

Who Is the Image of the Beast? #1

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 13:14-15

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The making and worshipping of images is often condemned in Scripture, especially in the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6):

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

And yet from our text today in Revelation 13:14-15, we read of an Image that is given life by the False Prophet and worshipped by the inhabitants of the earth, and those who will not worship this Image are to be killed. Like the image Nebuchadnezzar erected and commanded the world to worship, and if not, death by fire, so the Image of the Beast in Revelation 13:14-15. However, unlike Nebuchadnezzar's image, the Image of the Beast comes alive, speaks, and causes the earth to worship him. Who is this Image that is made alive? Is it an actual image or a figurative image? Is it an image of mere sticks and stones, or is it an image that is presently alive, breathing, and worshipped?

As we have noted in recent sermons, the second Beast that has two horns like a lamb and speaks as a Dragon (in Revelation 13:11) is identified with the Church of Rome (in its hierarchy), which is also identified under two other symbols in the Book of Revelation: the False Prophet (Revelation 19:20), and the Great Harlot (Revelation 17:1-6). We now ask, who is this Image (in Revelation 13:14-15) that is given life by the hierarchy of the Church of Rome (through its cardinals) and is worshipped?

It is no secret to those who have heard previous sermons, that this moral being (referred to as "the image of the beast") is most likely a symbol of the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church—a third great enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses in the Book of Revelation. This is an enemy that we ignore to our own deception and delusion, for I submit that when over a billion people throughout the world worship this Image (in addition to many more admirers of this image), we have an ongoing deception that is likely unprecedented in history, but a deception that by God's grace is to be exposed from God's Word this Lord's Day.

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are the following: (1) The Call to Make an Image to the Beast (Revelation 13:14); (2) The Power to Give Life to the Image of the Beast (Revelation 13:15).

I. The Call to Make an Image to the Beast (Revelation 13:14).

A. The call to make this Image of the first Beast is issued by the lamb-like Beast, which is the hierarchy of the Romish Church, i.e. its cardinals or princes. Note carefully who issues the call to make this Image: "saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast" (Revelation 13:14). Who says to make the Image? The same lamb-like Beast who deceives the earth by way of its alleged signs and

miracles. Some observations about this Image are warranted at this point before moving on to consider the text before us.

1. It does not seem likely that this Image of the Beast is a literal graven image (made of wood or stone) that resembles the first Beast (the Emperor of the Revived Western Roman Empire). Why?
 - a. Since the first Beast with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1) and the second Beast with two horns like a lamb (Revelation 13:11) are figurative symbols that represent immoral institutions of a civil and ecclesiastical nature, the Image that is called to be made by the second Beast (the hierarchy of the Church of Rome) in the likeness of the first Beast (the Emperor of the Revived Latin Roman Empire) is likewise a figurative symbol that represents an immoral institution as well.
 - b. Since the Image of the Beast is made alive, speaks, and authorizes the death of those who will not worship him, this likewise points to the fact that this Image of the Beast is likely not a literal Image, but is rather a figurative symbol that represents an immoral institution.
 - c. These considerations would eliminate the following interpretations of the Image of the Beast: (1) The Image of the Beast is an actual image of Nero (or of any other Roman Emperor) that was a part of pagan Emperor worship—it likewise means that this is not a literal image of a future world leader or antichrist; (2) The Image of the Beast is an actual image of Christ, Mary, the so-called saints, or any other material superstition used by the Church of Rome (or by Eastern Orthodox Churches or any other Church) as helps and aids to worship (which God has not commanded and authorized in the New Covenant for the worship of God).

2. Furthermore, it does not seem likely that this Image of the Beast is a figurative symbol of the so-called General (or Ecumenical) Councils of the Roman Catholic Church in the Western (or Latin) Roman Empire. Though this is a plausible interpretation offered by some Historicists, it has at least a couple problems that make it unlikely.

- a. First, this interpretation assumes that the first Beast is the Papacy (which as we have seen in past sermons is not the case), and it is based upon that erroneous assumption that the Ecumenical Councils are said to mirror (as an image) the will of the Papacy. However, if the first Beast with the seven heads and ten horns is not the Papacy, but is rather the Emperor of the Revived Western [Latin] Roman Empire (as has been demonstrated in previous sermons), it renders this interpretation untenable.
- b. Second, this interpretation does not seem to reconcile the text (in Revelation 13:14) with the facts of history. For Revelation 13:14 makes it clear that it is the second Beast (the hierarchy of the Romish Church) that calls for the making of the Image, and not the first Beast. Thus, if the Image of the Beast represents the Ecumenical Councils (as proposed by some Historicists), then we should expect both the text (Revelation 13:14) and history to agree that it is the hierarchy of the Romish Church that issues the call for a so-called Ecumenical Council. However, such is not the case. For we read from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

The pope's office and the council's function in the organization of the Church require that **the pope should call the council together**, preside over and direct its labours, and finally promulgate its decrees to the universal Church as expressing the mind of the whole teaching body guided by the Holy Ghost.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04423f.htm>

Thus, it is not the hierarchy of the Church of Rome that issues the call to form an Ecumenical Council, it is the Pope that does so, which is not what is taught here in Revelation 13:14. According to Revelation 13:14, it is the hierarchy of Romish Church that issues the call to make this Image—not the Pope.

B. I submit that the interpretation that most accurately represents the text of Scripture and that of history is that the Image of the Beast is the Roman Papacy (that Antichrist, that Man of Sin, and that Son of

Perdition that is prophesied in the inspired writings of the Apostle John and the Apostle Paul). For the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church is a most remarkable likeness, image, and mirror to that of the Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire.

1. The power and dominion of the Roman Pope was exercised ecclesiastically over the same Western (Latin) Roman Empire as that of the Roman Emperor civilly.
2. The power and dominion of both the Roman Pope in the Church and the Roman Emperor in the Western Roman Empire was supremely exercised in church and state, and was exercised with their respective princes in church and state.
3. The power and dominion of the Roman Pope comes from the Dragon (Satan, Revelation 13:11-12) as does the power and dominion of the Roman Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire (Revelation 13:2).
4. Worship and homage are given to the first Beast (the Roman Emperor of the Latin Roman Empire) in Revelation 13:4 just as worship and homage are given to the Image of the Beast (the Roman Pope of the Latin Roman Church) in Revelation 13:15.
5. Thus, the Roman Pope in the Latin Church is a remarkable Image and likeness of the Roman Emperor in the Latin Empire.

C. Note finally under this first main point that when a Pope dies or resigns, who it is that issues a call to make a Pope to replace the previous Pope. It is the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, which is what our text states concerning the second Beast that has two horns like a lamb in Revelation 13:14: It is the second Beast with the two horns like a lamb that says that this Image to the first Beast should be made.

1. In fact, after the death or resignation of the Pope, the power to call and set a date for the election of a new Pope rests in the hands of the College of Cardinals (i.e. the hierarchy of the Romish Church) http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/features/papal_elections.htm.
2. From the official online Vatican website, the canons of the Church of Rome state:

Can. 349 The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church constitute a special College, whose prerogative it is to elect the Roman Pontiff in accordance with the norms of a special law.

Can. 359 When the Apostolic See is vacant, the College of Cardinals has only that power in the Church which is granted to it by special law.

It is then the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (or the lamb-like second Beast that issues the call to elect a Pope (or using the language we find in Revelation 13:14, the call to make this Image. Thus, the prophetic statements of Scripture do once again ring true in history with regard to the process followed to make a new Pope (i.e. make an Image to the civil Beast).

II. The Power to Give Life to the Image of the Beast (Revelation 13:15).

A. This power (albeit a satanic power) that is possessed by the lamb-like second Beast (i.e. the hierarchy of the Romish Church, and particularly the College of Cardinals) to give life to this Image (the Roman Papacy) is an ongoing process if you will, and yet it is the same Image of the Beast that continues to war against the faithful witnesses of Christ, together with the Beast and the False Prophet for 1,260 years.

1. The man prior to his election as Pope does not have that supreme power as head (or as an ecclesiastical Emperor) of the Romish Church. Prior to his election, he is one among many, but after his election, he is supremely one above many.
2. After his election, the Pope has historically also been given a formal coronation, just as

the Emperor of an Empire (Pope Pius VI, in 1963, was the last Pope to have such a coronation ceremony—now it is called an inauguration ceremony, which is much more acceptable at the present by democratic nations). We read concerning the Papal coronation:

A papal coronation was the ceremony of the placing of the papal tiara on a newly elected pope. The first recorded papal coronation was that of Pope Celestine II in 1143. Soon after his coronation in 1963, Pope Paul VI abandoned the practice of wearing the tiara. His successors have chosen not to resume the coronation practice.

After the Mass, the new pope was crowned with the papal tiara. This frequently took place on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, overlooking the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square. The pope was seated on a throne with the flabella [which were large fans, or at times large peacock feathers, that adorned both sides of the throne of a king—GLP] to either side of him. The senior cardinal deacon, the protodeacon, removed the pope's mitre and placed the tiara on his head with the words:

Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns and know that thou art father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world on earth, the vicar of our Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory through all ages.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_coronation

3. Thus, we see how Roman Pope is indeed an Emperor over his Empire, and is a remarkable Image of the civil Emperor. When the lamb-like Beast (i.e. the hierarchy of the Romish Church) elects a Pope, they give life to the Image that had seemed to die, so that the Image that seemed dead speaks out and utters his false teaching, utters his bulls, and utters his pretended blessings (with all satanic authority, Revelation 13:11).

B. As soon as he is elected pope and he accepts the election of the Romish hierarchy, he is clothed with his royal garments, and the Cardinals come and worship before him, just as is stated in Revelation 13:15. Historically, this act of kneeling and kissing the Pope's feet or big toe is a ceremony called adoration (this ceremony as well of kissing the Pope's feet has in recent years also been abandoned). The hierarchy of the Papal Church of Rome first elect the Pope (thus giving life to the Image), and then they worship him. In fact, commemoration medallions (www.sits7.com/v02/r/quem_medal.pdf) honoring the election and coronation of Pope Martin V (in 1417) and of Pope Eugene IV (in 1431) have two Cardinals crowning the Pope, and two Cardinals kneeling before him, with this Latin inscription, *Quem creant adorant* ("Whom they create, they worship [or adore]"). This so remarkably fulfills the prophetic words found in Revelation 13:15. I found it also telling to read the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his final words to the College of Cardinals, which likewise point to the same fact of worship given to the new Pope (an article from the online news site, *News Max*):

Benedict, who was due to leave the Vatican later on Thursday for temporary residence at the papal summer villa south of Rome, bade an emotional farewell to cardinals before he was to become the first Pope in six centuries to step down.

"I will continue to be close to you in prayer, especially in the next few days, so that you are fully accepting of the action of the Holy Spirit in the election of the new Pope," he told cardinals in

the Vatican's frescoed Sala Clementina.

"May the Lord show you what he wants. Among you there is the future Pope, to whom I today declare my unconditional reverence and obedience," he said.

<http://www.newsmaxworld.com/Europe/pope-cardinals-farewell-obedience/2013/02/28/id/492392>

C. And those historically who have refused to bow in giving the worship and absolute obedience to the corrupt authority of this Image of the Beast (the Roman Papacy), and have resisted his usurped authority of Christ's titles and rights (who alone is the one and only Head of the Church, and who alone is the one and only Rock upon which the true Church of Christ is built), these faithful witnesses were imprisoned, slaughtered in their homes and in the fields, tortured with unimaginable cruelties, hauled before unjust courts, and burned at the stake as heretics for adhering to the sound doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture and faithful Confessions of Faith (faithful witnesses like the Waldensians, the Wyclifites and Lollards who followed Wyclif, the Tyndales, the Hussites, the Reformed witnesses during the First Reformation, and the Covenanters during the Second Reformation). This is likewise prophesied in Revelation 13:15.

D. This prophecy particularly is focused upon the two-horned Beast of the Romish clergy giving life to this Image (i.e. the Papacy) in the period of history contemporaneous with and subsequent to the healing of the Beast's wound (at the time Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire in 800 a.d.) according to Revelation 13:14. Thus, I submit that the particular period of history upon which we are intended by the Holy Spirit to focus our attention in the making and giving life to this Image (the Roman Papacy) is after 800 a.d. And it is especially from that period of time in which the Papacy was under the protection and safety of the Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire, and then the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, that the Roman Papacy began to reach and gain more and more authority and power (even at times over the Emperors themselves).

Thus the plenitude of the papal power (as it is termed) was not confined to what was spiritual; the Romish bishops "dethroned monarchs, disposed of crowns, absolved subjects from the obedience due to their sovereigns, and laid kingdoms under interdicts. There was not a state in Europe which had not been disquieted by their ambition. There was not a throne which they had not shaken, nor a prince who did not tremble at their presence" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary of the Bible*, Revelation 13:15, <http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?bk=65&ch=13>).

The point in history when the Papal Antichrist (i.e. the Image of the Beast) attained perhaps his highest degree of authority was with the Papal Bull issued by decree of Pope Boniface VIII, who published his infamous Bull, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302, which is summarized by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as follows:

The Bull lays down dogmatic propositions on the unity of the Church, the necessity of belonging to it for eternal salvation, the position of the pope as supreme head of the Church, and the duty thence arising of submission to the pope in order to belong to the Church and thus to attain salvation. The pope further emphasizes the higher position of the spiritual in comparison with the secular order.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* then quotes one sentence from the Papal Bull of Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*:

"Now, therefore, we declare, say, determine and pronounce that for every human creature it is necessary for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff."

Catholic Encyclopedia

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15126a.htm>

What an abomination, when Holy Scripture contradicts the Image of the Beast when it declares with absolute Divine authority in Acts 4:12:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Thus, I pray, dear ones, the words of this prophecy in Revelation 13:14-15 concerning the giving life to the Image of the Beast will clearly be seen and understood to be fulfilled in history by the Roman Clergy and hierarchy of the Romish Harlot Church (i.e. the lamb-like Beast) giving life to the Roman Papacy (i.e. the Image of the Beast) to rule as an Emperor over the Church of Christ (which is what is likewise what is taught by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 concerning the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition who leads this apostasy within the Church and takes his seat upon his throne in the Church of Christ, pretending to be Christ's Vicar and assuming to himself earthly headship in the Visible Church.

By way of application, dear ones, you don't have to bow the knee to the Roman Papacy in order to worship this Image. Sadly, many Protestants and Protestant Churches are implicitly bowing the knee to this Image when they treat this Roman Image (the Pope) as a saintly man of God and servant of Jesus Christ (which deception and delusion has overtaken many Protestants). But also many Protestant Churches have implicitly bowed the knee to this Roman Image by adopting the doctrine and worship of the Roman Image: Arminianism (where God is not absolutely sovereign, but the will of man is ultimately sovereign), justification by faith and works, holy days, singing of hymns with instrumental accompaniment, choirs, priests, sanctuaries, altars, etc.

But, dear ones, even more personally, what about the images that you have set up in your own heart—images that have supplanted your first love for Jesus Christ and His truth in your life, images that you have submitted to because it was easier and more comfortable to follow that image than to follow Christ (because the path of Christ requires tearing down images and refusing to bow to the images of the world, even to the point of being isolated, lonely, ridiculed, scorned, and suffering death [like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego]). Dear ones, the only image to which we are to be conformed is the image of Jesus Christ, and not images of anything earthly and perishable (Colossians 3:10; Romans 12:1-2). Dear ones, you will be conformed to some image, whether you know or not. Will you be conformed to the image of the world, the flesh, and the devil, or to the image of Jesus Christ? To whom are you bowing down in regard to your family, friends, the things you love, the things you fear, the things you desire and want? You have all the power and grace necessary in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bow to Christ and to be conformed to His image. It is a well and good to talk about the abomination of image worship in Rome, but do you take as seriously the abomination of image worship in your own heart (of anyone or anything of this earth)?

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