

Surprising Facts Series Two:

15. Is Antichrist Alive Today!

What or Who is the Antichrist? Some say he will not appear until after Jesus' Second Coming. Others say he appeared in the days of old Rome and is long gone. The Bible says he is alive today. Antichrist will play a very significant role in the final events of planet Earth. He is featured again and again in many of the last-day prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation. Do you know who he is? Are you certain? It is not possible to understand last-day prophecies unless you have correctly identified the Antichrist.

This lesson, based on Daniel chapter 7, clearly and unmistakably identifies the Antichrist. But it is only an introduction. Future lessons will reveal details of some of his activities that will have worldwide impact. What you discover today may displease or sadden you, but please remember that the prophecy of Daniel chapter 7 comes from Jesus, who loves you. Pray for God's guidance as you delve into this urgent subject. Be sure to read Daniel 7 before studying this lesson.

1. As the chapter begins, Daniel sees four beasts coming up out of the sea. In prophecy, what does a beast represent? What does the sea represent?

"The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth." Daniel 7:23. "The waters ... are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Revelation 17:15.

Answer: Beasts represent kingdoms or nations. Water represents multitudes of people or large populations.

2. The four beasts of Daniel 7 represent the four world kingdoms (verses 17, 18). Babylon, the first kingdom (Daniel 2:38, 39), is represented as a lion. (See also Jeremiah 4:7; 50:17, 43, 44 for Babylon pictured as a lion elsewhere.) What do the "eagle's wings" mean? What do the "four winds" of verse 2 represent?

"The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." Daniel 7:4.

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee ... as swift as the eagle flieth." Deuteronomy 28:49. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, ... a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." Jeremiah 25:32, 33.

Answer: The wings of eagles represent speed. **"Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled." Jeremiah 4:13.** Winds represent strife, commotion, and destruction. **"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Revelation 7:1.** The lion beast of Daniel 7 represents the empire of Babylon.

3. What kingdom does the bear represent? What do the three ribs in its mouth symbolize?

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.” Daniel 7:5.

Answer: Read Daniel 8. Notice that the beasts in chapter 8 parallel those in chapter 7. Daniel 8:20 specifically names Medo-Persia as the kingdom that precedes the rough goat, or Greece, of verse 21. It is the second world kingdom, the same power as the bear of Daniel 7. The bear with three ribs in its mouth symbolizes Medo-Persia. The empire was made up of two groups of people. The Medes came up first, represented in Daniel 7:5 by the bear coming up on one side, but the Persians eventually became stronger, represented in Daniel 8:3 by the ram's second horn which grew "higher," or taller. **“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.”** The three ribs represent the three principal powers conquered by Medo-Persia: Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.

4. Greece, the third kingdom is represented by a leopard with four wings and four heads (Daniel 7:6). What do the heads represent? What do the four wings represent?

“And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” Daniel 8:21.

Answer: The four heads represent the four kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander the Great was divided when he died. The four generals who headed these areas were: Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. The four wings (instead of two like the lion) represent super-speed, which was true of Alexander's conquests. The leopard beast of Daniel 7 represents the world kingdom of Greece.

5. The Roman empire, the fourth world kingdom, is represented by a horrible monster with iron teeth and 10 horns. **“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” Daniel 7:7.** What do the horns represent?

Answer: The 10 horns represent the 10 kings or kingdoms into which pagan Rome was eventually split (Daniel 7:24). The world empire of Rome is symbolized by the monster beast of Daniel chapter 7. Roving barbarian tribes swept in upon the Roman empire and carved out land niches for their people. Seven of those 10 tribes developed into the countries of modern Western Europe, while three were uprooted and destroyed. The next section will discuss those kingdoms that were rooted up.

VISIGOTHS-Spain

ANGLO-SAXONS-England

FRANKS-France

ALEMANNI-Germany

BURGUNDIANS-Switzerland

LOMBARDS-Italy

SUEVI-Portugal

HERULI-Rooted up

OSTROGOTHS-Rooted up

VANDALS-Rooted up

6. In the Daniel 7 prophecy, what happens next?

"I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Daniel 7:8.

Answer: The "little horn" appears next. We must identify it carefully because God takes more space describing it than the other four kingdoms combined. Why? Because the biblical characteristics identify it as the 'Antichrist' of prophecy and history. There must be no mistake in making this identification! The Bible says Antichrist would persecute God's people.

7. Are there clear points of identification?

Answer: Yes, God gives us nine characteristics of Antichrist in Daniel 7 so we can be certain of his identity. And even though some may find these truths from God's Word painful, we must be honest enough to accept them as His revealed will. Now let's discover what Jesus' nine points are:

A. The "little horn" or kingdom "came up among them", the 10 horns, which were the kingdoms of Western Europe (Daniel 7:8). So it would be a little kingdom somewhere in Western Europe.

B. It would have a man at its head who could speak for it (Daniel 7:8).

C. It would pluck up or uproot three kingdoms (Daniel 7:8).

D. It would be "diverse" or different from the other 10 kingdoms (Daniel 7:24).

E. It would make war with and "wear out" or persecute the saints (Daniel 7:21, 25).

F. It would emerge from the pagan Roman empire, the fourth world kingdom (Daniel 7:7, 8).

G. God's people (the saints) would "be given into his hand" for "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25).

H. It would "speak great words against" or blaspheme God (Daniel 7:25). In Revelation 13:5, the Bible says the same power speaks "great things and blasphemies."

I. It would "think to change times and laws." Daniel 7:25.

Don't forget, all these identification points come directly from the Bible. They are not some human opinion or speculation. Historians could tell you quickly what power is being described. These points can fit only one power, the Roman papacy. But in order to be certain, let us carefully examine all nine points, one by one. There must be no room left for doubt. The 'little horn' of Daniel 7:8 represents the 'antichrist'.

8. Does the papacy fit these points?

Answer: Yes, it fits every point perfectly. See items A through H below.

A. It "came up among" the 10 kingdoms of Western Europe. The geographical location of the papal power was in Rome, Italy, the very heart of the territory of Western Europe.

B. It would have a man at its head who speaks for it. The papacy meets this identifying mark because it does have one man at the head (the pope) who speaks for it.

C. It would pluck up or uproot three kingdoms. The emperors of Western Europe were largely Catholic and supported the papacy in its growth and authority. Three Arian kingdoms, however, did not support

the papacy, the Vandals, Heruli, and Ostrogoths. So the Catholic emperors decided they must be subdued or destroyed.

"The Catholic emperor Zeno (474-491) arranged a treaty with the Ostrogoths in 487 which resulted in the eradication of the kingdom of the Arian Heruls in 493. And the Catholic emperor Justinian (527-565) exterminated the Arian Vandals in 534 and significantly broke the power of the Arian Ostrogoths in 538. Thus were Daniel's three horns-the Heruls, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths-'plucked up by the roots.'" M. Maxwell, *God Cares: volume 1*, page 129. It is not difficult to recognize that the papacy fits this point.

D. It would be "diverse" or different from the other kingdoms. The papacy clearly fits this description, also. It came on the scene as a religious power and was totally different from the secular nature of the other 10 kingdoms.

E. It would make war with and persecute the saints. That the church did persecute is a well-known fact. The papacy clearly admits doing so. Much supportive evidence exists. Even conservative historians claim the church probably destroyed at least 50 million people over matters of religious conviction. We will quote here from two sources:

1. "That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history." W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, Vol 2, p. 40.

2. In *The History of the Inquisition of Spain*, D. Ivan Antonio Llorente provides these figures from the Spanish Inquisition alone: 31,912 persons were condemned and perished in the flames. 241,450 persons were condemned to severe penalties. The papacy clearly fits all nine identification points.

Words of Care and Concern: Lest some should think that we are attacking fellow Christians by identifying this little-horn power, please keep in mind that the prophecy is aimed at a system and not individuals. There are sincere, devout Christians in all churches, including the Catholic faith. Daniel chapter 7 is simply a message of judgment and correction upon a large religious institution which compromised with paganism, like so many other churches that arose after her.

Prophecy Reveals Faults of All Faiths: Other prophecies point out the faults of Protestant and Jewish faiths. God has true people in all religions. His true people (no matter what their faith) will always humbly accept the correction of the Lord and will not shut their ears and hearts against Him by self-defensiveness. We should be very thankful that God's Word speaks with impartial honesty on every subject.

F It would emerge from the fourth kingdom of iron, the pagan Roman Empire. We are quoting two authorities on this point:

1. "The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire baptised ... The very capital of the old Roman Empire became the capital of the Christian empire. The office of Pontifex Maximus was continued in that of the pope." Alexander Clarence Flick, *The Rise of the Medieval Church*, pp. 148, 149.

2. "Whatever Roman elements the barbarians and Arians left ... [came] under the protection of the Bishop of Rome, who was the chief person there after the emperor's disappearance. The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World Empire, of which it is the

actual continuation." Adolph Harnack, *What is Christianity?* Pp. 269, 270. So, once again, the point fits the papacy.

G. God's people (the saints) would "be given into his hand" for "a time and times and the dividing of time." Daniel 7:25.

Several things need clarification in connection with this point:

1. A time is a year, times is two years, and the dividing of time is a half-year. Three and one-half years."
2. This same time period is mentioned seven times (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5) in the books of Daniel and Revelation: three times as a time, times, and half a time; twice as 42 months; and twice as 1,260 days. Based on the 30-day calendar used by the Jews, these time periods are all the same amount of time: 3 1/2 years = 42 months = 1,260 days.
3. One prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34).
4. Thus, the little horn (Antichrist) was to have power over the saints for 1,260 prophetic days or 1,260 literal years.
5. The rule of the papacy began in A.D. 538, when the last of the three opposing Arian kingdoms was uprooted. Its rule continued until 1798 when Napoleon's general, Berthier, took the pope captive with hopes of destroying both Pope Pius VI and the political, secular power of the papacy. This period of time is an exact fulfillment of the 1,260 year prophecy. The blow was a deadly wound for the papacy, but that wound began to heal and is almost healed today.
6. This same period of persecution is mentioned in Matthew 24:21 as the worst period of persecution God's people will ever experience. Verse 22 tells us it was so devastating that not one soul would have survived if God had not shortened it. But God did shorten it. The persecution ended long before the pope was taken captive in 1798. It is plain to see that this point, likewise, fits the papacy.

H. It would speak "great words" of blasphemy "against the most High [God]" Blasphemy has two definitions in Scripture:

1. Claiming to forgive sins (Luke 5:21).
2. Claiming to be God (John 10:33).

Does this point fit the papacy? Yes! Let's first look at the evidence for it claiming to forgive sins: "Does the Priest truly remit [forgive] the sins, or does he only declare that they are remitted? The Priest does really and truly remit the sins in virtue of the power given to him by Christ." Joseph Deharbe, S.J., *A Complete Catechism of the Catholic Religion*, p. 275. The papacy further undermines Jesus by setting up a system of confession to an earthly priest, thus bypassing Jesus, our High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 8:1, 2) and only Mediator. (1 Timothy 2:5).

Next consider the evidence for it claiming to be God: "We [the pope] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty." "The Reunion of Christendom" (dated June 20, 1894) in the *Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII*, p. 304. Here is another: "The pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ, Himself, hidden under the veil of flesh." *Catholic National*, July 1895. It's obvious this point, likewise, fits the papacy.

I. It would "think to change times and laws."

In a future lesson we will deal with the "times" of this point. It is a major topic and needs separate consideration. But what about changing the "laws" or "the law." The reference is to changing God's law. Of course, no one can really change it, but has the papacy attempted to do so? The answer is "yes."

In its catechisms, the papacy has omitted the second commandment against veneration of images and has shortened the fourth commandment from 94 words to eight and divided the tenth commandment into two commandments. (Check this for yourself. Compare the Ten Commandments in any Catholic catechism with God's list of the commandments in Exodus 20:3-17.) The Bible says Antichrist would 'think' to change God's law.

There is no doubt that the little horn power of Daniel chapter 7 (the Antichrist) is the papacy. No other organization could possibly fit these nine points. And incidentally, this is no new teaching. Every Reformer, without exception, spoke of the papacy as Antichrist. R. Allen Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation*, p. 137.

9. Wasn't Daniel told to seal up his book until "the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4)? When will Daniel's prophecies be opened to our understanding?

Answer: In Daniel 12:4, the prophet was told to seal parts of the book till "the time of the end." In verse 6 an angelic voice asked, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" Verse 7 says, "It shall be for a time, times, and an half." The angel assured Daniel that the section of the book dealing with end-time prophecies would be opened after the end of the 1260-year period of papal control which was, as we learned earlier, 1798. So the time of the end began in the year 1798. Obviously, the book of Daniel contains crucial messages from heaven for us today. We absolutely must understand it.

10. Many Christians today have been tragically misinformed regarding the Antichrist. To believe an untruth about the Antichrist could easily cause a person to be deceived and lost. What should a person do when new Bible teachings are encountered?

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 11:11.

Answer: When a new Bible teaching is encountered, the only safe procedure is to compare it carefully with Scripture to see if it is in harmony with God's Word. All religious teachings must be compared with Scripture to determine their accuracy.

11. Are you willing to follow where Jesus leads, even though it may be painful?

Your Answer: _____

Many momentous prophecies from the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation will be featured in upcoming lessons. God has given these prophecies to:

- A. Reveal earth's closing events.
- B. Identify the participants in the final phase of the battle between Jesus and Satan.
- C. Clearly reveal Satan's sinister plans to ensnare and destroy us all.
- D. Present the security and love of the judgment; God's saints will be vindicated!
- E. Uplift Jesus-His salvation, love, power, mercy, and justice.

Key participants in the closing war between Jesus and Satan will appear repeatedly in these prophecies. These include: Satan, Jesus, the United States, the papacy, Protestantism, and spiritism.

Jesus repeats and expands His messages from the prophets to make certain His warnings of love and protection come through with clarity and certainty. The angel told Daniel that the prophecies of this book would be sealed until 1798, the time of the end.

Your Thought Questions Answered:

1. I always thought Antichrist was a person rather than an organization. Am I wrong?

ANSWER: Antichrist is an organization, the papacy. The words "eyes of man" in Daniel 7:8, however, do point to a leader. Revelation 13:18 speaks of man with a number being involved. In Daniel chapter 8, Greece is represented by a goat and its leader, Alexander the Great, is symbolized by a horn. The same is true of Antichrist. The organization is the papacy. The pope in office, is its representative. The prophecy of Daniel chapter 7 is not saying that popes are evil and that Catholics are not Christians. There are many warm, loving Catholic Christians. The system, however, is called Antichrist because it has usurped Jesus' authority and attempted to change His law.

2. Do you think it is wise or Christian to pass laws to enforce Christianity?

ANSWER: No. The Bible is clear that all should have freedom to choose the direction they wish to go in matters of conscience (Joshua 24:15) even if they choose to deny God and be atheists. God permitted Adam and Eve to choose to disobey even though it hurt both them and Him. Forced worship is not acceptable to God. Forced worship is the devil's way. God's way is loving persuasion. History shows that virtually every time the church passed laws to enforce its beliefs, persecution and murder of others resulted. This is a lesson we can learn from the Middle Ages history of the little horn.

3. Perhaps I have misunderstood, but my concept has always been that Antichrist would be an evil being who openly opposed God. Is this concept incorrect?

ANSWER: We usually consider the word "anti" to mean "against." But in "Antichrist" it means "in the place of or "instead of." Antichrist is guilty of assuming the rights of God. It claims:

- A. Its priests can forgive sins, which only God can do (Luke 5:21).
- B. To have changed God's law by dropping out the second commandment (on worshipping images) and splitting the tenth into two parts. God's law cannot be changed (Matthew 5:18).
- C. That the pope is God on earth.

Satan's Original Plan: Satan's original plan (in heaven) was to assume God's position and authority. His aim was to oust God and rule in His place. When Satan was ejected from heaven, his aim did not change, but rather intensified. Through the centuries he has endeavored (using various human agencies) to discredit God and take over His position.

Antichrist Appears to Be Spiritual: Satan aims to replace God in these last days by deceiving people into following Antichrist, who appears spiritual and holy. The main purpose of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is to expose Satan's traps and strategies and lead people to anchor in Jesus and His Word for safety.

Antichrist Will Work Miracles: Antichrist will work amazing miracles, posing as a heavenly angel (2 Corinthians 11:14) and calling fire down from heaven (Revelation 13:13). Most people will follow him (Revelation 13:3), thinking they are following Christ. Only the very elect will be safe (Matthew 24:23, 24). They will be safe because they test every spiritual teaching and leader by Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). Religious deception is everywhere today. We cannot be too careful.

4. In prophecy, does the symbol "beast" mean "beastly" characteristics?

ANSWER: Not at all. God uses the symbolism of a beast to signify a ruler, nation, government, or kingdom. It is His way of depicting governments in prophecy. We do this ourselves to some degree: We have depicted Russia as a bear, the United States as an eagle, etc. The symbol "beast" is not a demeaning, disrespectful term. It is synonymous with "animal" or "creature." Even Christ is portrayed as a Lamb by John the Baptist (John 1:29) and the apostle John (Revelation 5:6, 9, 12, 13). The term "beast" is utilized by God to give us a message about nations and leaders, good and evil.

Summary Sheet. Place a check beside the correct answer.

1. Which four world kingdoms are represented by beast symbols in Daniel chapter 7?

- Sweden.
- Egypt.
- Greece.
- China.
- Medo-Persia.
- Japan.
- Babylon.
- Iraq.
- Rome.

2. The 10 horns on the monster beast represent:

- Ten years.
- Ten special cities.
- Angels.
- Riches.
- The kingdoms into which pagan Rome eventually split.

3. How many tribes or nations were "rooted up" by the little horn power?

- Eight.
- One.
- Six.
- Three.

4. The little horn power, or Antichrist, represents:

- One of Babylon's generals.
- An evil ruler from the days of old pagan Rome.
- An evil power that will arise after the second coming of Jesus.

Atheism.

The papacy.

5. Check the true statements about the little horn (Antichrist) power from the list below:

It came from Egypt.

It would persecute God's people.

It arose immediately after Babylon fell.

It speaks great words against God.

It attempted to change God's law.

6. In prophecy, "time, times, and a half time" is symbolic of:

Three and one-half literal days.

42 years.

1,260 literal years.

7. When did "the time of the end" begin?

A.D. 31.

A.D. 1991.

A.D. 588.

A.D. 1798.

8. Antichrist is an organization, rather than a person.

Yes. No.

9. Antichrist exists today.

Yes. No.

10. God approves of enforcing true worship by law.

Yes. No.

11. General Berthier's capture of the pope only wounded the papacy. It is well and growing strong today.

Yes. No.

12. What item from the list below is essential for the spiritual safety of God's people in these end-time days?

Learn to preach.

Pray much in public.

Test every religious teaching by the Bible.

13. Are you willing to follow where Jesus leads, even though it may be painful? Yes. No.