

though I had the Scriptures on my side... that I should dare to make a stand alone against the pope, and hold him forth as antichrist." (Martyn, *The Life and Times of Luther*, p. 372-373)

### Does it match?

The Vatican is the smallest kingdom in the world by surface area. It rose in Europe and received political power around the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century (538) after having defeated three of the aforementioned kingdoms with the aid of the Byzantine emperor. One expositor writes: "I might cite three that were eradicated from before the pope out of the list first given, viz., the Heruli under Odoacer, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths." (Edward Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticæ*, vol. 3, p. 139). The time of Papal supremacy and authority over the Western world lasted for exactly 1260 years. Their power was broken when Napoleon's general Berthier captured the Pope and discontinued the Papal States in 1798 – exactly 1260 years later! Roman Popes and priests are said to be able to forgive sins prior to God's approval. The Pope is considered to be "the man on earth who represents the Son of God, who "takes the place" of the Second Person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity." (John Paul II, *Crossing the threshold of hope*, 1994, p. 13). This is blasphemy, according to the Bible. During the Dark Ages, the Roman Church shed more innocent blood than any other institution that ever existed on Earth. It is estimated that 50-100 million Protestants were killed for "heresy". The Catholic Church claims that: "The Pope is of great authority and power, that he is able to modify, declare, or interpret even divine laws." (Lucii Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca*, Art "Papa", vol. 5, col. 1823). In the Catholic catechism is the second commandment, which prohibits the worship of statues and images is removed, and the last is divided in two. Unfortunately, the description fits too well to be ignored as the fulfilment of the prophetic revelation.

**Remember:** We are dealing with a system, not of individuals. If you happen to find yourself in this system, you are not necessarily condemned by God. He has his people there (Rev. 18:4), and he calls them out. Are you willing to listen to his voice?



### *Antichrist Revealed*

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The Bible speaks of a figure called the Antichrist that will exist until the time of the Second Coming. Many theories have been invented about who or what the Antichrist is. But what does the Bible actually say?

### Tricked into false worship

The apostles warned the early Church of a coming apostasy in Christianity (Acts 20:29-30). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians not to expect Christ's Return yet, "for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." (2 Thess. 2:3) John called this apostasy the Antichrist (1Jn. 2:18-19). Paul says that Antichrist's coming "is according to the working of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:9, see also Rev 13:2). Satan's greatest desire is to get the worship that only belongs to God (see Matt. 4:9 & Isa. 14:12-14). But he knows that no Christian in their right mind would voluntarily worship and bow to him. Therefore, he uses deception. He establishes a front man who claims to be God or Christ – anti-Christ. The Antichrist is not an ugly, evil-looking, half-demon who openly defies Christ. Instead, he is described as an impostor pretending to be Christ (2 Thess. 2:4). When Christians see this front man they believe that they are following and worshiping Christ when in fact they worship Satan's representative. Thus the Antichrist gives people a false hope. They turn to this power for the remission of their sins and blessings instead of Christ. But Jesus is not passive in this crisis. He sends prophetic messages to warn his people and all who are willing to study. In the Book of Revelation, the Antichrist is pictured as a beast. Notice how the beast tries to emulate Christ:

|   | Jesus Christ                             | Antichrist  |
|---|--|-------------|
| Begins his ministry by coming up out of water | Matt. 3:16                               | Rev. 13:1   |
| Ministry of 3.5 years                         | Luke 3:1, 21; John 2:13, 5:1, 6:4, 11:55 | Rev. 13:5   |
| Death and resurrection                        | 1 Cor. 15:3-4                            | Rev. 13:3   |
| Receives worship after resurrection           | Rev. 5:13-14                             | Rev. 13:3-4 |
| Sits on his father's throne                   | Rev. 3:21                                | Rev. 13:2   |

The Bible goes on to say: "And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast..." (13:3-4). Through the beast, Satan receives the worship he craves, though the worshipers see no danger.

### The Little Horn

The beast in Revelation 13 is the same power that in Daniel 7 is described as the Little Horn. In Daniel 7, the prophet sees four beasts coming up out of the sea. These represent different world empires that reigned from Daniel's time to the end of the world (Dan. 7:17, 23). They correspond to the kingdoms described in the statue of Daniel 2:



Lion = \_\_\_\_\_ (Jer. 50:17)

Bear = \_\_\_\_\_ (Dan; 5:25-28)

Leopard = \_\_\_\_\_ (Dan; 8:21)

Dragon = \_\_\_\_\_ (John 11:48)



The horns represent ten kingdoms of Divided Rome (verse 24). At its fall, the Western Roman Empire was divided between ten barbarian tribes: The Anglo-Saxons (England), the Franks (France), the Alemanni (Germany), the Burgundians (Switzerland), the Lombards (Italy), the Visigoths (Spain), the Suevi (Portugal), the Ostrogoths, Vandals and the Heruli. Daniel then says: "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words." The angel explains: "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." (Dan; 7:8, 25) From these verses we can pick out at least 8 characteristics of the Antichrist:

1. It is a small kingdom (a little horn)
2. It rises in Europe (among the ten horns)
3. It rises after Rome's fall (after 476 AD)
4. It uproots three of the other kingdoms during its rise
5. It reigns for 1260 years (3.5 times = 42 months = 1260 days (Rev. 12:6) a prophetic day = a literal year (Ezek. 4:6, Numb. 14:34))
6. It persecutes the saints (God's true people)
7. It claims to change God's Law (the Ten Commandments)
8. It blasphemes God, i.e. it:
  - a) claim to be able to forgive sins (Mark 2:7)
  - b) claims to be God on Earth (John 10:33)

### What did the reformers say?

With the cards on the table, we can do nothing else but to draw the same conclusion as Luther and the other reformers did on this issue: "Luther ... proven by Daniels and St. John's revelations, by St. Paul, St. Peter and St. Jude, that Antichrist's reign, as predicted and described in the Bible, was the Papacy." (Merle D' aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, vol. 6, ch. 12, p. 215) Luther wrote about this: " O, how much pain it has caused me,