

Who Is The Beast Of Revelation? (#6)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 13:1-8

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Rev. Greg L. Price

A pursuit to understand more comprehensively how the office of Christ as mediatorial King of kings and Lord of lords so far surpasses that of Artaxerxes (King of Persia), who called himself “king of kings” in a letter written to Ezra (Ezra 7:12), has taken us down a path in considering Christ’s universal kingship over all His enemies and our enemies. Our attention is presently focused upon one great enemy whom our glorious Lord will destroy just before the worldwide millennial reign of Christ, at which time all nations of the world will be converted to Christ and will covenant with Christ to be Christian nations.

That notable enemy of Christ, whose identity the Lord has not hidden from us (even if revealed in symbolic language), is the Beast that arises from the sea having seven heads and ten crowned horns, and having one head that received a deadly wound and was healed (Revelation 13:1-3). That first Beast, who is the first of the three great enemies revealed in Revelation 13, received great power and authority to rule for 42 prophetic months (i.e. 42 months of years not 42 months of days, or 1,260 years). In recent sermons, the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, having one head that was mortally wounded but healed, this first Beast has been identified as the Revived Roman Empire (whose deadly wound was healed in 800 a.d. when Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Roman Empire by Pope Leo III in Rome at St. Peter’s). Further confirmation was added in the previous sermon, when the number of this first Beast (666) found a very probable identification in history with the

Greek name LATEINOS (which means Latin), which accurately described the Revived Western Roman Empire at the time of Charlemagne as being one that was Latin (a Latin people/nation, a Latin language, and a Latin Roman Catholic Church), in distinction from the Eastern Roman Empire, whose Empire was Greek (a Greek people/nation, a Greek language, and a Greek Orthodox Church).

I mentioned in the previous sermon that there have been historically two significant candidates (other than the Revived Roman [or Latin] Empire) whom many have embraced as fulfilling the symbol of the first Beast that arises from the sea: (1) The Papacy; and (2) Nero. Because I believe it is not only an important duty of a minister in His preaching to give a clear presentation of the truth (using the Scripture to interpret Scripture), but also to give a clear refutation of significant opposing positions, I would like to demonstrate why I have departed from those who identify the Beast that arises from the sea as the Papacy, or as Nero. We will first focus our attention upon that position that maintains that the Beast that arises from the sea, and whose number is 666, is the Papacy.

By way of preliminary remarks, I first want to make it very clear that in regard to those interpreters and scholars who identify the first Beast as the Papacy, I hold them in high regard. For this difference in interpretation as to the identity of the first Beast that arises from the sea (whether the Revived Roman Empire or whether the Papacy) is really an in-house difference among Historicists. I have been tremendously helped by those men (who identify the first Beast as the Papacy) in the overall interpretation of the Book of Revelation, but for reasons which I will share with you in the next few sermons, I have come to embrace the position promoted by other Historicists: namely, that the Beast is the Revived Roman (or Latin) Empire in its civil/political being or nature.

Now I want to make it absolutely clear that though I do not believe the first Beast that arises from the sea is the Papacy, I do wholehearted confess that the Papacy is that Antichrist and that man of sin who was prophesied to come with great deception and to mislead many as he sits in the Church of God, usurping the office, authority, titles, and prerogatives of Christ. On that point there is no disagreement at all. In fact, as we shall see in future sermons, one of the three notable enemies of Christ revealed in Revelation 13 is the Papacy (the Image of the Beast, who is given life by the Church of Rome and her cardinals, and who the Church of Rome calls the nations to worship). Believe me, dear ones, the Papacy will not be able to hide from the scrutiny of God's revelation in this sermon series, even if he is not identified with the first Beast that arises from the sea.

Before proceeding further, let me give you, by way of the most general overview, one basic difference that exists between the position that identifies the first Beast with the Revived Roman (or Latin) Empire and the position that identifies the first Beast with the Papacy. The first position (I'll call it the Revived Roman Empire position) interprets one of the three enemies revealed in Revelation 13 to be a civil/political enemy (i.e. the first Beast is the Revived Roman Empire) while the other two enemies revealed in Revelation 13 to be religious/ecclesiastical enemies (i.e. the second Beast or False Prophet is the Roman Catholic Church, and the Image of the Beast is the Papacy). The second position (I'll call it the Papacy position) interprets all three enemies revealed in Revelation 13 to be religious/ecclesiastical enemies (i.e. the first Beast is the Papacy, the second Beast or False Prophet is the Roman Catholic Church, and the Image of the Beast is the Roman Catholic Synods and Councils or the worship of saints through images). In other words, without making any judgment at this point, I want you to see one significant distinction between the two positions: In the Revived Roman Empire position, one of

the three revealed enemies of Christ and His faithful witnesses that will be destroyed has a civil/political nature; whereas in the Papacy position, there is no enemy (among the three revealed in Revelation 13) that has a civil/political nature—all three enemies in this position are religious/ecclesiastical enemies.

Is this satanic conspiracy that exists between these three enemies of Christ (in Revelation 13) only a religious/ecclesiastical conspiracy within the Roman Catholic Church, or is this satanic conspiracy that exists between these three enemies of Christ (in Revelation 13) a conspiracy between the civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire (on the one hand) and the ecclesiastical Beast of the Roman Catholic Church and its Papacy (on the other hand)? That I propose is the basic difference between these two positions promoted by good Historicist interpreters. Although good Historicist interpreters have taken one of these positions as opposed to the other position, I submit it is not an unimportant question, because, dear ones, we need to know (by God's grace and illumination) who these satanic inspired enemies are if we are to wage a good fight for Christ in exposing them and in testifying against them and in warning others against them.

Let us now turn our attention to considering the position that the first Beast (in Revelation 13:1-8) is the Roman Papacy. There are four basic arguments (I'm sure other variations and sub-arguments may also be presented) that I will briefly present and to which arguments I will respond over the next few sermons.

I. The First Argument In Favor Of The Beast Being The Papacy: He Is Worshipped By The World (Revelation 13:8,12).

A. First, let us consider how this argument is alleged to support

the position that the first Beast is the Roman Papacy (then I will offer my response).

1. It is inferred that because the first Beast is worshipped, he is more likely a religious Beast (namely, the Roman Papacy) than a civil Beast (namely, the Revived Roman Empire).

2. Since worship is a religious act, it is directed toward a Beast that is religious in nature (namely, the Roman Papacy).

B. My Response.

1. The worship ascribed by the world to the first Beast is obviously a false worship (or what may be called idolatry), which will issue forth in the judgment of God, because worship belongs not to the creature, but to the Creator alone (“Thou shalt have no other gods before me” Exodus 20:3).

a. Thus, whenever we place any creature (whether religious in nature or secular in nature) in our thoughts, words, or actions on an equal or superior standing before God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (or before His will and commandments), we worship the creature at that point (the creature becomes an idol to us—and it doesn’t matter whether the creature is religious in nature or secular in nature, whether the creature is a statue before which we bow or is food, a job, or a family member that we honor, love, serve, or obey more than Christ Himself).

b. Dear ones, the essence of false worship (idolatry) is giving equal or supreme honor, love, service, and obedience to the creature that belongs to God alone (Romans 1:25). Dear ones, there is to be nothing in our lives that holds a spot (for even a second) that would remove our most holy, most loving, most mighty God from His supreme throne in our lives (which being the case only points out all the more why we who are Christians need the redemption of Jesus Christ—finished and complete in its accomplishment, but ongoing in its efficacy). Even the sin

of covetousness is called by the Holy Spirit idolatry (i.e. worshipping the creature) in Colossians 3:5 (Ephesians 5:5). Dear ones, what have we worshipped and made an idol in our lives? This is a sin into which we all fall, but the question is, do we even care, do we dare shine the light of God's revelation into our lives in order to expose our idolatry? The nonchristian doesn't care. The Christian does care, and falls upon the grace of God daily to mortify the idols that seek to take root in our lives.

c. Therefore, people may indeed worship that which is secular and non-religious; and people may indeed worship civil rulers by giving to them the honor and obedience that belongs to God alone (Acts 12:20-23). It happens all of the time. An oath or vow is an act of worship ("A lawful oath is a part of religious worship" WCF 22:1). This is why we cannot take an oath (or vote for one who will take an oath) to swear allegiance to a Constitution that officially promotes national polytheism, which is idolatry at its very root and leads to every other form of lawlessness in this nation. Treason against God (idolatry) leads to tyranny against man (abortion, fornication, adultery, and sodomy).

d. Thus, there is no inherent contradiction or inconsistency in saying that the first Beast is civil/political in nature, and yet is worshipped falsely by idolaters who have made the will of this civil/political Beast (i.e. the Revived Roman Empire) that to which they will give unconditional obedience, rather than to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture.

2. Just for the record, in future sermons, I will also demonstrate that the Holy Spirit teaches that the Image of the Beast (which is the Roman Papacy) is likewise worshipped according to Revelation 13:15. How is the first Beast worshipped? It is worshipped by people giving to it the honor and unconditional obedience that belongs to Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. That is idolatry, or false worship.

3. Before moving on to the next point, let me briefly summarize why I believe the first Beast that arises from the seas is civil/political in nature.

a. The first Beast in Revelation 13 is the same as the fourth Beast in Daniel 7—the Roman Empire. Each of the four Beasts revealed in Daniel 7 are civil/political kingdoms in nature: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Thus, the first Beast in Revelation 13 is likewise civil/political in nature (rather than religious/ecclesiastical in nature).

b. The seven heads of the first Beast are seven forms of civil government that ruled over this Roman Beast: Kings, Consuls, the Council of Ten, Military Tribunes, Dictators, Emperors, and Patricians. This likewise demonstrates the civil/political nature of the first Beast.

c. The ten horns of the first Beast are ten civil/political barbarian kingdoms that divided the civil/political kingdom of the Western Roman Empire (i.e. the first Beast), but did not alter or change nature of the first Beast from a civil/political Beast to a religious/ecclesiastical Beast. The Beast from beginning to end remains a civil/political Beast that unites to form an alliance with the religious/ecclesiastical False Prophet (the second Beast in Revelation 13:11) in warring against Christ and His faithful witnesses.

d. The first Beast and the False Prophet (or second Beast in Revelation 13) seem clearly distinguished one from the other as to their nature. The first Beast is portrayed as the coercive and military arm of this wicked alliance (Revelation 13:4,7,10), whereas the False Prophet (or second Beast) by its very description is portrayed as a religious deceiver who pretends to be lamb-like (though is the mouthpiece of the dragon) and who works miracles that mislead the people (Revelation 13:11-14). Thus, the first Beast is the civil/political antichristian system used by Satan to enforce his will upon the people, whereas the second Beast (the False Prophet) is the religious/ecclesiastic antichristian system

used by Satan to deceive and mislead the people. These two antichristian Beasts (civil and ecclesiastical) work together in warring against Christ and His faithful witnesses.

e. Finally, the great Whore (which is the same Roman Catholic Church as the second Beast and False Prophet) sits upon the first Beast that has seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 17:3. But this first Beast is not the Papacy, for the Beast upon which the great Whore sits is also called many waters in Revelation 17:1. And the many waters are identified as “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” in Revelation 17:15. Moreover, the great Whore sits upon the seven mountains of Rome, which seven mountains also represent the seven civil heads of political government of the Roman Empire (Revelation 17:9-10). In other words, it seems that the ecclesiastical Beast sits upon the civil Beast and not upon another ecclesiastical Beast. Listen to how this symbiotic relationship was displayed in history (read from *Observations Upon The Prophecies Of Daniel* by Sir Isaac Newton, pp.86-88).

II. The Second Argument In Favor Of The Beast Being The Papacy: The Name Of The Beast Is The Number Of A Man (Revelation 13:18).

A. First, let us consider how this argument is alleged to support the position that the first Beast is the Roman Papacy (then once again I will offer my response).

1. It is proposed that since the number 666 gives us the name of the first Beast and is also said to be “the number of a man”, the number (666) most likely identifies a particular man.

2. Since LATEINOS (as was noted in the previous sermon) has a numerical value of 666. LATEINOS in Greek means “a Latin one”, or “a Latin man”. Who better can be described as a Latin man than the Pope himself? Thus, the name of the first Beast, whose number is 666, is LATEINOS, a Latin man (i.e. the Pope).

B. My Response.

1. I certainly recognize the plausibility of what is said.

However, in light of the reasons stated above for favoring a Beast with a civil/political nature (rather than a Beast with a religious/ecclesiastical nature), I believe there is a use of LATEINOS (the Greek name for the first Beast, whose numerical value is 666) that fits very well with its connection to the Revived Roman Empire.

2. For when the Apostle John states that the number 666 is the number of a man, it can be shown that LATEINOS (“a Latin man”) is actually the number of a specific, single individual. For the Greek word and name, LATEINOS, is the Greek translation of Latinus, who was the man who founded the Roman or Latin Kingdom. Since Latinus (or LATEINOS in Greek) is the name of a particular man, whose numerical value in Greek is 666 and who is the founder of the Roman (or Latin) Kingdom, there is no reason (even if we are looking for the name of a single individual man) why the identity of the name and number of the Beast must point to the Pope, as opposed to the Revived Western Latin Empire.

3. But in addition to what has just been stated, when the phrase, “the number of a man” is used in Revelation 13:18, it may not mean a specific individual man, but rather may mean that the name of the first Beast has a numerical value that is of man generically, i.e. a numerical value that is of mankind, or that is common among mankind (for the Greek word, *anthropos*, may refer to mankind as in Revelation 21:7; Matthew 4:4 etc.). Thus, the Greek name, LATEINOS, may refer to the common name used of the people of the Western (or Latin) Empire, thus emphasizing the civil/political nature of the first Beast, rather than a religious/ecclesiastical nature of the first Beast.

4. Thus, there is nothing necessarily indicated by the phrase, “the number of a man”, that would require us to identify first Beast as the Pope or Papacy.

I will no doubt have time to come back to this point in future sermons, but I believe it was a great error and backsliding on the part of Presbyterian Churches in the United States to revise the Westminster Confession of Faith (which in all honesty is no longer the Westminster Confession of Faith), and particularly to revise it by removing the reference to the Pope being that prophesied Antichrist who was to come. Compare the Westminster Confession of Faith (25:6) with the American Revision.

The Westminster Confession of Faith reads:

VI. There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.

The American Revision (adopted by the OPC, PCA) reads:

6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.

Dear ones, without a firm conviction that the Papacy was that particular and specific Antichrist (who would usurp the office and prerogatives of Christ as Head of His Church) that was prophesied to come at the time of great apostasy in leading the Church at large away from Christ and His pure Gospel, it is doubtful from a human perspective that the Protestant Reformers would have had the impetus to leave the Romish Harlot

Church and the tyrannical authority of the Papacy. But because they understood the Pope to be that Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and that man of sin and son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3) who deified himself by sitting as head in the temple (or Church of God), the Protestant Reformers made it clear that there was no alternative except to leave that Harlot Church (Revelation 18:4). But that section of the Confession was removed to placate the pluralism and the national polytheism enshrined in the Constitution, which was passed at the same time in Philadelphia. Remove or refuse to adopt the truth that the Papacy is that prophesied Antichrist, and you blind the eyes of the Church to that great apostasy and that Antichrist, who continues to siphon many Protestants into the Harlot Church of Rome. The good news is that the Lord will open the eyes of His people to the true and satanic identity of that Papal Antichrist and of that Harlot Church of Rome; for in Revelation 17:16, when the Lord converts the nations of this world, they will destroy this false religion once and for all. Therein is our hope alone, even as we presently seem to fight a losing battle against this great enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses. Amen.

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