

Who Is The Beast Of Revelation? (#9)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 17:11

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In a detailed study of any subject, we are prone to get so lost among the trees that we lose sight of the forest. That I believe would be a terrible mistake, no matter how sincere we may be in our pursuit of Christ's truth.

And so as to avoid that pitfall, let me emphasize that the reason that a detailed study of this great prophetic enemy, the Beast, which is found in the Book of Revelation, is so important is because this enemy for a period of 1,260 years (a period of time in which we find ourselves) is one of the great counterfeits in usurping the offices of Christ and the prerogatives of Christ over the nations (as King of kings and Lord of lords). The Beast pretends to be our savior in the civil realm, but in reality, the Beast is a satanic deceiver and destroyer. The devil, dear ones, is a master at deception, and any way that he can lead people away from Jesus Christ by juxtaposing his counterfeits, it becomes his mission to do so.

Thus, the great counterfeit for Christ as mediatorial King of kings (Revelation 19:16) is the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, who usurps Christ's headship over the nations and demands from citizens a blind obedience to his ungodly laws and constitutions, which he alleges are for the common good in order to promote equality and toleration, but which are truly contrary to the Moral Law of God and to biblical covenants (like the Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms, 1643). For to legally and constitutionally protect all false religion, idolatry, heresy, blasphemy, murder of unborn children, and same sex marriage is

to legally promote these very abominations, which Christ (as King of kings) hates. It is not to be neutral. To the contrary, it is to grant these abominations every opportunity to spread like leaven until it has leavened the whole lump. Official toleration of evil is the endorsement of evil. In so doing, the civil Beast of Revelation robs Christ of His rightful authority over the nations as Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). The Christian that is not aware of this truth is simply like a lamb that is blindly being led to the slaughter.

Dear ones, this enemy is real. It is satanic. And it is leading the masses of people down the broad road to everlasting destruction. Because we love Christ and His Gospel, we must testify against this enemy. But also because we love our neighbor, we must warn our neighbor against this great deception and apostasy. And it is Christ (as King of kings and Lord of lords) who will crush this enemy in Revelation 19:19-20.

Our study of the Beast with seven heads and ten horns has brought us to the place of not only identifying who the Beast is (namely, the Revived Western [or Latin] Roman Empire in Europe), but also responding to those who offer a different interpretation of the Beast. As has been observed in recent sermons, there are fellow Historicists whom I admire greatly, who identify the Beast not as the Revived Western Roman Empire of Europe, but rather as the Roman Papacy. I do believe the Papacy and the Romish Church are great enemies of Christ who will be destroyed by the Lord in Revelation 19:19-20, but I submit they appear under other symbols in the Book of Revelation (and not as the Beast with seven heads and ten horns). Although it is plausible that the Beast with the seven heads and ten horns is the Roman Papacy, I propose there are good reasons for rejecting this interpretation of the Beast of Revelation. Thus, we have responded to the following arguments offered by fellow

Historicists who allege the Beast of Revelation to be the Roman Papacy: (1) The Beast is worshipped by the world (Revelation 13:8); (2) The name of the Beast is the number of A MAN (Revelation 13:18); (3) The “little horn” (in Daniel 7) Is The Papacy, and is identified with the Beast of Revelation; and (4) The eighth head of the Beast is the Roman Papacy (Revelation 17:11).

IV. The Fourth Argument In Favor Of The First Beast Being The Papacy: The Papacy Is The Eighth Head Of The Beast (Revelation 17:9-11).

A. We began last Lord’s Day a consideration of whether the eighth head of the Beast is indeed the Roman Papacy (as claimed by a number of fellow Historicists). For the eighth head is said to be “of the seven [heads]” (Revelation 17:11), and is the healing of the Roman Beast after it received a mortal wound (Revelation 13:3).

1. Now though I do agree that the eighth head of the Beast is the healing of the Roman Beast, I do not agree (with a number of my fellow Historicists) that the eighth head of the Beast is the Roman Papacy, but rather believe with other fellow Historicists that the eighth head of the Beast is the Revived Western Roman Empire of Europe (beginning with Charlemagne in 800 a.d.).

2. One significant weakness that I have noted and will note once again with regard to the interpretation that the eighth head of the Beast is the Roman Papacy is that this view proposes that the eighth head is essentially a religious/ecclesiastical head (namely, the Papacy) and that the previous seven heads (in Revelation 17:10) are essentially civil/political heads over the Roman Empire. And yet the question must be answered, How is a religious/ecclesiastical eighth head a healing of the seven civil/political heads of the Beast (either as a group) or as a healing of any particular civil/political head of the Beast that was mortally

wounded? If the eighth head is essentially a religious/ecclesiastical head and not essentially a civil/political head, how can it be the healing of any particular civil/political head that was wounded? The Beast then ought to be seen in vision (in the Book of Revelation) as having eight distinct heads (seven civil/political heads and one religious/ecclesiastical head). But this Beast is always revealed in vision (in the Book of Revelation) as having only seven civil/political heads. Why? Because the eighth head is not a new head (e.g. the Papacy), but is rather the healed sixth head of Emperors (as was demonstrated in the previous sermon). The eighth head is simply the healing and continuation of Roman Emperors under Charlemagne (in 800), after the sixth head of Roman Emperors received a mortal wound (when Romulus Augustus was deposed in 476 and brought Roman Emperors in the West to an end for 324 years).

B. Now let us turn to the arguments proposed by fellow Historicists who favor the interpretation that the eighth head is the Roman Papacy.

1. **The first argument in favor of the eighth head being the Roman Papacy** was considered and responded to last Lord's Day, which was that the eighth head is a revived or healed head in the form of the Papacy that arises from the seven heads of the Roman Empire just as the Western Roman Empire appears headed for complete desolation.

2. **The second argument in favor of the eighth head being the Roman Papacy** is that the "little horn" (in Daniel 7:24) is the same moral being as the eighth head (in Revelation 17:11). Since the "little horn" is the Roman Papacy (as was noted in a previous sermon) and is upon the head of the Roman Beast (or the Roman Empire) and is among the ten horns (or ten barbarian kingdoms), so likewise the eighth head upon the Roman Beast is the Roman Papacy and has on its head ten horns (or ten barbarian kingdoms). Just as the "little horn" is the Roman

Papacy and was in the midst of the ten civil horns (in Daniel 7), so the eighth head is the Roman Papacy and is connected to the previous seven civil heads (Revelation 17). In other words, just as the religious and civil kingdoms are mixed together on the head of the Roman Beast (in Daniel 7), even so are the religious and civil heads (or forms of government) mixed together on the Roman Beast (in Revelation 17).

a. I respond to this argument by noting that the “little horn” (which is a religious/ecclesiastical kingdom, namely the Papal Kingdom of Rome) in Daniel 7:24 is said to be “diverse” or different from the other ten horns (the ten civil kingdoms of the barbarians). In other words, there is a sound reason why we ought to view the “little horn” as religious and the other ten horns as civil (it is “diverse” from the ten horns). However, in Revelation 17:11, the eighth head is not said to be “diverse” or different from the previous seven heads, but to the contrary, is said to be “of the seven” heads (i.e. one of the seven previous forms of civil/political government). In other words, the language used by the Holy Spirit in Revelation 17:11 does not distinguish the eighth head as different from one or all of the seven previous civil/political heads, but rather states that the eighth head is “of the seven” (i.e. one of the seven heads, namely the sixth head of Emperors that was wounded and healed).

b. Since it is the sixth civil/political head of Emperors that was mortally wounded (and not a religious/ecclesiastical head), the eighth head (which is the head that is healed and revived) cannot be a religious /ecclesiastical head (like that of the Roman Papacy), but must likewise be the civil/political head of Emperors that was revived with Charlemagne in 800.

3. **The third argument in favor of the eighth head being the Roman Papacy** is that the continuity of the Roman Papacy demonstrates that it must be the eighth head of the Beast (whereas there is no

continuity of a Revived Roman Empire in Europe, and there is presently no Revived Roman Empire in Europe). The Beast of Revelation is given authority for 42 prophetic months (i.e. 1,260 prophetic days, which is 1,260 years using the Day-Year Principle). But this is not true of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe (since it has ceased to exist). Therefore, the eighth head cannot be that of Emperors in a Revived Roman Empire of Europe, but the eighth head can be the Roman Papacy, which has had unbroken authority to rule for 1,260 years. If the Beast is the Revived Roman Empire and is to be destroyed by the Lord (in Revelation 19:19-20) just before the millennium (in Revelation 20), where is the Revived Roman Empire at the present time?

a. In response, I first want to remind you of what I said in the last sermon in regard to the place of Scripture and history in the matter of prophetic symbols. Scripture interprets prophetic symbols (like the Beast of Revelation, and like the eighth head of the Beast), not history. History applies prophetic symbols that have been faithfully interpreted by Scripture. In other words, it is always our first task to allow all that is said in Scripture to establish for us what the meaning of a prophetic symbol is. If we don't begin there, we will be very prone to allow our interpretation of a prophetic symbol to be based upon history, rather than upon Scripture (which is always dangerous). Then having faithfully interpreted a prophetic symbol (like the Beast or the eighth head of the Beast), we are to go to history in order to find the confirmation and realization of that prophetic symbol. Thus, we must each one ask, Does Scripture interpret the eighth revived and healed head of the Beast to be the religious/ecclesiastical head of the Roman Papacy, or does Scripture interpret the eighth revived and healed head of the Beast to be the civil/political head of Emperor? Let Scriptural testimony lead you in faithfully interpreting the eighth head. I submit through these past several sermons the evidence points in the direction

of the Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire in Europe being the eighth healed head on the Roman Beast, and not the Roman Papacy.

b. Now we go to history to confirm what Scripture has interpreted. Was there in history a clear mortal wounding of the sixth head of Emperors? Yes, when Romulus Augustus was deposed in 476, it appeared that the head of Emperor in the Western Roman Empire had ceased. In fact, for 324 years, there was no Roman Emperor in the Western Roman Empire. But in 800, Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III, and was given the following official title: “most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific [peaceful—GLP] emperor, governing the Roman Empire.” I submit that this is a most remarkable confirmation and realization of the eighth healed and revived head upon the Roman Beast. And thus began the Western Roman Empire in Europe under Emperors to rule once again.

c. But what about subsequent historical confirmation and realization? Let’s track this briefly in the European history that followed Charlemagne.

(1) The Revived Roman Empire continued under Charlemagne and his Frank successors from 800-888, and then division occurred until 962.

(2) Then the Holy Roman Empire followed the Revived Roman Empire under the rule of German and Austrian Emperors, which came to be known as the First Reich or Empire. It continued from 962-1806, when Emperor Francis II abdicated the throne.

(3) Then the French European Empire under Emperor Napoleon I raised its beastly head as an expression of the Revived Roman Empire that began under Charlemagne. Napoleon’s Empire ended in 1815.

(4) A second French Empire then came to power under Napoleon III, which continued from 1852-1870.

(5) The Second Reich or Second German Empire under Kaiser (Caesar) Wilhelm I and Kaiser (Caesar) Wilhelm II, Emperors of the Second Reich, lasted from 1871-1918.

(6) The Third Reich or Third German Empire extended from 1933-1945, at which time Hitler sought to revive the Holy Roman Empire, and for all intents and purposes functioned as an Emperor, even if the title of Emperor was not assumed.

(7) Initial steps were taken after WWII to form a federation of European nations, but it was not until 1967 that a treaty was signed to form the “European Community”. In 1986, the official flag for the “European Community” began to fly. What is now called the European Union was formally established in 1993. The European Union is an economic and political union that has its own Court, its own Bank, and its own Parliament (whose members are elected every five years). There are calls for a stronger central government in the European Union in order to deal with the many problems it faces (former Prime Minister Tony Blair being one of the voices who has called for the formation of the United States of Europe). With the rise and spread of Islam throughout Europe, there are rumblings in various quarters to the effect that unless Europe returns to its Western Roman Imperial roots, Islam with sharia law will take over. Indeed the European Union may be the very staging ground for a future European Empire. And although the Roman-European Beast may not be the persecuting power that it once was against Christ and His faithful witnesses, under the right circumstances that could certainly change.

(8) What I hope you will see by means of this sketchy outline of European history is that the eighth head of the Roman Beast (by way of Emperors over a Revived Roman Empire of Europe) has been more visible at times and less visible at times. But I submit that the Roman-European Beast is still alive, though now less visible than in

previous periods of history. But is there Scriptural warrant for a Roman-European Beast that is less visible at times?

(9) I submit that this shifting back and forth between the nationalism of independent European nations and a more unified Western European Empire is explained for us in Daniel 2:41-43. Likewise, it should be noted that the most visible power of the Roman-European Beast to crush the faithful witnesses of Christ is particularly manifested at the very end of the 1,260 year period (just before Christ destroys the Beast and the False Prophet), when the Beast will persecute the faithful witnesses and the faithful witnesses will appear to be slain and lying in the streets for 3 ½ prophetic days or 3 ½ actual years (according to Revelation 11:7ff).

(10) And finally, it should be remembered that the faithful Church of Jesus Christ has not always been as visible at certain times in history in comparison to other times (e.g. during the Middle Ages).

(11) Even the Roman Papacy has not been as visible at certain times in history as at other times. There were periods in history in which the Papacy was not in Rome, but was in exile. There were periods in history in which Rome was sacked, pillaged, and the Pope fled for his life. Such was the case in 1527 when troops of Charles V (Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) invaded Rome, the Pope was held captive, and was forced to pay 400,000 ducats in exchange for his life. Martin Luther wrote at that time, "Christ reigns in such a way that the Emperor who persecutes Luther for the Pope [on behalf of the Pope—GLP] is forced to destroy the Pope for Luther [on behalf of Luther—GLP]" (*Luther's Works*, 49:169). There were periods of history in which the Papacy was stripped of all temporal power. For example, on February 10, 1798 Napoleon's general invaded Rome, stripped Pope Pius VI of all his temporal power, and took him as a prisoner to France, where he died in

1799. In 1859 all the Papal States of the Church, except Rome, were seized by the armies of Victor Emmanuel II, leader of the movement for the unification of Italy. In 1870 Rome itself was taken, and made capital of Italy, and the Pope became virtually a prisoner in his own palace. And not until 1929 was the *Lateran Treaty* signed between the Papacy and the crown of Italy, granting to the Papacy temporal power and sovereignty over the City of the Vatican, by a formal concordat between the Pope and the crown of Italy. There were periods of history in which there was no Papacy in Rome at all, because it was moved to Avignon in France. The present power of the Papacy over Europe is significantly less visible than it was in earlier periods of history due to the separation of church and state and religious toleration in European nations. And yet the Papacy manifests itself (whether more visible or less visible) until it will be finally destroyed by Christ in Revelation 19:19-20.

(12) From a brief overview of history, the Roman-European Beast is visible for significant periods of history, and when it is not as visible, it is not because it has ceased to exist, any more than is true of the faithful Church at various times in history. Thus, I submit Scripture interprets the Beast as the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and interprets the healed head as the Roman-European Emperors. And history likewise provides adequate confirmation and realization of this Scriptural interpretation as well.

By way of application, there are times in our lives in which those beasts and enemies of the flesh that war against us in our very souls are more visible and at other times are less visible. Think of the beast of pride that takes our eyes off of Christ and His justifying righteousness, or the beast of anger that spills out in cruel and profane language, or the beast of lust that leads to pornographic websites, or the beast of fear that shrinks from standing for Christ because of opposition, or the beast of unbelief

that chooses to believe what it can see and handle over the promises of Christ, or the beast of hypocrisy that has an outward form of godliness but in one's heart is lukewarm and even cold, or the beast of idolatry in loving the things of the world more than Christ.

Dear ones, we all as Christians have such beasts that attack us and would seek to lead us into bondage (even Paul did according to Romans 7). At times these beasts are more visible and at other times they are less visible. But even at those times that they are less visible, they are lurking in the dark, hiding themselves, and waiting for an opportunity to attack (perhaps when you least expect it). David was overcome by lust at a time when he should have been about his duties as king. Elijah was overcome by fear of Jezabel after a victory over the 400 false prophets on Mt. Carmel. Hezekiah was overcome by pride in revealing to the Babylonians his immense treasures after having been miraculously healed by the Lord. Peter was overcome by fear soon after Christ told him to watch and pray that he enter not into temptation.

Just because these enemies are not as visible at certain seasons is no reason to conclude that they no longer exist. We do see Christ's power manifested in subduing these enemies in our lives, but we must daily watch and pray, daily lean upon Christ and His promises that these enemies have already been legally defeated, and daily be humbled by the weakness of our flesh and yet the power of God to overcome them. Yes, these beasts have been legally defeated by Christ in His death and resurrection. Yes, these beasts are doomed for final destruction. And yet these beasts live more visibly or less visibly. We overcome them as faithful witnesses have always overcome them (Revelation 12:11—a justifying testimony, a sanctifying testimony, and a sacrificial testimony).

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