

HOW SHOULD WE THINK?

(“*LITTLE HORN*”)

Against All Odds

From its inception, the Christian church was imperiled by threats from Judaizers, Nicolaitans and pagan cults. The inspired writers of the New Testament brought an element of distinction, purpose and comprehension to the Christian faith. Yet their storied narratives were punctuated by reports of resistance from such zealots. Evil Empire leaders, such as Nero (54–68 A.D.), defaced and crushed segments of the Christian community. Yet its numbers and influence grew.

- Many early church leaders (“fathers”) over the next 200–300 years often veered from the apostolic faith, bringing uncertainty into doctrinal understanding. Many giant thinkers did, however, contribute to the body of Christian literature, elevating the intent and scope of the new “faith.”
- These included Polycarp (friend of the Apostle John), Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Ambrose, Athanasius, Clement of Rome, Augustine and Jerome.

Approximately 250 A.D. Gnosticism threatened to taint the Christian understanding of redemption.¹ Complicating this was the terror brought to God’s saints from the pagan/secular world through persecution, especially under Diocletian (284–305).²

- In approximately 316 A.D. the Bishop of Rome, Sylvester I (centuries later called a pope), declared an ***ecclesiastical law*** requiring Sunday worship (partly as an anti-Semitic move).³ This was another threat to the purity of the apostolic faith.
- Later, in 321, Roman Emperor Constantine (306–337) introduced a ***secular Sunday law*** which also had strong anti-Semitic tones, undermining the seventh-day Sabbath.⁴

Western Emperor Constantine and Eastern Emperor Licinius had brought Christian persecution to a close with the Edict of Milan in 313. Milan was the governing center of the Western Roman Empire at that time. Sylvester I, however, “ruled” Christianity to the south in Rome. As previously noted, he influenced Constantine to contribute toward the construction of several Christian edifices in Rome. How much overall collaboration there was between the two leaders is unclear, but the close timing of their decrees and similar anti-Jewish objectives suggest a firm church–state alliance.

- Constantine’s sympathy towards all “faiths” (except the Jewish persuasion) is historical, wanting no religious conflict in the Empire.

His Nicean “Council” in 325 A.D. was, however, a turning point in Christian history. It drew the Christian leaders from the Empire together to collectively negotiate issues. Whether or not

¹ <https://prezi.com/sivxkc0n5gyu/biblical-timeline-100-300-ad/>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian>

³ <http://biblelight.net/sylvester-I.htm> (with references)

⁴ http://www.the-ten-commandments.org/did_constantine_change_sabbath.html

representatives of the pure apostolic faith participated is unknown. **However, no distinct “bishop” or church leader stood out as an ecclesiastical “head.”**

- Nicene Christianity would not even become the official religion of the Empire for another fifty plus years.⁵
- Evidence suggests that Constantine personally continued to honor Mithraism with the god Sol Invictus, who was worshipped on the first day of the week.

The “mysteries” of that religion had spread throughout the Roman Empire, having originated among the Chaldean people. It was the primary religion of the Empire between 222 and 391. Mithraism became, therefore, the chief rival to Christianity. As pagan traditions were later outlawed, many of their rites, doctrines and feast dates were blended with “Roman Christianity,” renaming them to relate to Biblical symbols and events.⁶

Though Sylvester I appears to have influenced Constantine regarding Sunday worship and support for anti-Semitism, this Roman emperor **functioned** as the key leader in church affairs. For a period of time the Christian church in the Empire was subject to the vagaries of this Emperor.⁷

Sylvester I did change times and laws. ***Might he be that Daniel 7 “horn” when still “little” – or was it Constantine?***

Complicating all this were “church leaders” headquartered in Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Rome, each claiming administrative “Christian” preeminence and authority.

Who would the “*little horn*” of Daniel 7:8 finally be who was so strong that he could overcome and wear out the true saints (7:21, 25)? When does he rise historically? Was it a religious or secular leader? Horns do represent power to the beast they are on. They could be secular or ecclesiastical rulers.

The Power of the Roman Church Rises

Throughout the fourth century several scholars and philosophers emerged who molded “Christian” thinking and did influence political leaders.

1. Jerome (345–420) translated the Greek and Hebrew Bible into standard Latin, later called the Vulgate.
2. Ambrose of Milan (374–397) was a powerful bishop who strongly influenced emperors.
3. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) addressed, in his extensive writings, Biblical issues that continue to influence millions of Christians even today (especially Roman Catholics).

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea

⁶ <http://hope-of-israel.org/mithraism.html>

⁷ http://vlib.us/medieval/lectures/western_church.html

Theodosius I (Theodosius the Great – 379–395) was appointed emperor of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, later assuming control of both the east and the west sides of the Empire. He was the last emperor to achieve this unification.

During his reign two key bishops led out in church affairs.

- Damasus I of Rome (366–384) was the person that commissioned Jerome to create the Latin Vulgate Bible. He also sent delegates to the First Council of Constantinople (discussed later), which would change the thrust of Christianity forever.
- Ambrose of Milan (374–397), who forced Emperor Theodosius into humiliation.

In 380 Theodosius signed the Edict of Thessalonica. It ordered all subjects of the Roman Empire to profess faith in the bishops of Rome **and** Alexandria.⁸

Until this time the religious leaders were subject to the Empire’s rulers. This now was a dramatic change – but was temporary.

- Theodosius I had favored Nicene Christianity from his early years. Because of growing division and religious “heresies,” especially with the rise of Arianism, he called the First Council of Constantinople in 381.
- As a follow-up, Nicene Christianity was decreed as the **law for all citizens in the Empire**. Though paganism was not outlawed, it was marginalized and stripped of all legitimacy.⁹

In 390 Butheric, a military Roman governor from Thessalonica, was assassinated. Theodosius heard of his death, and in rage massacred 7000 innocent people in Thessalonica in revenge for the death of his military governor.

- Bishop Ambrose of Milan (in the west) sent a letter to Theodosius in 391, excommunicating the Emperor and demanding humility, repentance and admission of his guilt.
- **This** suddenly exploded into a new era in the power wielded by the Western Roman church. The Emperor did enter several months of penitence.¹⁰ He fully submitted himself to the dictates of Bishop Ambrose.¹¹

Ambrose of Milan did rise to symbolize the accelerating religious influence of bishops within the secular world.

Might this be the rise of Roman ecclesiastical power that fulfills the “little horn” prophecy?

The excommunication was eventually lifted when Theodosius I reacted submissively, including sending a letter of apology throughout his realm. Between 389 and 391 a series of

⁸ <http://historybytez.com/2016/10/27/380-edict-of-thessalonica/>

⁹ <http://www.arcaneknowledge.org/catholic/councils/comment02.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.revolvy.com/topic/Christian%20persecution%20of%20of%20paganism%20under%20Theodosius%201>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_Thessalonica

“Theodosian codes” (laws) began to ban paganism in the Empire under the growing advice of Ambrose.¹²

- Many pagan temples were destroyed, holy sites defaced, holidays abolished and many pagan priests were martyred.
- Yet vestiges of pagan rites and gods survived over the next three centuries – and, as previously noted, eventually found a place within “church” liturgy.
- The Roman Catholic Church today even credits Theodosius I as finally bringing Sunday worship securely into the Empire.¹³

Might Theodosius I be that “little horn”?

The Justinian Factor

In spite of herculean efforts to stamp out paganism and many views (actual movements) within the Christian faith, the dream of an empire-wide Nicene Christianity continued to be fractured. When the **western half** of the Empire fell to the Germanic Odoacer in 476, he was crowned king of that area. Emperor Zeno of the Eastern Roman Empire reluctantly accepted Odoacer’s kingly role in the west. Odoacer was Arian at heart but tolerated trinitarianism.^{14,15}

Theodoric the Great later became emperor over the Western Roman Empire when he murdered Odoacer in 493. From Constantine onward the secular Roman leaders influenced or ruled over religious affairs. This would also be true of Justinian, who became the Byzantine emperor of the East (527). This area was influenced heavily by Greek culture, and the west by Latin culture.

Justinian I became “co-emperor” of the Eastern Empire with his uncle Justin. His successful military campaigns nearly united the western and eastern halves of the Roman Empire.

- Justinian I issued many legal codes or laws that are referenced even today as the Justinian Codes.
- He claimed to be a Christian and immersed himself into the debate of Christ’s nature, even making religious legal edicts related to it. This led to his unpopularity, especially in the west – with its bishop, Vigilius.¹⁶

Roman Catholic sources have vacillating historical interest in Justinian I, seeing that his positions divided the Christian world.

“The Catholic cannot applaud the great emperor’s ecclesiastical polity, though in this, too, we recognize the statesman’s effort to promote peace and union within the empire....The Corpus Juris [The Justinian Code] is full of laws against paganism (apostasy was punished by death, 10 c., ‘Depag.’, I, 11), Jews, Samaritans (who began a dangerous revolt in 529), Manichaeans,

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14577d.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.ancient.eu/Odoacer/>

¹⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odoacer>

¹⁶ <https://www.thoughtco.com/byzantine-roman-emperor-justinian-118227>

and other heretics.... There was no toleration of dissent. True to the ideal of Constantinople, ***the emperor conceived himself as ‘priest and king,’ supreme head on earth in matters ecclesiastical as well as in the State.... His ecclesiastical tyranny is the one regrettable side of the character of so great a man.***¹⁷

Though there is referenced history that Justinian appointed the “pope” of Rome to be head of the Church, the empire was limited in scope and his iron rule over secular and religious matters made Justinian that head.¹⁸ Under his reign, the bishops of Rome were appointed by his decrees.¹⁹ Over 50 bishops gathered in 536 A.D. at a meeting that was dubbed the Standing Council of Bishops. One decision created an interesting sidelight when Bishop Menas revealed how controlled the Church was by the emperor, stating that nothing could take place in ecclesiastical affairs without the emperor’s “will and command.”²⁰

- Justinian assumed that the emperor had the right and duty to regulate laws related to worship, theological opinions and church discipline.²¹
- He actually decreed five centers of religious influence in the Empire: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.²²

By the end of the sixth century, the church in the Eastern Empire was tied to the imperial government. In the west, Christianity was subject to the laws and customs of nations that then ruled segments of land.²³

If the antichrist “little horn” would “wear out the saints” for time times and dividing of time, when and to whom might that apply? Questions continue to linger.

“Christianity” is Morphed Again

Gregory Anicius, later known as Pope Gregory I, served as bishop of Rome from 590 to 604. He insisted that the ecclesiastical head of Christianity should be centered in Rome and not in the east. Emperor Phocis of the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire (602–610) agreed.

- In 602–603 Phocis “acknowledged that the bishop of Rome was the “head of all the churches.”²⁴
- ***This truly began the rise of ecclesiastical power of the bishop of Rome.***

Might this be the fulfilling issue of the “little horn” of Daniel 7?

¹⁷ <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/Justinian-I>

¹⁸ <http://www.christian-history.org/pope-vigilius.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.otherpapers.com/Religion/Rise-of-Papacy-Power/20388.html>

²⁰ <http://docs.exdat.com/docs/index-193831.html?page=15>

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_church_of_the_Roman_Empire

²² Cairns, Earle; *Christianity Through the Centuries* (1996), as noted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_church_of_the_Roman_Empire

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Cairns, Earle; *Christianity Through the Centuries*, p. 161.

<http://browseinside.harpercollins.ca/index.aspx?isbn13=9780310208129>

Muslim conquest began to clash with the Roman Empire, beginning in 634. By the following century much of the land of the eastern Christian world was under Muslim rule.

Later, in the European amphitheater, conflicts waged, especially between the Lombards and the Franks. The bishop of Rome, Zachary (741–752), helped to orchestrate the crowning of Pepin the Younger as king of the Franks. Zachary's successor, Bishop Stephen II (752–757), continued in great favor with this king. Pepin gratefully donated conquered land in Italy to the papacy in ~756. A subsequent king of France, Charlemagne, codified this donation in 781. The new Roman Bishop, Leo III, had crowned him as king the previous year (780)! Leo III, for the first time, claimed the title of "Pope."

- This affirmation by Charlemagne **formalized the union of a church and state within that donated land – then called the Papal States.**
- This "union" would, with brief exceptions, last until 1870.
- The papacy had full secular authority over the peoples of this area (rule and taxation).²⁵

Might this church–state rule have a fulfilling dimension to Daniel 7?

Seven very significant events occurred in the Roman Empire to this point:

1. The Nicaean Council (325), under Constantine, which established the doctrine of the Trinity. This marked the beginning of an attempt to unify what Christianity stood for – albeit under secular rule.
2. The Edict of Thessalonica (380) under Theodosius I, establishing Nicaean Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire
3. The Theodosius I decrees (between 389 and 391), banning paganism, formalized the Empire's "Christianity"
4. The ecclesiastical power of Bishop Ambrose by humiliating Roman Emperor Theodosius I in 390
5. Muslim conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire, causing, by the sixth century, a localizing of "Christianity" to Rome
6. The affirmation of the Roman Church and State by Charlemagne during the "reign" of Pope Leo III
7. The growing secular power of "Popes" Zachary and Leo III

Intriguingly, it was the act of crowning Charlemagne by Pope Leo III that began what is today known as the "Holy Roman Empire." "Behind this lay the conviction that Christendom should be a single political unit in which religion and governance would be combined to serve one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is enthroned in heaven above all earthly rulers."²⁶

Might Leo III be the power referred to as the "little horn" or do other prophetic issues come into play?

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_States

²⁶ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Holy_Roman_Empire

The Middle Ages – the “Dark Ages”

Ever since Emperor Nero (54–68 A.D.), the secular versus religious powers waxed and waned in authoritarian rule over Christianity. These leaders, in turn, influenced doctrine and even life and death over their subjects.

“Pope” Gregory the Great, who came into power in 590, laid the foundation for an elaborate administrative papal machine for the Roman church. When Leo III rose in power (795–816), governing the Papal States, ***the authority of the Roman Christian church permanently strengthened.***

- However, the militant inroads of Islam – and
- Competing religious powers throughout the east gave an air of theocratic competition.

When Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) issued a decree, *Dictatus Papae*, declaring that the pope alone could appoint or depose bishops, King Henry VI rejected it. Gregory excommunicated him. This led to a dramatic public penance in the snow.²⁷

Might Gregory VII be “little horn” of Biblical proportions?

When Pope Urban II in 1095 proclaimed a “holy war” against Islam because of its conquest of Jerusalem by the Islamic Turks, he assured any person that their sins would be forgiven if they would fight in the Crusades. By this time, apostolic Christianity had become irrevocably corrupt and supremely powerful.

Was this ninth century leader the beginning of the Daniel 7 prophecy?

The power of the church was rising over secular leaders.

Inquisitions Began

It is difficult to know what triggered the leaders of the Catholic world to slaughter “heretics.” Demon possession unquestionably controlled the logic and their insatiable lust for power.

- Many historians suggest that this ravenous urge to slaughter began with Pope Urban II in 1095 in support of those first bloody Crusades.
- Others claimed that the organized drive to destroy innocent Christians (Waldensians and Albigenses), which was initiated by Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), started the “wearing out” of those with ***pure faith*** in Christ.
- Regardless, millions of lives were lost over the next six centuries. This horror commenced in the ninth century. Hunting down “heretics” and torturing or killing them became a formalized function of the Roman Church!

“Everywhere it existed, the ‘Holy Office’ of the Inquisition spread its tentacles of fear.

²⁷ Wikipedia, “History of Christianity during the Middle Ages.”

“When an inquisitor arrived in an area he called for reports of anyone suspected of heresy, sometimes offering rewards to spies who would report suspected heretics. Those suspected were imprisoned to await trials. The trials were held in secret and the inquisitor acted as judge, prosecutor, and jury. The accused had no lawyer. It was often simpler to confess to heresy than to defend oneself, especially since torture was often employed until the accused was ready to confess.

“Because church and state had not been kept separate, the church powers could call upon the government to use its power against the convicted heretics. Anyone who fell back into heresy after repentance was turned over by the Inquisition to the regular government to be put to death. Most of those condemned to death were burned at the stake, but some were beaten to death or drowned. [Laura I-licks, editor; *The Modern Age: The History of the World in Christian Perspective*, vol. 11 (A Beka Books Publications; Pensacola, Florida; 1981).

“Even after the death of a victim, his punishment was not ended. The property of condemned heretics was confiscated, leaving his family in poverty.

“It is important here to emphasize Rome’s role in the brutality of the Inquisition. Roman Catholic apologists are quick to point out that it was the state that put heretics to death. This is an alibi meant to excuse the Vatican’s role in the atrocities. However, Dollinger, the leading 19th century Catholic historian, stated: ‘The binding force of the laws against heretics lay not in the authority of secular princes, but in the sovereign dominion of life and death over all Christians claimed by the Popes as God’s representatives on earth, as [Pope] Innocent III expressly states it.’

“In other words, the secular arm of the state acted only as it was pressured to do so by the popes. Even kings who hesitated to commit genocide on their own populaces were spurred into action by their fear of papal excommunication or subversive Catholic activities within their kingdoms” (from historian J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger).²⁸

One must conclude that satanic possession drove what was called the “Holy Roman Empire.” Catholic “Christianity” itself blasphemed God by assuming divine prerogatives. The dignity of an individual was degraded by fiendish men claiming to represent God.

Might this be the point where the saints are “worn out” and God is blasphemed? What about that “time, times and dividing of time”? How might that fit into this prophecy? Do those historical time periods really match this prophecy?

Evil Agendas

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) rose within the Catholic world as a philosopher, theologian, professor and author of many works considered Catholic dogma today, especially the many-volumed *Summa Theologica*. He formally justified the killing of “heretics” or individuals who opposed Catholic beliefs.²⁹

John Wycliffe (1330–1384) later attacked the corruptions within the Roman Church, especially the sale of indulgences, belief in transubstantiation and that tradition had added to Biblical

²⁸ <http://www.mtc.org/inquis.html>

²⁹ <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3011.htm>

truth, and directly challenged the Pope's authority. John Huss (1369–1415) soon joined in the resistance and was later burned to death by the Catholics for his beliefs.

Opposition against the Roman Church grew and sparked the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the Wittenberg Church door October 31, 1517. Other leaders joined the resistance, and its success swept through Europe as the Protestant Reformation."³⁰

An arrow was thrust into the Roman Church's authority base. Their lust for power drove those "elites" to resist the rapidly spreading Protestant influence. This accelerated when Ignatius Loyola organized the *Society of Jesus*, later known as the Jesuits, in 1534. By 1540 Pope Paul III formally adopted them as a new Catholic Order.

- Its main goal was to stop the Protestant Reformation (known as the Counter-Reformation).
- The Church of Rome became desperate.
- This society was permitted to use murder, deceit, political subversion, infiltration, tyranny and immorality.³¹
- They instigated revolutions, demanded absolute obedience in their order, and used intimidation, blackmail and bribery.

"Jesuit Professor Adam Weishaupt had created the Order of the Illuminati in 1776 in Bavaria, Germany. These Illuminati followers became the Jacobins – a major force responsible for the French Revolution."³²

Might the horrendous work of the Jesuits be fulfilling the prediction of Daniel 7:8, 21, and 25?

Historians have linked the Jesuits to the Masons, Knights of Malta and growing secular influence through their educational institutions.³³

They introduced "spiritual exercises" which are today, under various names, infiltrating the Protestant world. This has morphed into many forms of mysticism where "self" is honored, even worshiped. The Jesuit agenda preserved little of the apostolic faith. Any picture of "holiness" was a front for its greater purpose of geopolitical control.³⁴

How shall we think?

There are many ways that Daniel 7:8, 21 and 25 is understood by scholars. The "little horn" rises in power from the Roman Empire scene. It boldly speaks against God and is represented by a person.

³⁰ <http://www.theopedia.com/protestant-reformation>

³¹ <http://ia902707.us.archive.org/35/items/jesuitsinhistory00macp/jesuitsinhistory00macp.pdf>

³² <https://deusnexus.wordpress.com/2013/11/29/jesuits-behind-politics/>

³³ <http://voxfux.com/features/jesuits1.html>

³⁴ <http://www.lighthouse Trails Research.com/The-Jesuit-Agenda-FINAL.pdf>

- History claims many possible leaders and/or events who/which might fulfill this prophecy.
- Many scholars suggest that to explain verses 23-26 requires a dependency on the timing period of *“time times and dividing of time.”*
- Is it 1260 years? Or – might it really be three and a half years, as the Aramaic text suggests? Are there two rises of the antichrist, as suggested in Daniel? Has too much interpretation been assigned to a Roman Emperor’s “declaration” of papal authority? Or, perhaps, are there additional issues to penetrate and include in this prophetic understanding?

How shall we think? Cautiously. Since the Western Roman Empire fell in 476, might that *“little horn”* actually precede that time? Or, since the church and state of 781 didn’t crumble until the Italian armies invaded Rome in 1870, might there be points within that period that clarify Daniel 7? Any decree that makes the bishop (pope) of Rome a religious authority must “stick” and fit the prophecies. That, too, is tenuous to pinpoint. ***Since that “little horn” is burned to death in 7:11 (cf. Revelation 20:20), might much of Daniel 7 be actually referring to the very end of time?***

Concern for Sylvester I and his “Sabbath” laws keeps arising. ***Might that be the “little horn” that later grew?*** We search for precision and understanding that can withstand the assaults of wise Biblical and historical minds. We ask for caution, thoughtful study and heaven’s wisdom as these issues are weighed. The answer seems to be couched in *time* and the two papal rises.

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