

Hellenistic Greek kingdoms:\* “[1] Cassander got Macedonia and Greece; [2] Lysimachus took Thrace and much of Asia Minor; [3] Ptolemy retained Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Palestine; and [4] the rest of Asia [that is, Syria and

\*The Battle of Ipsus was decisive. It marked the end of the vigorous attempt by Antigonos to form a single, reunited empire. The four-way division lasted until the death of Lysimachus in 281 B.C., after which there were for a while three main Hellenistic Greek kingdoms—Syria, Egypt, and Macedonia—along with a few minor ones.

the lands Alexander had won in the east] went to Seleucus.”<sup>1</sup>

All of this is background, of course, a mere introduction, to the major themes of Daniel 7. The career of the “little horn” and the course of the heavenly judgment attracted Daniel’s attention principally, and so they do ours. After you have read the chapter for yourself, we will examine what the Bible says about God and Christ in the judgment and about the horn that made war with the saints.

STARS IT'S A SECRET

CHAPTER 7

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. <sup>2</sup> Daniel said, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. <sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. <sup>4</sup> The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. <sup>5</sup> And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ <sup>6</sup> After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it. <sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup> I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

<sup>9</sup> As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. <sup>10</sup> A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment,

and the books were opened. <sup>11</sup> I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. <sup>12</sup> As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

<sup>13</sup> I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

<sup>15</sup> “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. <sup>16</sup> I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things. <sup>17</sup> ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. <sup>18</sup> But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever.’

<sup>19</sup> “Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; <sup>20</sup> and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up and before which three of them fell, the horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and which seemed greater than its fellows. <sup>21</sup> As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom.

*The Son of man.* After telling us that the Ancient of Days was seated and the judgment had begun, Daniel says that the beast was slain and that “**in the night visions**” there came “**with the clouds of heaven**” “**one like a son of man,**” and that he “**came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.**” Daniel 7:13.

Who is this “Son of man”? The answer is that more than forty times Jesus applied the term to Himself. To the disciples He said, “The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” Matthew 17:22. To Zacchaeus, the diminutive tax collector, He said, “The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10. To Judas He said, “Would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” Luke 22:48. And to the high priest as he sat in judgment conducting Christ’s own trial, Jesus said, “Hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:64.

The “Son of man . . . on the clouds of heaven”! Commentators agree that in this salient utterance Jesus identified Himself unmistakably with the Son of man of Daniel 7.

*Who is the judge?* Now in Daniel 7:9-14, after saying that “**the court sat in judgment and the books were opened**” and before saying that “**there came one like a son of man**” to the Ancient of Days, Daniel mentions that he saw the beast slain and its body destroyed. It is easy to get the impression that the Son of man arrives at court only after God has completed the judgment.

But the Bible tells us in John 5:22 that “the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son”!

How can God be the judge and yet not judge anybody? Acts 17:30, 31 solves the riddle easily: “God . . . has fixed a day on which *he will judge* the world in righteousness *by a man* whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.” So God is the Judge, but in His capacity as judge He has chosen to delegate the judging to His Son.

When President Jimmy Carter was asked in 1979 to commute the sentence of Patty Hearst, he announced publicly that he would follow whatever recommendation came to him from the lawyers in the United States Department of Justice. President Carter was the ultimate judge, but he chose to exercise his judicial responsibility by relying on the judgment of others.

*Jesus, our Attorney and Judge.* Now 1 John 2:1 says that Jesus is our lawyer. He is our “advocate with the Father.” First Timothy 2:5 calls Him our “mediator.” And Hebrews 7:25 says that He “always lives to make intercession” for us. Christ, then, is ever ready to plead our case before God as our Advocate and Mediator and Intercessor.

Yet—surprising as it may sound—Jesus has told us that He does not guarantee to intercede for us! “I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you.” John 16:26.

Whatever can He mean?

Jesus explains Himself by saying, “*For the Father himself loves you, because*

you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father.” John 16:27.

Evidently Jesus does not have to “intercede” for us in the way we may have imagined. He does not have to persuade God to love us; for, as He Himself makes clear, God already loves us.

A “mediator” is a person who helps other people understand one another and, if the other people are not friends, helps them to become friends. The words of Jesus that we have just quoted from John 16:26 provide a beautiful hint as to Christ’s true role as mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) between God and man: “The Father himself loves you, *because you have loved me* and have believed that I come from the Father.”

One of the several ways, then, in which Jesus serves as mediator between God and man is in showing us what God is like, because it is so difficult for us to love a God whom we have never seen. God gave His only Son and sent Him into the world so that we could love the Son and, in the process of loving the Son, learn to love the Father too.

There is no doubt that God is the Judge. “God will judge the world” (Acts 17:31)—but He will do it “by” the Man He raised from the dead. So we read in Romans 14:10, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of *God*,” and in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of *Christ*.”

In electing to follow this procedure, God has done a very beautiful thing. To this Son of man who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) and who was “made like his brethren in every respect” and “suffered” under temptation (Hebrews 2:17, 18), to this Son of man who lived on earth and knows the frailty of our humanity and how much it hurts to be disappointed and lonely and to be treated harshly by other people, to this Son of man who is also Son of God—God the Father, who is the Ancient of Days, says, “I am the judge, but My verdict will be whatever verdict You recommend.”

So God is *not* a cross old man! How, indeed, could He be any more understanding?

If, then, Jesus plays a dual role in the judgment, serving both as our advocate and as our judge, it becomes evident that He does not arrive on the scene of judgment after the work of judgment is completed!

Thus Daniel 7:11, 12, which tells about the destruction of the beast, is seen to be parenthetical. It leaps ahead to the happy ending, as occurs so many times in this chapter as a whole. The actual order of events is as follows: (1) thrones placed, (2) Ancient of Days seated, (3) Son of man welcomed, (4) judgment held, (5) Son of man and saints rewarded, (6) beast destroyed.

*Saints and fellow heirs.* Although Daniel 7:14 says that “**dominion and glory and kingdom**” are given to the *Son of man*, Daniel 7:27 says that “**the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.**” So who really does receive the kingdom, Christ or the saints?

Both, of course! Hebrews 1:2 says that God has appointed Jesus to be the “*heir*

of all things"; and Romans 8:15-17 says that when we call God our Father, it becomes evident that "we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."

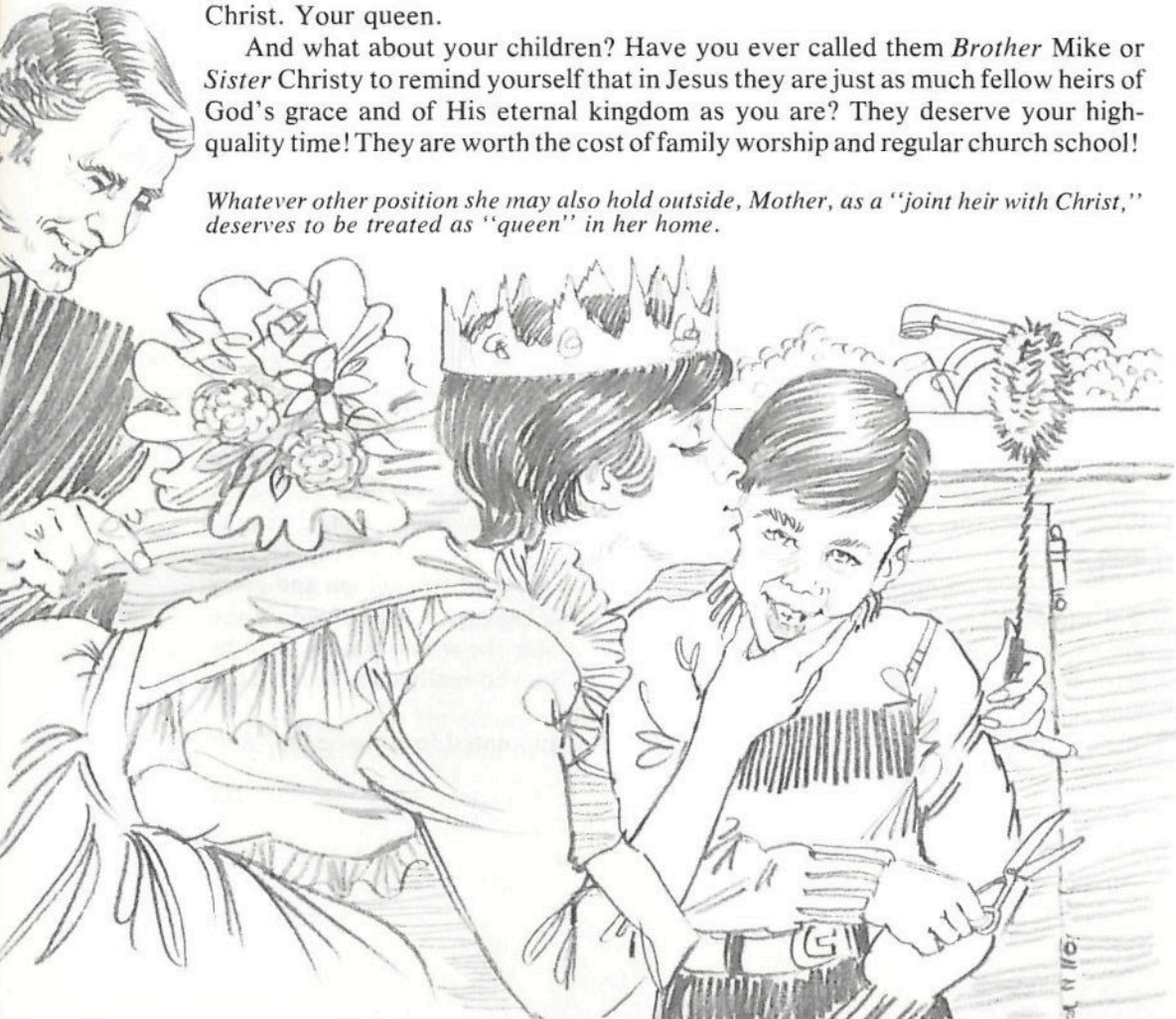
Christ receives the kingdom and immediately shares it with all the people who trust Him.

Fellow heirs with Christ! *You* are a fellow heir. And so is your Christian spouse. Says 1 Peter 3:7, "Husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman . . . , since you are *joint heirs* of the grace of life."

Christian husband! If Christ is willing to share His kingdom with your wife, can you share some of your time and thought with her? With a scarcely concealed air of superiority, some husbands crush their wives at supper with the patronizing question, "And what did *you* do all day, my dear?" James Dobson, author of *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*,<sup>2</sup> reminds us that "everybody must be somebody to somebody to be anybody." Many wives, he says, especially those who stay home with little children and dedicate all their energies to their families, often experience deep, unexpressed depression because their husbands do not seem to appreciate them. So—how about bringing home some flowers tomorrow night; and tonight what about taking out the garbage? This is your wife you are honoring! She's a daughter of the heavenly King. A fellow heir with Christ. Your queen.

And what about your children? Have you ever called them *Brother Mike* or *Sister Christy* to remind yourself that in Jesus they are just as much fellow heirs of God's grace and of His eternal kingdom as you are? They deserve your high-quality time! They are worth the cost of family worship and regular church school!

*Whatever other position she may also hold outside, Mother, as a "joint heir with Christ," deserves to be treated as "queen" in her home.*



When Father and Son sit in judgment and the beast is slain and the saints receive the kingdom, your precious spouse and children *and you* will be glad, so glad, that together you put the things of God ahead of every other consideration.

## II. God's Basis for Judgment

Employees like to have company policies posted where they can read them. Children want to know the rules before being accused of breaking them. Free societies insist that even criminals have the right to have charges against them stated in writing and supported by solid evidence.

What kind of evidence and what sort of legal basis will God employ in the judgment?

*God's recorded evidence.* Daniel 7:10 says, "**The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.**" Revelation 20:12-15 also speaks of "*books*" that are "opened" and out of which the dead will be judged on the basis of "*what they had done.*" Revelation adds that "another book was opened, which is the *book of life.*" And Malachi 3:16 refers to "*a book of remembrance*" which is written about "those who feared the Lord and thought on his name."

The book of life sounds attractive! Registers of births and deaths were kept in ancient times as today. The "register of the house of Israel" is referred to in Ezekiel 13:9. In the heavenly book of life God evidently preserves a record of all who are "born again" into Jesus Christ (Revelation 21:27) and who by virtue of their faith in Jesus possess even now "eternal life." John 6:54 (see also Philippians 4:3; Luke 10:20; Daniel 12:1).

So there are three categories of books: one, containing a record of all our deeds; another, containing a selection of only the good things done by those who love God; and a third book which lists the names of all who are born again and who live in Christ.

We don't need to know what the books look like. In Daniel's day "books" were clay tablets, papyrus, or parchment. Heavenly books may be computer printouts or, very likely, something far more sophisticated.

But it is appropriate to ask why God maintains the books. He cannot possibly need them to jog His memory! He keeps them for our sakes. Of course. But our attention is drawn to the large assembly that gathers around the throne:

**A thousand thousands serve him,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand  
stood before him;  
the court sat in judgment,  
and the books were opened. Daniel 7:10.**

In Revelation 5:11 (K.J.V.) the figure "ten thousand times ten thousand" is applied to the angels. So are the records made for sake of the angels too? Evidently yes, in part. Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:9 speaks about his being "a spectacle to the

world, to angels and to men." The word "spectacle" is translated from *theatron* from which our "theater" is derived. "All the world's a stage," said the playwright, more aptly perhaps than he intended. Outer space *is* peopled with intelligent beings, and they are deeply interested in the drama unfolding on planet Earth. For their sakes, then, the records are maintained. God wants them as well as us to know the evidence on which our cases are determined.

Indeed the angels are much more deeply involved in the dramatic contest between good and evil than most of us may be aware. Revelation 12 actually speaks about war in heaven! We will have more to say about this war later on.

In the meantime, how pleasant it is to contemplate the tender joy of Jesus as He opens the book of remembrance in the presence of the celestial angels. We can almost hear His voice: "Let me read the sacrificial contributions that John Smith made to some senior citizens in a city ghetto; . . . and the beautiful thing that Jane Smith said to the woman who grabbed the very item *she* wanted at a basement sale; . . . and the nice things that Jimmy Smith said and did when his mother asked him to clean up the kitchen because she had a headache."

Book of remembrance and book of life. How happy we may be for both! But what about the other books? Do you want everything you have done in your life to be paraded in detail before the universe? Praise God for 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he . . . will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Here is the remedy that we need. Let us admit what we have suspected all along—that *we are* self-seeking sinners. Let us admit the things that we have done wrong and tell the Lord sincerely that we are sorry. And then in the light streaming from the cross let us rejoice that "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

*God's legal basis.* We just talked about sin. Sin provides us a clue to the legal basis for the judgment; for in 1 John 3:4 God defines sin as "lawlessness," that is, as living or acting without due concern for law.

Without due concern for what law? God's law, of course.

Says the Bible, "Fear God, and keep *his commandments*; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into *judgment*, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.

When Jesus lived on earth, a lawyer asked Him which commandment He regarded as the greatest. Christ's reply has become famous: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Then Jesus added, "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:35-40.

Jesus did not say, If you have these two commandments (of love for God and love for man) you can throw away all the others! He said that all the other laws and all the messages of the Old Testament prophets depend upon—are built upon—these two basic principles.

In other words, Don't throw away your Old Testament! Don't discard the Ten

Commandments! Instead look at them through the eyes of love. Realize that they were given by God to explain, confirm, and illustrate what true love consists of.

Most of us think that we know what love is, but without the Bible it is surprisingly easy to interpret love wrongly. A great many people these days think that love is making out with anybody they happen to like at the moment, married or not. And what heartache often results. How good it is to have God's law to remind us of the faithfulness of true love in the words, "You shall not commit adultery"!

Some people actually think it is a kind of love to get presents for people by shoplifting. Obviously this doesn't show much love for storekeepers! Most of us would agree that the Ten Commandments reveal love better by saying, "You shall not steal."

Many men think that love for their families requires them to work seven days a week so they can pay for all the pleasures and facilities of the twentieth century. But in explaining love for families, the fourth commandment says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, *you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant.*" Exodus 20:8-10.

The Sabbath commandment reveals love for families because it involves the whole family together in its observance of rest and worship. And it *also* reveals love for God when we keep holy the very day *He* has chosen.

Now, about twenty years after the cross Paul complained that "the mystery of lawlessness" was "already at work." 2 Thessalonians 2:7. He had in mind an attitude developing among some Christians who felt that because Jesus had died for them they didn't need to keep the law anymore. How tragic that anyone should suppose that Jesus came to make us lawbreakers!

Even during His lifetime on earth some of Christ's listeners got the idea that He was undermining the Ten Commandments. He did His best to set them straight!

*In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insisted that He had not come to change the law.*



“Think not,” he said, “that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:17, 18.

As you read these words, let me ask you something. Is the earth still solid under your chair? Is the sky still overhead? Then in Christ’s own words “not an iota, not a dot” has passed from the law!

The book of Revelation describes an “angel” as flying symbolically in the sky just before judgment day and shouting, “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come.” Shortly after this angel, another angel appears with the announcement, “Here is a call for the endurance of the *saints*, those who keep the *commandments of God* and the *faith of Jesus*.” Revelation 14: 7, 12.

These two angels in Revelation tie together the things we have been studying here about the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and about the importance of the Ten Commandments. The saints of the Most High who receive the kingdom in Daniel’s vision are shown in Revelation to be the people who through faith in Jesus keep the commandments of God. Such faith-filled, born-again Christians have their names inscribed in the book of life and need have no fear of the judgment.

### III. The Horn That Made War With the Saints

The feature in Daniel 7 that interested the angel most was the judgment scene, but what fascinated Daniel most was the fourth beast and the “little horn” that grew out of its head and made war with the saints.

In view of the importance of the little horn, more space will be devoted to this present section than to most, and it will be divided into two subsections: (a) “Four Principles” and (b) “Eight Identifying Marks.”

#### *Four Principles*

1. *There is more than one antichrist.* Although the little horn has the eyes and mouth of a man, it contrasts strongly with the Son of man seen in the same vision. The Son of man shares His kingdom with the saints, but the little horn devastates the saints. The Son of man comes close to God, but the little horn opposes Him and tries to change His law. No wonder then that many people have perceived the little horn as the antichrist.

Now some Christians today (called “preterists”) say that the antichrist appeared long, long ago. Others (the “futurists”) say that he hasn’t appeared yet. And still others (the “historicists”) say that the antichrist has operated throughout church history, revealing himself most especially, thus far, in the medieval Christian church.

In some sense or other they may all be right!

The word “antichrist” appears in the Bible only in the epistles of John. There we are told that antichrist “denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22) and “will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (2 John 7), and also that the

spirit of antichrist *is*—around A.D. 90—“in the world already” (1 John 4:3). We are also told (1 John 2:18) that “*many* antichrists have come” and that they “went out from us.”

From these Bible verses it appears that “antichrist” is a term that applies technically only to apostate Christians who “went out from us” during the first century A.D. and who denied truths about Jesus and God. Most scholars see these first-century antichrists in certain Christian Gnostics. Here are antichrists of the long ago.

But in common usage the word “antichrist” has been applied for centuries to other enemies of God in addition to the antichrists of the first century. For example, a great many Christian writers have seen antichrist in “the lawless one” (or “man of sin” K.J.V.) of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8 whom, the Bible says, the “Lord Jesus will slay . . . and destroy . . . by his appearing and his coming.” Here is an antichrist of the future.

And, through the centuries, various Roman Catholic spokesmen have felt that the pope—either the current one or a future one, or the papacy as a whole (the entire line of popes)—was the antichrist. For example, during a time of deep spiritual laxness in Rome, Arnulf, the bishop of Orleans, deplored the Roman popes as “monsters of guilt” and declared in a council called by the king of France in 991 that the pontiff, clad in purple and gold, was “‘Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God.’”<sup>3</sup>

Eberhard II, archbishop of Salzburg (1200-1246), stated approvingly at a synod of bishops held at Regensburg in 1240 (some scholars say 1241) that the people of his day were “accustomed” to calling the pope antichrist.<sup>4</sup>

When the Western church was divided for about 40 years between two rival popes, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, France, each pope called the other pope antichrist—and John Wycliffe is reputed to have regarded them as both being right: “two halves of Antichrist, making up the perfect Man of Sin between them.”<sup>5</sup>

Martin Luther, as an Augustinian monk in the University of Wittenberg, came reluctantly to believe that “the papacy is in truth . . . very Antichrist”; but when he became a Protestant, he was willing to except individual popes from the allegation. He actually dedicated his most beautiful tract, *Concerning Christian Liberty*, to Pope Leo X on the basis that Leo was worthy of being a pope in better times.<sup>6</sup>

Inasmuch as the Bible speaks of “many” antichrists (1 John 2:18) and inasmuch as the word “antichrist” has been used by Christians in broader ways than the Bible uses it, it is not very helpful to debate whether this or that phenomenon is *the* antichrist, as if there were only one. In any event, our purpose in this chapter will not be to identify the “antichrist” as such but to identify the little horn.

2. *Daniel’s vision purposely presents a one-sided picture of Rome.* The Roman Empire was responsible for a great many good things. Its fabulous network of paved roads comes to mind, its advanced system of law and jurisprudence, and its

famous Roman peace (*pax Romana*).<sup>\*</sup> Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship and took advantage of its privileges (see Acts 22:25-29). In Romans 13 he taught that Roman authorities were God's servants, authorized by Heaven to punish evil-doers (see pages 63-65). It is alongside Paul's appreciation of Rome that Revelation 12, like Daniel 7, portrays Rome as an ugly monster. In Romans 13 God honors Rome as a *civilizing* force. In Revelation 12 God criticizes Rome as a *persecuting* force.

We all know that the Romans did persecute, but it comes as a surprise to most people to learn how few Christians they killed, relatively speaking.

Nero, it is true, had a good many Christians burned as lampposts on the charge that they had set Rome on fire. Under the Emperor Domitian the apostle John was exiled to Patmos. In Carthage (now Tunis) in North Africa, around A.D. 202, Perpetua and Felicitas surrendered their babies to the care of others and walked bravely into the arena to be eaten by wild beasts.<sup>7</sup>

But persecution severe enough to result in martyrs was usually local and brief. The emperor Commodus (180-192) actually ordered many Christians brought back from exile. Many a Roman governor preferred to boast when he returned to Rome from his service in a province that his sword was not bloodied by anybody's life, even by a criminal's.<sup>8</sup> The governors were appointed to maintain the Roman

<sup>\*</sup>Under the Roman Empire the people living around the Mediterranean enjoyed a greater degree of peace for two centuries than they have for any similar period since.

*Perpetua and Felicitas were only two of thousands of Christians who were brutally persecuted under the Roman Empire.*



peace; and as long as things remained peaceful, a person could believe almost anything that he wanted to. If to quell a pagan riot against the Christians, a governor thought it expedient that someone should die, a single Christian or a handful at most might be executed and the rest left alone. When Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was martyred in 258, his church members came out to see his end—some climbing trees for a better view—and the Roman officials laid a hand on none of them.<sup>9</sup>

There were only two periods of serious, methodical persecution: A short one under the emperor Decius in 250 and another one associated with the emperor Diocletian that lasted approximately a decade, 303-313. During the Diocletian persecution an eyewitness in Egypt reported that so many Christians were slain that the executioners' axes grew dull and had to be replaced, and that the executioners grew tired and had to be relieved in shifts.<sup>10</sup>

But using evidence compiled and analyzed by Professor W. H. C. Frend of Cambridge University, we are led to conclude that the grand total of martyrdoms under pagan Rome did not exceed 5000—a figure far smaller than the millions that some people have imagined.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Frend's figure, which agrees with the results of my own research, does not, of course, tell the whole story. It accounts only for Christian martyrs, the believers who were actually done to death for their faith. It says nothing about the ongoing fear of persecution that hung over the church more or less for centuries. For the most part physical persecution was sporadic; it occurred now and then, here and there. But it could happen at any time, anywhere, and the Christians knew this. The fear of persecution is, in itself, a kind of persecution and can be very damaging. The Decian persecution of 250, which we mentioned a moment ago, was a kind that resulted in relatively few martyrdoms but, through fear, caused uncounted apostasies.

Frend's figure of 5000 martyrs is also limited to the period between Pentecost (A.D. 31) and the close of the Diocletian persecution (A.D. 313). It omits the unknown but apparently large number of deaths which occurred during the fourth century when the empire, now nominally Christian, persecuted Christians who were officially regarded as heretics.

The point in referring to Professor Frend's figure is that evidently Rome did not have to kill *vast concourses* of Christians in order for prophecy to portray it as "**terrible and dreadful.**" Rome was, in fact, in many ways good. It was even "*ordained of God.*" Romans 13:1, K.J.V. Despite the brutality and immorality of its society it maintained widespread peace and order, making possible the preaching of the gospel to millions of people. But in Daniel 7 God *purposely* represented Rome as indescribably ugly to teach us how much He dislikes persecutors.

Which is something for us all to remember, isn't it? Families need firm leadership; but are you a Roman emperor (or empress) in your home, bringing in a weekly check and supplying countless comforts but at the same time insisting like a dictator that everyone obey your will?

3. *The New Testament also predicted persecution.* It may be helpful to reflect on the fact that the Old Testament prophecies about a persecuting beast and a persecuting horn are reinforced by New Testament prophecies about the persecution of the church.

As an early member of the Christian church, Paul surely knew what it meant to be persecuted. He was whipped, beaten, or stoned at least *nine* times, and imprisoned many times. See 2 Corinthians 12. It is amazing that he lived long enough to be beheaded! Taking his own experience as an illustration, Paul gave his young associate Timothy a prophetic warning that concerned all the future of the Christian church. Said Paul, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will be persecuted.*" 2 Timothy 3:12.

Jesus implied the same in His famous sentence about taking up our crosses. "If any man would come after me," He said, "let him . . . *take up his cross* and follow me." Matthew 16:24. Thus the New Testament, like the Old, predicted tough times for true Christians.

4. *The New Testament also prophesied apostasy.* One of the plainest, and certainly one of the saddest, New Testament prophecies concerning the course of church history has to do with apostasy. Looking steadily but, I am sure, sadly into the eyes of the elders of a large New Testament church, Paul stated in the Spirit, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Acts 20:29, 30.

As the Christian church advanced from Paul's day to its further experience under the Roman Empire, Paul's prophecy about apostasy found continuing fulfillment. Indeed, the speed with which early Christians tobogganed into apostasy almost takes one's breath away. For example, before the end of the first century, very few church members were left in Sardis whose "garments" were "not soiled." Revelation 3:4. The Christians in Thyatira were committing spiritual and probably also physical fornication. Revelation 2:20-22. False teachers were traveling widely, calling on new believers in their homes, undermining their faith and leading whole families astray. 2 Timothy 2:18; Titus 1:11.

In the second century Marcionite Gnosticism ravaged the church from east to west with its doctrine that the Old Testament God was different from the New Testament God and should not be obeyed. Other types of Gnosticism flourished also, with sects named after their various leaders: Basilides, Valentinus, Cerinthus, and so on. The Elkesaites vaunted a new baptismal formula so potent that it was good even for dogbite!<sup>12</sup> "Catholic" Christians (as the mainstream believers came to be known) wrote urgent documents warning one another about these heresies and advising traveling Christians not to worship in just any Christian congregation in a town but to inquire for the true one.

Thus the apostasy and the persecution which marked Christianity during the centuries have provided evidence of the reliability of Bible prophecy.

With these four principles in mind—(1) that there is more than one antichrist,

and we are here trying to identify not "the" antichrist but only the little horn; (2) that in Daniel 7 God purposely presented a one-sided picture of Rome as a terrible beast in order to emphasize His displeasure at persecution; (3) that the New Testament, like the Old, foretold persecution for the church; and (4) that the New Testament also foretold serious apostasy within the church—we are ready to proceed with the eight identifying marks of the little horn.

*Eight Identifying Marks*

Daniel 7 provides eight marks to help us identify the little horn. They may be listed as follows:

1. It rose out of the "fourth beast." Verses 8 and 24.
2. It appeared after "ten" other "horns." Verse 24.
3. It was "little" when it was first seen, but in time it became "greater than its fellows." Verses 8 and 20.
4. It was to "put down three kings" so that, as it arose, "three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots." Verses 8 and 24.
5. It had "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things," and it spoke "words against the Most High." Verses 8 and 25.
6. It was to "wear out the saints of the Most High." Verse 25.
7. It was to "think to change the times and the law." Verse 25.
8. It was allotted special powers for "a time, two times, and half a time." Verse 25.

Only one entity really fits all eight of these identifying marks—the Christian church which rose to religiopolitical prominence as the Roman Empire declined and which enjoyed a special influence over the minds of men between the sixth and the eighteenth centuries.

To call this Christian church the "Roman Catholic" Church can be misleading if Protestants assume that the Roman Catholic Church of, say, the sixth century was one big denomination among others, as it is today. Actually the Roman Catholic Church was virtually *the* Christian church in Western Europe for about a thousand years. Because of this early universality, both Protestants and Catholics may regard it as the embodiment of "our" Christian heritage, for better or for worse.

And very often it was for the better. Of course! Catholic universities fed the torch of learning in law, medicine, and theology. Most Catholic monasteries maintained hospitals, virtually the only hospitals that existed, and provided care also for the orphaned and the aged. Catholic Latin provided a lingua franca for diplomacy and commerce, and Catholic schools provided education for diplomats and business clerks. The Cistercian monks in Britain greatly improved that land's vital wool trade. Most importantly, Roman Catholic missionaries Christianized large areas of Western Europe and provided pastoral care. Chaucer's famous words about the country parson of the fourteenth century must have been applicable to many a priest in any century:

Broad was his parish, with houses far apart,  
 Yet come it rain or thunder he would start  
 Upon his rounds, in woe or sickness too,  
 And reach the farthest, poor or well-to-do,  
 Going on foot, his staff within his hand—  
 Example that his sheep could understand—  
 Namely, that first he wrought and after taught.<sup>13</sup>

Protestant readers need not feel delicate about calling this Christianity “Roman Catholic.” Professor John L. McKenzie of Notre Dame University, in his work *The Roman Catholic Church*,<sup>14</sup> says on behalf of at least most of his coreligionists that “Roman Catholics believe that their Romanism is a reflection of the authentic Christianity of their church.”<sup>15</sup>

Professor McKenzie recognizes that “this belief [in the importance of ‘Romanism’] may involve some misunderstanding, but,” he insists, “it is impossible to discuss Roman Catholicism without admitting that Catholics accept their Romanism.”<sup>16</sup>

Professor McKenzie, a Jesuit, has provided such a revealing work that we shall have occasion to quote from it several times. In regard to the historical shortcomings of his church, he has written with such disarming candor, however, that it would be discourteous for anyone to exploit him.

*The Ostrogoths compelled Pope John I to sail to Constantinople in an attempt to curtail Catholic persecution of Arian Christians.*



Mainstream Christianity in the second and third centuries was known among its membership as “catholic.” The term appeared for the first time as early as A.D. 115 in a letter written by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch to the members of the church in Smyrna. It meant “universal” and “orthodox” in contrast to sectarian or heretical.

*Arrival of the “ten horns.”* The shift from “catholic” to “Roman Catholic” took place at the time when the Roman Empire was declining and was being invaded by a series of Germanic tribes.

Constantine, the first Christian emperor (306-337), ruled at a time when runaway inflation, high taxes, sagging morale, and insistent military pressure on the borders made it seem advisable to move the capital from Rome to Constantinople (now Istanbul). The move left the Roman bishop almost on his own in Italy and added greatly to his stature.

“In 376 a large population of uncivilized Visigoths received official permission to cross the River Danube into the territory of the Roman Empire. ‘They poured across the stream day and night, without ceasing, embarking in troops on board ships and rafts, and in canoes made of the hollow trunks of trees.’ ‘The man who should wish to ascertain their number,’ wrote the contemporary historian, Amianus Marcellinus, quoting Virgil, ‘might as well . . . attempt to count the waves in the African Sea, or the grains of sand tossed about by the zephyrs.’”<sup>17</sup>

“Over the next century or so the Visigoths were followed by perhaps a score of other tribes, some large, some very small, the makings of the European nations of today.”<sup>18</sup> Of these the most significant besides the Visigoths were the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Lombards, the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, the Alemanni, the Heruls, and the Sueves. Here are Daniel’s “ten horns.”

*Three horns uprooted.* Some of these tribes had been Christianized prior to their invasion of the empire, but their Christianity was not Catholic. It was a kind of Arianism. That is, unlike the Catholics, these tribes believed that although Jesus is very great, He is not “God” essentially but is a created being. Because of their difference in belief the Catholics and Arians opposed each other. When the Arian Ostrogoths under Theodoric took over Italy in the year 493, they considerably limited the power of the Roman pope. In 523 Theodoric even bundled off the pope to Constantinople with instructions to persuade the Catholic emperor there to stop persecuting Arians in what was left of the Roman Empire. A little later he actually put the pope in jail.<sup>19</sup>

But the Catholic emperors of the eastern empire found ways to help the pope by eliminating three of the Arian tribes. 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.” (For more on the three horns, see pages 139-141.)



“A time, two times, and half a time.” Remember 538, the date for the crushing of the Ostrogoths. It so happened in 1798, 1260 years later, that the French general Berthier, under the direction of the military government of France, arrested Pope Pius VI as he celebrated the anniversary of his coronation in the Sistine chapel in Rome. France arrested and exiled the pope with the express intention of destroying not just the pope himself but the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. (For more on this event see comments on Revelation 13 in *God Cares, II.*)

Daniel’s prophecy said that special prerogatives would be given to the little horn for “a time, two times, and half a time.” In Revelation 13:5 this period is spoken of as 42 months, and in Revelation 12:6, as 1260 days.

We are dealing here with symbols. The Bible says that the four beasts are symbols of four kings or kingdoms, that the horns likewise symbolize kingdoms, and that the waters are symbolic of multitudes of people. The Bible also indicates that in symbolic prophecy days represent years.

You will recall that when Daniel lived in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel lived at Nippur, not very far away (see page 66). In the symbolic prophecy of Ezekiel, chapters 4 to 6, God said expressly to Ezekiel, “I assign you, a day for each year.” Ezekiel 4:6.

The 1260 “days” or years (538-1798) of rising and then declining influence of Roman Catholicism over the minds of men exactly fulfill the “time, two times, and half a time” of Daniel 7 and further confirm our understanding that the Roman



Catholic Church is the fulfillment of the little horn. (For the resurgence of Catholic influence in our day see comments on Revelation 13 in *God Cares, II.*)

“Greater than its fellows” with “a mouth speaking great things.” Daniel 7:8. Back again to A.D. 538, the year when the Ostrogoths collapsed. It was out of the smoking ruins of the western Roman Empire and after the overthrow of the three Arian kingdoms that the pope of Rome emerged as the most important single individual in the West, the head of a closely organized church with a carefully defined creed and with vast potential for political influence. Dozens of writers have pointed out that the real survivor of ancient Rome was the Church of Rome.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the Roman Empire was replaced by the Roman Church; or, as nineteenth-century writers used to put it, pagan Rome was succeeded by papal Rome.

And the pope’s power—and his religious and political claims—increased for centuries. In 1076 Pope Gregory VII informed the subjects of Henry IV, emperor of Germany, that if Henry would not repent of his sins, they would not need to obey him. Henry was the most powerful monarch in Europe at the time, but he nonetheless made a pilgrimage to Canossa in the Alps, where the pope was residing, and waited three painful days, barefoot in the snow, until Pope Gregory forgave him.

Taking his cue from Gregory VII, Pope Pius V in 1570, in the bull (or decree) *Regnans in excelsis* (“He who reigns in the heavens”) declared that the Protestant queen of England, Elizabeth I (1558-1603), was an accursed heretic who hereafter should have no right to rule and whose citizens were all, by papal authority, forbidden to obey her.

Professor McKenzie acknowledges in his gracious manner that “the teaching authority of the Roman Church is vested at any given moment in men, who are not all of equal virtue and competence.” He continues: “[Pope] Pius V was and is respected as a holy and learned man, but his deposition of Elizabeth I of England is recognized as one of the greatest blunders in the history of the papacy.”<sup>21</sup>

The admission that the “teaching authority of the Roman Church” is vested in men of unequal virtue and competence contrasts with a claim made as recently as the 1890s by Pope Leo XIII. In an encyclical letter, “On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens,” dated January 10, 1890, Leo XIII asserted that “the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires . . . complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself.” On June 20, 1894, in “The Reunion of Christendom,” Leo claimed further that “we [that is, we popes] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”

Grand as these claims may appear today, even they are not quite so exalted as the status attributed to Pope Julius II at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1512, when Christopher Marcellus told the pope—and the pope did not rebuke him for it—“Thou art the Shepherd, thou art the Physician, thou art the Governor, thou art the Husbandman, finally, thou art another God on earth.” (I have the Latin on my

desk in front of me: *tu enim pastor, . . . tu denique alter Deus in terris.*)<sup>22</sup> The words seem particularly inappropriate under the circumstances, for Julius II is described in history books as “chiefly a statesman and a military leader,”<sup>23</sup> “a pope in arms, . . . who led his own troops in the conquest of Bologna,”<sup>24</sup> and as a “hard-swearing leader of papal armies.”<sup>25</sup>

Since the great Catholic window opening (*aggiornamento*) was inaugurated by genial Pope John XXIII, many modern Catholics have learned only too well that the teaching office of their church has been vested in men who have been much less than “another God on earth.” These Catholics are struggling earnestly with an identity crisis and with the very basic question of ecclesiastical authority. Catholics today need and deserve the fervent prayers of all other Christians—who, likewise, often have to face the question of authority in their own denominations.

We mention these things here only because long ago God showed Daniel that the “little horn” would grow “greater than its fellows” and would have “a mouth speaking great things.”

“Wear out the saints.” The aspect of historical Catholicism that affects the Protestants the most is probably its record as persecutor. Although, understandably, modern Catholic authorities seek to mitigate the more startling aspects of their church’s religious oppression, they do not deny them. For example, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* recognizes that, “judged by contemporary standards, the Inquisition, especially as it developed in Spain toward the close of the Middle Ages, can be classified only as one of the darker chapters in the history of the Church.” It acknowledges the killing of 2000 Protestants within 50 years in the Netherlands and admits the death of perhaps 3000 to 4000 French Huguenots in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, which commenced on the night of August 23, 1572.<sup>26</sup>

The figures are modest. They overlook the vigorous crusades conducted by the Roman Church against Albigenses and Waldenses. They also omit numerous isolated acts of religious oppression, and they say nothing about the devastating Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a largely religious conflict in which it is estimated that military and civilian casualties, Protestant and Catholic, exceeded 8,000,000. Non-Catholic research compiles far higher figures than 2000 here and 3000 to 4000 somewhere else. But we remember that the Roman Empire was called “dreadful and terrible” when it killed some 5000 Christians! And the empire was pagan. How troubled God must have been to see Christians slay their fellow Christians in any number.

“Not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your father’s knowledge.” Matthew 10:29, Phillips.

God cares!

Whatever the statistics, numbers alone convey little about personal anguish—such as the suffering of Englishman John Brown, when they barbecued his feet before tying him to the stake; and of Helen Stark, when they sentenced her to be

stuffed with her baby into a sack and drowned; and of eight-year-old Billy Fetty, when they cudged him to death for sympathizing with his father, who for two weeks had been suspended by an arm and a leg.<sup>27</sup>

Nor can statistics convey the searing pain of legal torture. Can you conceive the excruciation of having your hands tied behind your back, then having them lifted slowly outward and upward, your shoulder joints popping apart, your arms being stretched straight up, your whole body weight finally hanging from your wrists, while the inquisitor, in the name of Jesus Christ and Holy Church, demands repeatedly, “Will you recant? Will you recant?”

We are driven to ask ourselves how Christians could have been so cruel. We are reminded that Protestants also persecuted Catholics. And we recall that even born-again evangelicals can make “cutting” remarks about one another and can eagerly destroy people’s reputations with unfounded gossip. Heaven help us all!

We are also reminded that in medieval times life was cheap and that even the father of starving children could be hanged for stealing a loaf of bread. But it may be most helpful to learn something from the history of legal torture.

In the courts of the Roman Empire judges often assumed, in harmony with Roman law, that an accused person was most probably guilty. They therefore applied torture routinely in order to force the person to confess his crime, and they regarded such torture as an appropriate part of the punishment. Persecuted Christians often suffered more pain in Roman law courts than they did from the actual process of execution.

When the Germanic tribes took over the territory of the Roman Empire, the practice of legal torture largely ceased. When around 850 a church court tortured a monk called Gottschalk, who held a non-Catholic view of predestination, the people of Lyons, France, prepared a vigorous protest. They reminded their bishop<sup>28</sup> that in the Bible Paul says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Galatians 6:1.

But in the twelfth century someone discovered ancient volumes containing the laws of the Roman Empire. This discovery stimulated a great revival of Roman law and with it a revival of the Roman practice of legal torture. We quote again from the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:<sup>29</sup>

Under the influence of Germanic customs and concepts, torture was little used from the 9th to the 12th centuries, but with the revival of Roman law the practice was reestablished in the 12th century. . . . In 1252 [Pope] Innocent IV sanctioned the infliction of torture by the civil authorities upon heretics, and torture came to have a recognized place in the procedure of the inquisitorial courts.

What an astonishing fulfillment of Bible prophecy! In the most brutal and non-Christian aspect of its medieval activity, the Roman Church appears as a direct and dynamic descendant of the Roman Empire. The little horn emerged unmistakably from the head of the terrible beast.

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"Think not," he said, "that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Matthew 5:17, 18.

As you read these words, let me ask you something. Is the earth still solid under your chair? Is the sky still overhead? Then in Christ's own words "not an iota, not a dot" has passed from the law!

The book of Revelation describes an "angel" as flying symbolically in the sky just before judgment day and shouting, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come." Shortly after this angel, another angel appears with the announcement, "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14: 7, 12.

These two angels in Revelation tie together the things we have been studying here about the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and about the importance of the Ten Commandments. The saints of the Most High who receive the kingdom in Daniel's vision are shown in Revelation to be the people who through faith in Jesus keep the commandments of God. Such faith-filled, born-again Christians have their names inscribed in the book of life and need have no fear of the judgment.

### III. The Horn That Made War With the Saints

The feature in Daniel 7 that interested the angel most was the judgment scene, but what fascinated Daniel most was the fourth beast and the "little horn" that grew out of its head and made war with the saints.

In view of the importance of the little horn, more space will be devoted to this present section than to most, and it will be divided into two subsections: (a) "Four Principles" and (b) "Eight Identifying Marks."

#### Four Principles

1. *There is more than one antichrist.* Although the little horn has the eyes and mouth of a man, it contrasts strongly with the Son of man seen in the same vision. The Son of man shares His kingdom with the saints, but the little horn devastates the saints. The Son of man comes close to God, but the little horn opposes Him and tries to change His law. No wonder then that many people have perceived the little horn as the antichrist.

Now some Christians today (called "preterists") say that the antichrist appeared long, long ago. Others (the "futurists") say that he hasn't appeared yet. And still others (the "historicists") say that the antichrist has operated throughout church history, revealing himself most especially, thus far, in the medieval Christian church.

In some sense or other they may all be right!

The word "antichrist" appears in the Bible only in the epistles of John. There we are told that antichrist "denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22) and "will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (2 John 7), and also that the

spirit of antichrist *is*—around A.D. 90—"in the world already" (1 John 4:3). We are also told (1 John 2:18) that "many antichrists have come" and that they "went out from us."

From these Bible verses it appears that "antichrist" is a term that applies technically only to apostate Christians who "went out from us" during the first century A.D. and who denied truths about Jesus and God. Most scholars see these first-century antichrists in certain Christian Gnostics. Here are antichrists of the long ago.

But in common usage the word "antichrist" has been applied for centuries to other enemies of God in addition to the antichrists of the first century. For example, a great many Christian writers have seen antichrist in "the lawless one" (or "man of sin" K.J.V.) of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8 whom, the Bible says, the "Lord Jesus will slay . . . and destroy . . . by his appearing and his coming." Here is an antichrist of the future.

And, through the centuries, various Roman Catholic spokesmen have felt that the pope—either the current one or a future one, or the papacy as a whole (the entire line of popes)—was the antichrist. For example, during a time of deep spiritual laxness in Rome, Arnulf, the bishop of Orleans, deplored the Roman popes as "monsters of guilt" and declared in a council called by the king of France in 991 that the pontiff, clad in purple and gold, was "Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God." <sup>3</sup>

Eberhard II, archbishop of Salzburg (1200-1246), stated approvingly at a synod of bishops held at Regensburg in 1240 (some scholars say 1241) that the people of his day were "accustomed" to calling the pope antichrist. <sup>4</sup>

When the Western church was divided for about 40 years between two rival popes, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, France, each pope called the other pope antichrist—and John Wycliffe is reputed to have regarded them as both being right: "two halves of Antichrist, making up the perfect Man of Sin between them." <sup>5</sup>

Martin Luther, as an Augustinian monk in the University of Wittenberg, came reluctantly to believe that "the papacy is in truth . . . very Antichrist"; but when he became a Protestant, he was willing to except individual popes from the allegation. He actually dedicated his most beautiful tract, *Concerning Christian Liberty*, to Pope Leo X on the basis that Leo was worthy of being a pope in better times. <sup>6</sup>

Inasmuch as the Bible speaks of "many" antichrists (1 John 2:18) and inasmuch as the word "antichrist" has been used by Christians in broader ways than the Bible uses it, it is not very helpful to debate whether this or that phenomenon is *the* antichrist, as if there were only one. In any event, our purpose in this chapter will not be to identify the "antichrist" as such but to identify the little horn.

2. *Daniel's vision purposely presents a one-sided picture of Rome.* The Roman Empire was responsible for a great many good things. Its fabulous network of paved roads comes to mind, its advanced system of law and jurisprudence, and its

3. *The New Testament also predicted persecution.* It may be helpful to reflect on the fact that the Old Testament prophecies about a persecuting beast and a persecuting horn are reinforced by New Testament prophecies about the persecution of the church.

As an early member of the Christian church, Paul surely knew what it meant to be persecuted. He was whipped, beaten, or stoned at least *nine* times, and imprisoned many times. See 2 Corinthians 12. It is amazing that he lived long enough to be beheaded! Taking his own experience as an illustration, Paul gave his young associate Timothy a prophetic warning that concerned all the future of the Christian church. Said Paul, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will be persecuted.*" 2 Timothy 3:12.

Jesus implied the same in His famous sentence about taking up our crosses. "If any man would come after me," He said, "let him . . . *take up his cross* and follow me." Matthew 16:24. Thus the New Testament, like the Old, predicted tough times for true Christians.

4. *The New Testament also prophesied apostasy.* One of the plainest, and certainly one of the saddest, New Testament prophecies concerning the course of church history has to do with apostasy. Looking steadily but, I am sure, sadly into the eyes of the elders of a large New Testament church, Paul stated in the Spirit, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Acts 20:29, 30.

As the Christian church advanced from Paul's day to its further experience under the Roman Empire, Paul's prophecy about apostasy found continuing fulfillment. Indeed, the speed with which early Christians tobogganed into apostasy almost takes one's breath away. For example, before the end of the first century, very few church members were left in Sardis whose "garments" were "not soiled." Revelation 3:4. The Christians in Thyatira were committing spiritual and probably also physical fornication. Revelation 2:20-22. False teachers were traveling widely, calling on new believers in their homes, undermining their faith and leading whole families astray. 2 Timothy 2:18; Titus 1:11.

In the second century Marcionite Gnosticism ravaged the church from east to west with its doctrine that the Old Testament God was different from the New Testament God and should not be obeyed. Other types of Gnosticism flourished also, with sects named after their various leaders: Basilides, Valentinus, Cerinthus, and so on. The Elkesaites vaunted a new baptismal formula so potent that it was good even for dogbite!<sup>12</sup> "Catholic" Christians (as the mainstream believers came to be known) wrote urgent documents warning one another about these heresies and advising traveling Christians not to worship in just any Christian congregation in a town but to inquire for the true one.

Thus the apostasy and the persecution which marked Christianity during the centuries have provided evidence of the reliability of Bible prophecy.

With these four principles in mind—(1) that there is more than one antichrist,

and we are here trying to identify not "the" antichrist but only the little horn; (2) that in Daniel 7 God purposely presented a one-sided picture of Rome as a terrible beast in order to emphasize His displeasure at persecution; (3) that the New Testament, like the Old, foretold persecution for the church; and (4) that the New Testament also foretold serious apostasy within the church—we are ready to proceed with the eight identifying marks of the little horn.

#### *Eight Identifying Marks*

Daniel 7 provides eight marks to help us identify the little horn. They may be listed as follows:

1. It rose out of the "**fourth beast.**" Verses 8 and 24.
2. It appeared after "**ten**" other "**horns.**" Verse 24.
3. It was "**little**" when it was first seen, but in time it became "**greater than its fellows.**" Verses 8 and 20.
4. It was to "**put down three kings**" so that, as it arose, "**three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots.**" Verses 8 and 24.
5. It had "**eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things,**" and it spoke "**words against the Most High.**" Verses 8 and 25.
6. It was to "**wear out the saints of the Most High.**" Verse 25.
7. It was to "**think to change the times and the law.**" Verse 25.
8. It was allotted special powers for "**a time, two times, and half a time.**" Verse 25.

Only one entity really fits all eight of these identifying marks—the Christian church which rose to religiopolitical prominence as the Roman Empire declined and which enjoyed a special influence over the minds of men between the sixth and the eighteenth centuries.

To call this Christian church the "Roman Catholic" Church can be misleading if Protestants assume that the Roman Catholic Church of, say, the sixth century was one big denomination among others, as it is today. Actually the Roman Catholic Church was virtually *the* Christian church in Western Europe for about a thousand years. Because of this early universality, both Protestants and Catholics may regard it as the embodiment of "our" Christian heritage, for better or for worse.

And very often it was for the better. Of course! Catholic universities fed the torch of learning in law, medicine, and theology. Most Catholic monasteries maintained hospitals, virtually the only hospitals that existed, and provided care also for the orphaned and the aged. Catholic Latin provided a lingua franca for diplomacy and commerce, and Catholic schools provided education for diplomats and business clerks. The Cistercian monks in Britain greatly improved that land's vital wool trade. Most importantly, Roman Catholic missionaries Christianized large areas of Western Europe and provided pastoral care. Chaucer's famous words about the country parson of the fourteenth century must have been applicable to many a priest in any century:

famous Roman peace (*pax Romana*).<sup>\*</sup> Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship and took advantage of its privileges (see Acts 22:25-29). In Romans 13 he taught that Roman authorities were God's servants, authorized by Heaven to punish evildoers (see pages 63-65). It is alongside Paul's appreciation of Rome that Revelation 12, like Daniel 7, portrays Rome as an ugly monster. In Romans 13 God honors Rome as a *civilizing* force. In Revelation 12 God criticizes Rome as a *persecuting* force.

We all know that the Romans did persecute, but it comes as a surprise to most people to learn how few Christians they killed, relatively speaking.

Nero, it is true, had a good many Christians burned as lampposts on the charge that they had set Rome on fire. Under the Emperor Domitian the apostle John was exiled to Patmos. In Carthage (now Tunis) in North Africa, around A.D. 202, Perpetua and Felicitas surrendered their babies to the care of others and walked bravely into the arena to be eaten by wild beasts.<sup>7</sup>

But persecution severe enough to result in martyrs was usually local and brief. The emperor Commodus (180-192) actually ordered many Christians brought back from exile. Many a Roman governor preferred to boast when he returned to Rome from his service in a province that his sword was not bloodied by anybody's life, even by a criminal's.<sup>8</sup> The governors were appointed to maintain the Roman

<sup>\*</sup>Under the Roman Empire the people living around the Mediterranean enjoyed a greater degree of peace for two centuries than they have for any similar period since.

*Perpetua and Felicitas were only two of thousands of Christians who were brutally persecuted under the Roman Empire.*



peace; and as long as things remained peaceful, a person could believe almost anything that he wanted to. If to quell a pagan riot against the Christians, a governor thought it expedient that someone should die, a single Christian or a handful at most might be executed and the rest left alone. When Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was martyred in 258, his church members came out to see his end—some climbing trees for a better view—and the Roman officials laid a hand on none of them.<sup>9</sup>

There were only two periods of serious, methodical persecution: A short one under the emperor Decius in 250 and another one associated with the emperor Diocletian that lasted approximately a decade, 303-313. During the Diocletian persecution an eyewitness in Egypt reported that so many Christians were slain that the executioners' axes grew dull and had to be replaced, and that the executioners grew tired and had to be relieved in shifts.<sup>10</sup>

But using evidence compiled and analyzed by Professor W. H. C. Frend of Cambridge University, we are led to conclude that the grand total of martyrdoms under pagan Rome did not exceed 5000—a figure far smaller than the millions that some people have imagined.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Frend's figure, which agrees with the results of my own research, does not, of course, tell the whole story. It accounts only for Christian martyrs, the believers who were actually done to death for their faith. It says nothing about the ongoing fear of persecution that hung over the church more or less for centuries. For the most part physical persecution was sporadic; it occurred now and then, here and there. But it could happen at any time, anywhere, and the Christians knew this. The fear of persecution is, in itself, a kind of persecution and can be very damaging. The Decian persecution of 250, which we mentioned a moment ago, was a kind that resulted in relatively few martyrdoms but, through fear, caused uncounted apostasies.

Frend's figure of 5000 martyrs is also limited to the period between Pentecost (A.D. 31) and the close of the Diocletian persecution (A.D. 313). It omits the unknown but apparently large number of deaths which occurred during the fourth century when the empire, now nominally Christian, persecuted Christians who were officially regarded as heretics.

The point in referring to Professor Frend's figure is that evidently Rome did not have to kill *vast concourses* of Christians in order for prophecy to portray it as "**terrible and dreadful.**" Rome was, in fact, in many ways good. It was even "*ordained of God.*" Romans 13:1, K.J.V. Despite the brutality and immorality of its society it maintained widespread peace and order, making possible the preaching of the gospel to millions of people. But in Daniel 7 God *purposely* represented Rome as indescribably ugly to teach us how much He dislikes persecutors.

Which is something for us all to remember, isn't it? Families need firm leadership; but are you a Roman emperor (or empress) in your home, bringing in a weekly check and supplying countless comforts but at the same time insisting like a dictator that everyone obey your will?

Broad was his parish, with houses far apart,  
 Yet come it rain or thunder he would start  
 Upon his rounds, in woe or sickness too,  
 And reach the farthest, poor or well-to-do,  
 Going on foot, his staff within his hand—  
 Example that his sheep could understand—  
 Namely, that first he wrought and after taught.<sup>13</sup>

Protestant readers need not feel delicate about calling this Christianity “*Roman Catholic*.” Professor John L. McKenzie of Notre Dame University, in his work *The Roman Catholic Church*,<sup>14</sup> says on behalf of at least most of his coreligionists that “Roman Catholics believe that their Romanism is a reflection of the authentic Christianity of their church.”<sup>15</sup>

Professor McKenzie recognizes that “this belief [in the importance of ‘Romanism’] may involve some misunderstanding, but,” he insists, “it is impossible to discuss Roman Catholicism without admitting that Catholics accept their Romanism.”<sup>16</sup>

Professor McKenzie, a Jesuit, has provided such a revealing work that we shall have occasion to quote from it several times. In regard to the historical shortcomings of his church, he has written with such disarming candor, however, that it would be discourteous for anyone to exploit him.

*The Ostrogoths compelled Pope John I to sail to Constantinople in an attempt to curtail Catholic persecution of Arian Christians.*



Mainstream Christianity in the second and third centuries was known among its membership as “catholic.” The term appeared for the first time as early as A.D. 115 in a letter written by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch to the members of the church in Smyrna. It meant “universal” and “orthodox” in contrast to sectarian or heretical.

*Arrival of the “ten horns.”* The shift from “catholic” to “Roman Catholic” took place at the time when the Roman Empire was declining and was being invaded by a series of Germanic tribes.

Constantine, the first Christian emperor (306-337), ruled at a time when runaway inflation, high taxes, sagging morale, and insistent military pressure on the borders made it seem advisable to move the capital from Rome to Constantinople (now Istanbul). The move left the Roman bishop almost on his own in Italy and added greatly to his stature.

“In 376 a large population of uncivilized Visigoths received official permission to cross the River Danube into the territory of the Roman Empire. ‘They poured across the stream day and night, without ceasing, embarking in troops on board ships and rafts, and in canoes made of the hollow trunks of trees.’ ‘The man who should wish to ascertain their number,’ wrote the contemporary historian, Amianus Marcellinus, quoting Virgil, ‘might as well . . . attempt to count the waves in the African Sea, or the grains of sand tossed about by the zephyrs.’”<sup>17</sup>

“Over the next century or so the Visigoths were followed by perhaps a score of other tribes, some large, some very small, the makings of the European nations of today.”<sup>18</sup> Of these the most significant besides the Visigoths were the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Lombards, the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, the Alemannians, the Heruls, and the Sueves. Here are Daniel’s “ten horns.”

*Three horns uprooted.* Some of these tribes had been Christianized prior to their invasion of the empire, but their Christianity was not Catholic. It was a kind of Arianism. That is, unlike the Catholics, these tribes believed that although Jesus is very great, He is not “God” essentially but is a created being. Because of their difference in belief the Catholics and Arians opposed each other. When the Arian Ostrogoths under Theodoric took over Italy in the year 493, they considerably limited the power of the Roman pope. In 523 Theodoric even bundled off the pope to Constantinople with instructions to persuade the Catholic emperor there to stop persecuting Arians in what was left of the Roman Empire. A little later he actually put the pope in jail.<sup>19</sup>

But the Catholic emperors of the eastern empire found ways to help the pope by eliminating three of the Arian tribes. 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.” (For more on the three horns, see pages 139-141.)



*"A time, two times, and half a time."* Remember 538, the date for the crushing of the Ostrogoths. It so happened in 1798, 1260 years later, that the French general Berthier, under the direction of the military government of France, arrested Pope Pius VI as he celebrated the anniversary of his coronation in the Sistine chapel in Rome. France arrested and exiled the pope with the express intention of destroying not just the pope himself but the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. (For more on this event see comments on Revelation 13 in *God Cares, II.*)

Daniel's prophecy said that special prerogatives would be given to the little horn for *"a time, two times, and half a time."* In Revelation 13:5 this period is spoken of as 42 months, and in Revelation 12:6, as 1260 days.

We are dealing here with symbols. The Bible says that the four beasts are symbols of four kings or kingdoms, that the horns likewise symbolize kingdoms, and that the waters are symbolic of multitudes of people. The Bible also indicates that in symbolic prophecy days represent years.

You will recall that when Daniel lived in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel lived at Nippur, not very far away (see page 66). In the symbolic prophecy of Ezekiel, chapters 4 to 6, God said expressly to Ezekiel, "I assign you, a day for each year." Ezekiel 4:6.

The 1260 "days" or years (538-1798) of rising and then declining influence of Roman Catholicism over the minds of men exactly fulfill the *"time, two times, and half a time"* of Daniel 7 and further confirm our understanding that the Roman



Catholic Church is the fulfillment of the little horn. (For the resurgence of Catholic influence in our day see comments on Revelation 13 in *God Cares, II.*)

*"Greater than its fellows" with "a mouth speaking great things."* Daniel 7:8. Back again to A.D. 538, the year when the Ostrogoths collapsed. It was out of the smoking ruins of the western Roman Empire and after the overthrow of the three Arian kingdoms that the pope of Rome emerged as the most important single individual in the West, the head of a closely organized church with a carefully defined creed and with vast potential for political influence. Dozens of writers have pointed out that the real survivor of ancient Rome was the Church of Rome.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the Roman Empire was replaced by the Roman Church; or, as nineteenth-century writers used to put it, pagan Rome was succeeded by papal Rome.

And the pope's power—and his religious and political claims—increased for centuries. In 1076 Pope Gregory VII informed the subjects of Henry IV, emperor of Germany, that if Henry would not repent of his sins, they would not need to obey him. Henry was the most powerful monarch in Europe at the time, but he nonetheless made a pilgrimage to Canossa in the Alps, where the pope was residing, and waited three painful days, barefoot in the snow, until Pope Gregory forgave him.

Taking his cue from Gregory VII, Pope Pius V in 1570, in the bull (or decree) *Regnans in excelsis* ("He who reigns in the heavens") declared that the Protestant queen of England, Elizabeth I (1558-1603), was an accursed heretic who hereafter should have no right to rule and whose citizens were all, by papal authority, forbidden to obey her.

Professor McKenzie acknowledges in his gracious manner that "the teaching authority of the Roman Church is vested at any given moment in men, who are not all of equal virtue and competence." He continues: "[Pope] Pius V was and is respected as a holy and learned man, but his deposition of Elizabeth I of England is recognized as one of the greatest blunders in the history of the papacy."<sup>21</sup>

The admission that the "teaching authority of the Roman Church" is vested in men of unequal virtue and competence contrasts with a claim made as recently as the 1890s by Pope Leo XIII. In an encyclical letter, "On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens," dated January 10, 1890, Leo VIII asserted that "the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires . . . complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, *as to God Himself.*" On June 20, 1894, in "The Reunion of Christendom," Leo claimed further that "we [that is, we popes] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

Grand as these claims may appear today, even they are not quite so exalted as the status attributed to Pope Julius II at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1512, when Christopher Marcellus told the pope—and the pope did not rebuke him for it—"Thou art the Shepherd, thou art the Physician, thou art the Governor, thou art the Husbandman, finally, thou art another God on earth." (I have the Latin on my

desk in front of me: *tu enim pastor, . . . tu denique alter Deus in terris.*)<sup>22</sup> The words seem particularly inappropriate under the circumstances, for Julius II is described in history books as “chiefly a statesman and a military leader,”<sup>23</sup> “a pope in arms, . . . who led his own troops in the conquest of Bologna,”<sup>24</sup> and as a “hard-swearing leader of papal armies.”<sup>25</sup>

Since the great Catholic window opening (*aggiornamento*) was inaugurated by genial Pope John XXIII, many modern Catholics have learned only too well that the teaching office of their church has been vested in men who have been much less than “another God on earth.” These Catholics are struggling earnestly with an identity crisis and with the very basic question of ecclesiastical authority. Catholics today need and deserve the fervent prayers of all other Christians—who, likewise, often have to face the question of authority in their own denominations.

We mention these things here only because long ago God showed Daniel that the “little horn” would grow “**greater than its fellows**” and would have “**a mouth speaking great things.**”

“**Wear out the saints.**” The aspect of historical Catholicism that affects the Protestants the most is probably its record as persecutor. Although, understandably, modern Catholic authorities seek to mitigate the more startling aspects of their church’s religious oppression, they do not deny them. For example, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* recognizes that, “judged by contemporary standards, the Inquisition, especially as it developed in Spain toward the close of the Middle Ages, can be classified only as one of the darker chapters in the history of the Church.” It acknowledges the killing of 2000 Protestants within 50 years in the Netherlands and admits the death of perhaps 3000 to 4000 French Huguenots in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, which commenced on the night of August 23, 1572.<sup>26</sup>

The figures are modest. They overlook the vigorous crusades conducted by the Roman Church against Albigenses and Waldenses. They also omit numerous isolated acts of religious oppression, and they say nothing about the devastating Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a largely religious conflict in which it is estimated that military and civilian casualties, Protestant and Catholic, exceeded 8,000,000. Non-Catholic research compiles far higher figures than 2000 here and 3000 to 4000 somewhere else. But we remember that the Roman Empire was called “dreadful and terrible” when it killed some 5000 Christians! And the empire was pagan. How troubled God must have been to see Christians slay their fellow Christians in any number.

“Not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your father’s knowledge.” Matthew 10:29, Phillips.

God cares!

Whatever the statistics, numbers alone convey little about personal anguish—such as the suffering of Englishman John Brown, when they barbecued his feet before tying him to the stake; and of Helen Stark, when they sentenced her to be

stuffed with her baby into a sack and drowned; and of eight-year-old Billy Fetty, when they cudged him to death for sympathizing with his father, who for two weeks had been suspended by an arm and a leg.<sup>27</sup>

Nor can statistics convey the searing pain of legal torture. Can you conceive the excruciation of having your hands tied behind your back, then having them lifted slowly outward and upward, your shoulder joints popping apart, your arms being stretched straight up, your whole body weight finally hanging from your wrists, while the inquisitor, in the name of Jesus Christ and Holy Church, demands repeatedly, “Will you recant? Will you recant?”

We are driven to ask ourselves how Christians could have been so cruel. We are reminded that Protestants also persecuted Catholics. And we recall that even born-again evangelicals can make “cutting” remarks about one another and can eagerly destroy people’s reputations with unfounded gossip. Heaven help us all!

We are also reminded that in medieval times life was cheap and that even the father of starving children could be hanged for stealing a loaf of bread. But it may be most helpful to learn something from the history of legal torture.

In the courts of the Roman Empire judges often assumed, in harmony with Roman law, that an accused person was most probably guilty. They therefore applied torture routinely in order to force the person to confess his crime, and they regarded such torture as an appropriate part of the punishment. Persecuted Christians often suffered more pain in Roman law courts than they did from the actual process of execution.

When the Germanic tribes took over the territory of the Roman Empire, the practice of legal torture largely ceased. When around 850 a church court tortured a monk called Gottschalk, who held a non-Catholic view of predestination, the people of Lyons, France, prepared a vigorous protest. They reminded their bishop<sup>28</sup> that in the Bible Paul says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Galatians 6:1.

But in the twelfth century someone discovered ancient volumes containing the laws of the Roman Empire. This discovery stimulated a great revival of Roman law and with it a revival of the Roman practice of legal torture. We quote again from the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:<sup>29</sup>

Under the influence of Germanic customs and concepts, torture was little used from the 9th to the 12th centuries, but with the revival of Roman law the practice was reestablished in the 12th century. . . . In 1252 [Pope] Innocent IV sanctioned the infliction of torture by the civil authorities upon heretics, and torture came to have a recognized place in the procedure of the inquisitorial courts.

What an astonishing fulfillment of Bible prophecy! In the most brutal and non-Christian aspect of its medieval activity, the Roman Church appears as a direct and dynamic descendant of the Roman Empire. The little horn emerged unmistakably from the head of the terrible beast.

prophecy began. In the eighth century (two hundred years later) strange documents began to be “discovered” which claimed to be ancient and which taught that Jesus Himself had transferred the holiness of the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday, the first day. (One of them, known as the “Letter From Heaven,” taught that Jesus Himself had warned that if a woman worked on Sunday, winged serpents would fly at her and snatch away her breasts.)<sup>38</sup> At this same time church laws became so strict that in some places a person could be sentenced to seven days penance for washing his hair on Sunday.<sup>39</sup> So when Catholics claimed in Luther’s day and at the Council of Trent that they had changed the obligation from Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday, they had a point. Catholics had, openly and honestly, attempted in this way to change the Ten Commandments, believing that God had authorized them to do so.

But the *voluntary* observance of Sunday as a day for Christian worship did not commence at the Third Council of Orleans or with Constantine’s Sunday law. And so we are curious to know how and why this voluntary practice originated. The Ten Commandments say to honor the seventh day as the Sabbath, but most Christians choose to honor the first day.

*The beginning of voluntary Sunday observance.* Voluntary observance of Sunday as a day for Christian worship (though not as a day of rest) seems to have been widespread before the middle of the second century—and it appears to have been motivated by a sincere love for Jesus.

Around the year A.D. 160 Justin Martyr could write, “Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly.”<sup>40</sup> Justin was widely traveled and well informed. When he said, “We all,” he spoke for most believers of his day.

Just as plainly, Justin, who gave this report, must have loved the Lord dearly. Around the year 165 he willingly surrendered his life for Christ’s sake and was beheaded by Roman authorities. Shortly before his arrest, but when he already knew that his life was in danger, he published a tract in which he wrote, “I boast, and with all my heart strive to be found a Christian.”<sup>41</sup> Justin was an active Christian layman. He taught Bible prophecy to pagans and Jews and appears to have won a considerable number to the church.

What specific reasons did Justin give for Christian meetings on Sunday? Three major ones: (1) on Sunday Christ rose from the dead, (2) on Sunday God made light, and (3) Sunday is the “eighth day,” which follows the seventh and, in the cycle of the week, is again the first.<sup>42</sup>

This “eighth day” idea need not delay us. Many early Christian writers saw a parallel between the Old Testament ritual of circumcision, performed on the eighth day of a baby boy’s life, and the new Christian worship, performed on the “eighth day” of every week (the day which followed the seventh day). The “eighth day” was, of course, the same as the “first day.” Early Christians felt that by worshiping on the eighth day of the week they somehow became heirs to the covenant promises given to circumcised Israelites. Barnabas, another Christian writer, tells us (around A.D. 130) that Christians celebrated the eighth day “with

gladness.”<sup>43</sup> Barnabas, like Justin, also says that Christians worshiped on Sunday because “on that day Jesus rose from the dead.”

Early Christians gave many Christ-centered arguments in favor of Sunday worship. Christ was the New Law; Christ introduced the New Covenant; Christ, after His second coming, would, they said, provide heavenly rest during an “eighth day” eternity that would follow the “sabbath” millennium.<sup>44</sup> They acknowledged that Jesus kept the Sabbath Himself, but they insisted—though they offered no Bible text to prove it—that He had abolished it for His followers. Their favorite reason for Sunday observance was, of course, that on the first day of the week Jesus rose from the dead.

The Gospels do state repeatedly that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.<sup>45</sup> It is understandable that early Christians tended to look on the first day as a sort of weekly anniversary.

There is something else to be considered. By the time Jesus lived on earth the Sabbath had become encrusted with a variety of man-made regulations. For example, a sheep or an ox could be pulled out of a ditch on the Sabbath, but a person could not be treated for a chronic illness on that day. Jesus defied such traditions (see, e.g., Matthew 12:1-14). Those Christians who gave up the Sabbath in favor of Sunday most probably reasoned that they were abandoning not the Sabbath of God but a legalistic sabbath of human tradition. Sunday, with its joyous resurrection memories, must have seemed a superior monument to the Saviour’s love.

We just used the words, “Those Christians who gave up the Sabbath.” The truth is that the early Christians did *not all* give up the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of Sunday. An indeterminate number continued to observe the seventh-day Sabbath in some way or other. In the second and third centuries we hear about these Sabbath-observing Christians all around the Roman Empire. They lived in areas known today as Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Palestine, Syria, Italy, France, Yugoslavia, and more.<sup>46</sup> By the fifth century, in the Eastern Roman Empire, services were held regularly on Sabbath as well as on Sunday in almost all churches.<sup>47</sup> In Armenia and Ethiopia (Aksum) the Sabbath was observed as a rest day along with Sunday. It was principally in the Western Roman Empire, where Catholic influence was strong, that Sabbath services were not conducted on a general basis (see the map and box on pages 134, 135).

We have thus far seen that early Christians adopted Sunday because of their love for the Lord. On the other hand, many writers have said that Sunday was adopted because Jesus Christ specifically asked His followers to worship on that day. But, strange as it may seem, *not one writer of the second and third centuries ever cited a single Bible verse as authority* for the observance of Sunday in the place of the Sabbath. Neither Barnabas, nor Ignatius, nor Justin, nor Irenaeus, nor Tertullian, nor Clement of Rome, nor Clement of Alexandria, nor Origen, nor Cyprian, nor Victorinus, nor any other author who lived near to the time when Jesus lived knew of any such instruction from Jesus or from any part of the Bible.

Christians of the second and third centuries believed that Jesus was pleased to have them hold Sunday in special regard; but even though they often cited Bible proofs for their doctrines, they never once cited a Bible commandment requiring them to observe the first day of the week.

This of course helps to explain why it was that in the eighth century and later people had to “discover” ancient documents that claimed to teach that Jesus had transferred the Sabbath of the fourth commandment from the seventh to the first day of the week.

It also helps to explain why the term “Christian Sabbath” did not come into common use for many centuries after the church was founded. Professor Peter Heylyn, after extensive research, tell us<sup>48</sup> that “the first [person] who ever used this title”—Christian Sabbath, *Christianorum Sabbatum*—“to denote the Lord’s day (the first that I have met with in all this search) is one Petrus Alfonsus” who lived about the year 1100.\*

*Sabbath keepers who loved the Lord.* Now what about those early Christians we mentioned a moment ago who did *not* give up the Sabbath in favor of Sunday? Is it possible that they *refused* to give up the Sabbath because of their love for the Lord?

Unfortunately none of their writings have come down to us. Perhaps they never wrote any. Happily, however, we do know quite a bit about some other Sabbath-keeping Christians who lived in the time of Martin Luther and later. There can be no reasonable doubt that *these* Christian Sabbath keepers did keep the Sabbath because they loved the Lord.

Sabbath keepers Oswald Glait, Andreas Fischer and his wife, and John James are known to have accepted martyrdom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the sake of Jesus Christ—just as Justin and other Sunday keepers did in the second and third centuries. Other Sabbath keepers, like John and Dorothy Traske and John Bampfield, accepted jail terms.

So here is a dilemma! Some Christians who loved Christ enough to die for Him have abandoned the Sabbath and adopted Sunday, and other Christians who loved Him enough to die for Him have abandoned Sunday and adopted the Sabbath.

So who have been right?

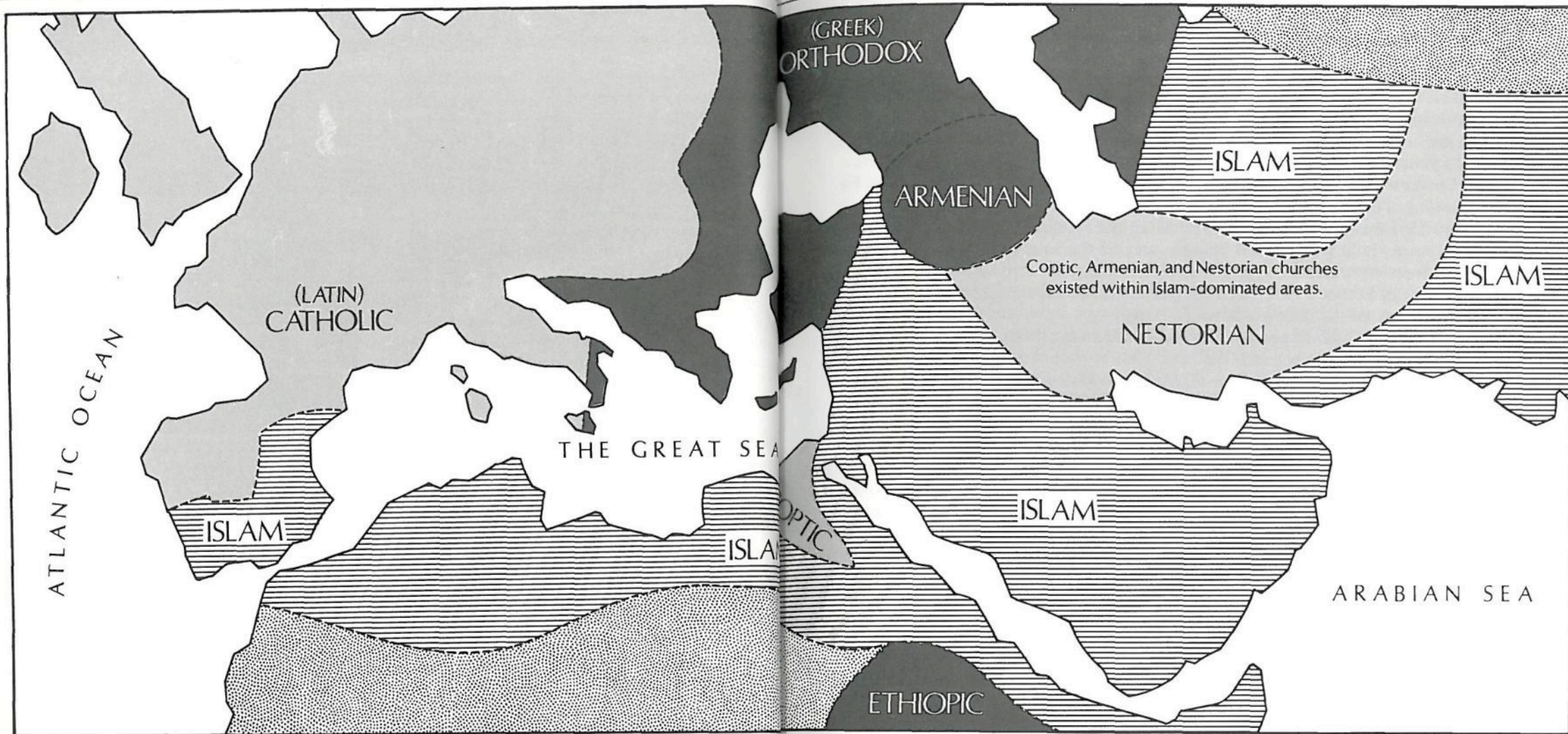
One basic difference between these later Christian Sabbath keepers and the early Christian Sunday keepers may help us to decide. The Sabbath keepers used specific Scriptures in direct support of their position.

Martin Luther, as a Catholic teaching-priest, startled Europe and started the Reformation by championing *sola Scriptura*, “The Bible and the Bible only.” Many devout Catholics, deeply stirred, followed his lead and became Lutherans, even though in many cases they lost their lives as a result. Angry bishops hanged Lutherans from trees in batches.<sup>53</sup>

\*Heylyn overlooked the use of the term, “Christian Sabbath,” by Origen in the third century, in Origen’s *Homily 23 on Numbers*; but Heylyn rightly emphasized the rarity of the use of the term among Christians for over a thousand years.

*Sabbath-keeping Christians met in the cave temples of Ethiopia.*





## SABBATH OBSERVANCE AS OF A.D. 1054

A.D. 1054 marks a watershed, not only in Christian history as a whole, but also in the history of Sabbath observance. In that year Orthodox Christians and Catholic Christians excommunicated each other. The Great Schism (SIZ-um), or division, which resulted lasted until 1967.

One of the principal issues which led to this tragic separation in 1054 was Rome's opposition to the Sabbath.<sup>49</sup> Patriarch Michael Cerularius and his associates in Constantinople insisted in 1053 and 1054 that the Roman Catholics ought to abandon their gloomy Saturday fasts. They said that the way Catholics treated the Sabbath had no foundation in Scripture and seriously altered the intended character of the Sabbath as a day of joy.

Pope Leo IX refused to make the requested change. He insisted instead that because he was the successor of Peter his word was law for all faithful Christians to obey.

Tempers flared, and Pope Leo ordered his representative, the papal legate Cardinal Humbert, to present the patriarch of Constantinople with an official document denouncing his "Orthodox" Christians for being on a level with "the devil and his angels."<sup>50</sup>

The map portrays the six major branches of Christianity as they existed in 1054: Catholic, Orthodox, Armenian, Nestorian, Egyptian (or Coptic), and Ethiopic. In the areas depicted as Orthodox, Armenian, and Ethiopic the Sabbath was honored, along with Sunday, by regular worship services. In addition to holding meetings, Armenian and Ethiopic Christians also honored the Sabbath by resting on that day as well as on Sunday.<sup>51</sup>

From the seventh century onward the Nestorian, Armenian, and Egyptian (Coptic) churches were out-rivalled in influence by Islam as a result of the Moslem conquests. (Contrary to popular belief, the early Moslems, unlike some later ones, did not compel Christians and Jews to accept Islam or die; they stipulated instead that Christians and Jews had to pay extra taxes; then they resisted the conversion of Christians to Islam as causing an erosion of the tax base.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, Islam greatly diluted the influence of Christianity in the lands it conquered.)

Thus the Catholics emerged as the primary Christian opponents of the seventh-day Sabbath. This helps explain why Daniel 7 portrays the Catholic Church as "thinking to change the times and the law."

The fact that Sunday is observed by Christians in most parts of the world today to the exclusion of the Sabbath is explained by the vigorous missionary work conducted by Catholics and Protestants after the Reformation. Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries carried with them around the world the Catholic opposition to the Sabbath.

But as some of these Catholics-turned-Lutherans studied the Bible they learned to their surprise that the Christian Sunday has no clear root in Scripture. Oswald Glait and Andreas Fischer, two Lutheran ministers who had once been Catholic priests, committed themselves in 1527 to the Bible Sabbath, the "Sabbath of the Lord your God." Exodus 20:8-11.

Luther was disturbed to have his followers reach this particular conclusion. He sent some of his best theologians<sup>54</sup> to visit Glait and Fischer to try to change their minds. He asked the theologians to tell Glait and Fischer that the Ten Commandments as a whole were indeed binding but that the seventh-day Sabbath was a mere ceremony which Jesus Christ abolished when He died on the cross. (For a discussion of Luther's view, see *Your Questions Answered*, pages 138, 139.) Here is a summary of the dialogue between them:

1. *Isn't the Sabbath part of the ceremonial law?* asked the Lutheran theologians. No, replied Fischer and Glait. It cannot be part of the law of sacrifices and circumcision, they said, because that law was given after man sinned. It was intended to point sinners symbolically to their Saviour, Jesus. On the other hand, the Sabbath was given as soon as man was created (Genesis 2:3), *before* he had sinned. Hence the Sabbath was given, they said, before man needed any ceremonies to symbolize a Saviour.

2. *But isn't the Sabbath itself merely a ceremony?* insisted the Lutherans. No, answered Fischer and Glait. It is embodied in the heart of the Ten Commandments, and the Ten Commandments, as Luther himself admitted, was *moral* law. Observance of the seventh-day Sabbath involves a moral issue, they said.

3. *But didn't Jesus abolish the Sabbath at the cross?* No, said Fischer and Glait. To the contrary, Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:17, 18, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Further, Jesus added, "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:19.

4. *But didn't the apostles show that the obligation of the Sabbath had been terminated?* asked the Lutherans. No, answered Fischer and Glait. Paul said in Romans 3:31 that by faith "we uphold the law"; we don't overthrow it. And James shows in his epistle (2:10-12) that breaking even "one point" of the Decalogue makes a person guilty of breaking it all.

5. *Then where do you think Sunday observance came from?* asked the Lutherans. To which Fischer and Glait replied by quoting Daniel 7:25. They told the Lutheran theologians that the "little horn" would try to change God's law—the very thing we have been studying in this chapter.

*The Christian Sabbath and the love of Jesus.* So which is the true "Christian Sabbath" for people who have felt the saving power of grace and who love Jesus with all their hearts?

Professor McKenzie, our helpful Jesuit professor at Notre Dame University, has no trouble at this point. He recognizes freely that the Roman Catholic Church cherishes many beliefs not found in the Bible. He defends these beliefs on the basis that they have resulted from "a kind of inner compulsion," a "surging" within, a true "religious experience" in the Catholic Church which adequately justifies them.<sup>55</sup>

Protestants and Catholics can agree that it was precisely such a surge of religious experience that led to the substitution of Sunday worship for Sabbath keeping.

So the question we have to ask ourselves in church school and at family worship is this: is a surge of conviction a sufficient substitute for Scripture?

With pathos Jesus asked the people of His day, "Why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" Matthew 15:3. (The "commandment of God" He was talking about was one of the Ten Commandments. See verse 4.) To His own followers Jesus said tenderly, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:15.

#### Further Interesting Reading

In Arthur S. Maxwell, *The Bible Story*, vol. 6:

"Animals From the Sea," beginning on p. 60.

In Ellen G. White, *The Triumph of God's Love*:

The chapters entitled "Rejecting God's Word" and "Defending the Faith in the Mountains."

In *Bible Readings for the Home*:

The chapters entitled "The Kingdom and Work of Antichrist" and "The Change of the Sabbath."