

The Antichrist - Part Two

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PAPAM ESSE IPSUM VERUM ANTICHRISTUM - THE POPE IS THE VERY ANTICHRIST

Smalcald Articles

“This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is properly speaking, ‘to exalt himself above all that is called God’, as Paul says, 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Even the Turks, or the Tartars, great enemies of Christians as they are, do not do this, but they allow whoever wishes to believe in Christ, and take bodily tribute and obedience from Christians.”

The Smalcald Articles are one of the Particular Symbols of the Lutheran Church. Article III of the Constitution of the CLC states: *“We confess the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds and the Particular Symbols of the Lutheran Church as published in the Book of Concord of 1580, BECAUSE (not insofar as) they are a true exposition of the Word of God.”* The constitutions of all member churches of the CLC make this same confession. When our pastors are ordained, they are also required to make this confession. So also our Christian day school teachers. Whenever a congregation calls a pastor or teacher, the congregation is demanding that the called pastor or teacher believe, confess, and teach that the Pope is the very Antichrist.

Identification of the Antichrist

How can we identify the Pope as the Antichrist? The Bible nowhere says in so many words that the Pope is the Antichrist. Neither did the prophets of old explicitly state that Jesus of Nazareth would be the promised Messiah. What the prophets did was to paint a picture of the Messiah to come – that He would be born of a virgin in the city of Bethlehem, that He would be despised and rejected, that He would suffer, die and rise again. The New Testament believers identified Jesus as the fulfillment of those pictures. So also with the Antichrist! The Apostle Paul describes the Antichrist as a man within the church who would exalt himself above God, 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The Pope and only the Pope fits that picture.

The Horns in the Visions in the Book of Daniel

1. The Great Colossus, Daniel 2 This vision came to King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. Daniel interpreted the various parts of the Colossus as being succeeding anti-Kingdom of God kingdoms of this world, as follows:

Head of gold - the neo-Babylonian empire

Breast and arms of silver - Medo-Persian empire

Belly and thighs of brass - Grecian empire

Legs and feet of iron and clay - Roman empire

As Daniel watched, he saw a stone cut without hands strike the iron and clay feet of the colossus, which became as chaff the wind blew away. The stone became a great mountain and filled the earth. Daniel is assured that while one empire follows another, ***“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44)***. The STONE, the King of the everlasting Kingdom (Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22), shall establish His Kingdom. Both the destruction of the anti-kingdom of God kingdoms of this world and the establishing of our Lord’s Kingdom are pictured as occurring during the time of the Roman Empire. The New Testament era is passed over in silence. No HORN in this vision!

2. The Four Beasts, Daniel 7. In Daniel’s vision the four parts of the Great Colossus appear as wild beasts, as follows:

Lion with eagle wings - Neo-Babylonian empire

Bear raised on one side - Medo-Persian empire

Leopard with four wings and four heads - Grecian empire

Nondescript beast with iron teeth, brass claws and ten horns -
Roman empire

The four anti-Kingdom of God kingdoms of this world would follow each other. But just as the Stone would become a mountain filling the earth, so the four empires could not prevent the saints of the Most High from receiving and possessing the eternal Kingdom (7:18). But unlike the vision of the Great Colossus, which pictures no historical development after the fourth empire, Daniel saw ten horns on the head of the fourth beast, the Roman empire. The effort to identify each of these horns historically is an exercise in futility. For this writer, the ten horns symbolize all anti-Kingdom of God kingdoms from the dissolution of the Roman empire to the last day. The USA is symbolized by those horns. We are currently the most powerful empire on earth. But from the Lord’s point of view, the USA is

but another earthly kingdom already doomed to destruction.

The nondescript beast had ten horns. Daniel's attention was glued to those ten horns. As he was considering them, *"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" (7:8)*. Daniel's attention was focused on the little horn *"because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking" (7:11)*.

Daniel asked for more information about the fourth beast, the ten horns, and *"about the other horn which came up, before whom three fell, namely, the horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching, and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them" (7:20-21)*. Daniel was told that *"the horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High. And shall intend to change the times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time" (7:24-25)*.

So what does this vision of Daniel mean for us who live some twenty-five centuries after Daniel saw the vision in a dream? The fourth beast that was dreadful and terrible, had huge iron teeth, and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling everything that remained was the Roman Empire. The ten horns in the head of the that fourth beast represent all subsequent anti-Kingdom of God kingdoms of this world from the Roman Empire till the coming of our Lord and King. But what about the little horn that came up among the ten horns and established itself by uprooting three of the ten horns? That little horn symbolizes the kingdom of the Antichrist. The Antichrist established his kingdom by force, uprooting three kingdoms. He used kingdoms of this world to establish his spiritual kingdom. But all attempts to identify the three uprooted kingdoms are futile. The kingdom of the little horn is human. It has human eyes and a mouth that speaks pompous words. It is a kingdom that persecutes the saints, but cannot prevent them from possessing the everlasting Kingdom. That kingdom is the Papacy! It established itself by filling a political void. The Pope never ceases speaking pompous words - claiming to be God on earth with the sole power of opening or closing the gates of Paradise.

3. The Ram and Male Goat, Daniel 8. Daniel had seen the Medo-Persian empire as a bear. In this vision it appears as a ram, the Grecian empire that had appeared as a leopard, appears as a male goat with a notable horn between his eyes in this vision. The goat broke the ram's horns and trampled him. The goat grew very great, but its large horn (Alexander the Great) was broken. Four horns came up and from one of them (the Seleucid empire) came a little horn. The little horn is described as having *"exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down" (8:11)*.

4. The Vision of the Flow of History, Daniel 11. This is an amazing vision. It reveals the flow of history from the Persian empire to the destruction of the nation of the Jews, the chosen people of God. The little horn that came from the Seleucid empire is described as *"a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue" (11:21)*. The description of this little horn from a horn continues: *"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place the abomination of desolation" (11:31)*.

Bible students are almost unanimously agreed that the identity of this little horn from a horn is Antiochus Epiphanes. He placed in the temple the abomination of desolation in the form of a statue of Zeus and then washed the walls of the sanctuary with the broth of a cooked swine. He forbade circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and other mandated Jewish rites. He was opposed by the Maccabees. Antiochus was the antichrist of the Old Testament. He failed as the Great Antichrist is and shall fail.

Mis-interpretations

Dispensationalists and futurists in general find the Antichrist in the Vision of the Seventy Sevens, Daniel 9. The vision pictures the covenant-fulfilling work of Messiah the Prince, who shall be cut off, but yet destroy Jerusalem after He has confirmed (not made) the covenant by bringing sacrifice and offering to an end. The vision describes the work of the Christ, not the Antichrist. So also the king in Daniel 11:36 is not the Antichrist but Herod the Great. Those that find the Antichrist in the king insert an artificial gap of some 2000 years between verses 35 and 36. PAPANESSE IPSUM VERUM ANTICHRIST!