

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF REVELATION THROUGH BIBLE PROPHECY

8 Identifying the Antichrist's Agenda

A fascinating story from Greek mythology warns against deception dressed in religious clothes. The Greeks, unable to defeat the Trojans, resorted to deception. They built a huge wooden horse and delivered it to the gates of Troy, declaring it was an offering to the goddess Athena. But armed Greek soldiers were hiding inside the horse. The Greeks left it outside the walls of Troy and sailed away. Only to return under the cover of the night, when their soldiers opened the gates and let them in.

Could it be that there's a Trojan horse in the midst of the Christian Church? Could millions be deceived and not know it? Satan's greatest deceptions are religious ones. Satan disguises error as truth. Satan's master deception, his Trojan horse under the guise of religion, is a counterfeit day of worship.

Daniel's Amazing Dream: At the beginning of our series, we learned about King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image, recorded in chapter two of Daniel's book. Now we'll look at chapter seven, where Daniel himself had a dream and saw four "beasts" rise up out of the sea. These divinely-inspired dreams are full of vital meaning for us today. Daniel chapter seven is like an instant replay of Daniel chapter two, only better, because it adds more details and looks at things from a different perspective. Daniel's dream starts in the days of Babylon but takes us through the days of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—the four world empires. It takes us through Christianity's early days and shows how, after the death of Christ and His disciples in the early centuries, *a power would arise that would attempt to change the Sabbath.*

Read **Daniel 7:1-8** and consult the illustration on page 3, below. Note that the fourth beast was indescribable—not like a **lion**, a **bear**, a **leopard**, or *anything* Daniel had ever seen before! The fourth was a dreadful, powerful beast with iron teeth and ten horns. Then among those ten horns, Daniel saw *another* horn come up. This "Little Horn" became a great power. Daniel 7:8 says, "In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things"—verse 20 says, "*very* great things." And this Little Horn tried to change the commandments and the very Law of God.

Unlocking The Symbols: Some think interpreting prophecy is anybody's guess. But **2 Peter 1:21, RSV** says, "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's *own* interpretation." That means I shouldn't depend on what I personally think the prophecy means—I shouldn't give my own private interpretation, because the Word of God explains itself, if we let it. God tells us plainly in **Daniel 7:17** and **23** that "These great beasts, which were four, are four kings, which shall arise. . . . The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth." So these beasts are not four individual kings but rather four successive kingdoms or world empires. In fact, The Living Bible says the fourth beast "is the fourth world empire that will rule the earth." Even today we use beasts or animals as symbols. We say the *elephant* symbolizes the Republican Party, and the *donkey* the Democrats. We use the Russian *bear* as a symbol of that country, the regal *lion* for England, the *eagle* for the United States. Just as we use animals as symbols for nations, so does God.

Which kingdoms or nations do the beasts in Daniel's dream represent? Chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel contain remarkable parallels. For instance, the last part of the image had ten toes, and the last beast had ten horns. The four metals and the four

beasts symbolize the same four world empires. The fourth beast is the Roman Empire which fell in A.D. 476 and was divided into the nations of modern Europe represented by the ten horns. This point in history was after the death of Christ, after the days of the apostolic church. In those days when Rome was being divided, something would happen. In **Daniel 7:8** the prophet looked at those ten horns, at the ten divisions of Rome, and saw coming up *among them* a Little Horn which had “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

The Mysterious Little Horn: Where would this power arise? Not in Asia, Africa, or South America, but “among” the ten horns, which means out of the Roman Empire, out of Rome. When would this power arise? **Daniel 7:24** tells us “after” Rome’s fall and subsequent breakup in A.D. 476. This horn had “eyes like the eyes of a man.” **1 Samuel 9:9** says a prophet was called “a seer” because he sees with God’s wisdom and foresight. But this Little Horn power has not the eyes of God, but the eyes of a man. This power is based not on God’s divine wisdom but on merely human wisdom.

Something about the Little Horn made it *fundamentally different* from the first ten horns. **Daniel 7:24** says the Little Horn power would be “diverse” or (RSV) “different from the former ones,” the former ten. The first ten divisions of the Roman Empire became the modern nations of Western Europe and are all *political* in nature. This “Little Horn” would be different or “diverse” in that it proved to be a religious power (or at least a hybrid, being part religious and part political—a religio-political entity).

Daniel 7:8, 11 & 30 emphasize that this “Little Horn” had “a mouth speaking great things . . . very great things.” Modern translations say, “great boasts,” “pompous words,” *etc.* Finally, **Daniel 7:25** divulges that “He [the Little Horn power] shall speak great words against the most High.” Clearly, then, God is telling us that this power—this religious power which was “different” from all the political powers of Europe, this power that arose in Rome after the breakup of the Roman Empire—would make great claims, great decrees. It would speak pompously, boastfully, even claiming infallible power to change God’s Law and the day of worship! Now, of course, we know that this is the strategy of the Devil. He works through people (sometimes even good people like Peter) and systems to accomplish his purposes.

We know the Roman Catholic Church is responsible for this predicted change for two reasons: (1) It’s the only institution that could have done it, and (2) it admits doing it! A catechism is a set of questions-and-answers used as an official training manual to instruct new church members. On page 50 in *The Convert’s Catechism* we read: “Question: Which is the Sabbath day? Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day. Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.” Again and again, in many official sources, the church brazenly *admits* changing the day!

Who changed the Bible Sabbath? God didn’t. He says in **Malachi 3:6**, “I am the Lord, I do not change.” God established the Sabbath at creation, 2300 years before the Jews. In **Exodus 20:8-10**, he wrote the Sabbath command into the law with His own finger and told us to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” In **Ezekiel 20:12**, he calls the Sabbath “a sign between them and me.” It has been God’s sign down through the centuries.

Jesus didn’t change the Sabbath. According to **Luke 4:16**, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, “as his custom was.” In **Matthew 24:20** Jesus said that the disciples would be keeping the Sabbath 40 years after the cross. **Hebrews 13:8** tells us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

The apostles didn’t change the Sabbath. **Acts 13:42-44** shows that the Apostle Paul taught a whole city to keep the Sabbath. The apostles wouldn’t change it because Peter plainly said in **Acts 5:29**, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Revelation 1:10 tells us that John was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day. But which day is the Lord’s Day? **Luke 6:5** tells us that the Sabbath is Jesus’ day (see also Mark 2:27, 28 and Matthew 12:8). So how did God’s Sabbath get changed? How did Sunday worship come about?

There were a variety of social and religious factors involved, but John Eadie gives us an idea of the distinction between the two days: “Sabbath . . . A Hebrew word signifying rest . . . Sunday was a name given by the heathens to the first day of the week, because it was the day on which they worshipped the sun.” Bible Encyclopedia p.561 John Eadie, D.D., LL.D.

Worship on Sunday was common because it a day dedicated to the sun. Constantine was a Roman Emperor who decided to unite his empire on a common day of worship and therefore enforced a day of rest in honor of the sun. In a decree issued in 321 A.D. he wrote, “On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all the shops be closed.” This was the first Sunday law, and it was issued in honor, not of Christ, but of the sun! Constantine’s coins have his image on one side and the sun on the other.

The March 1994 Catholic World, p.895 states, "The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom . . . There is, in truth, something royal, kingly about the sun, making it a fit emblem of Jesus, the Sun of Justice. Hence the Church in these countries would seem to have said, 'Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus." There were three reasons why Sunday worship came into the church: (a) Constantine wanted to unite his empire; (b) Roman church leaders wanted to convert the pagans, and (c) there was strong anti-Semitism .

The Catholic Church Council of Laodicea records the first prohibition of keeping the Bible Sabbath. "Christians shall not Judaize," that is, "they shall not keep the Sabbath, and be idle on Saturday. But the Lord's Day they shall especially honor, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day." Here, the church council, is declaring their own Lord's Day to replace the Bible Sabbath.

The Catholic Convert's Catechism clearly answers the question of why the day was changed.

"Question: Which is the Sabbath day?

Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Question: Why then do we observe Sunday instead of Sabbath?

Answer: Because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

This is confirmed by the Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 153 which states, "The church, after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath of the seventh day of the week to the first. made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord's Day." They call the Sabbath commandment the third commandment because the commandment against image worship was dropped and the tenth commandment was divided into two.

So, clearly it was the Roman church leaders who changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. So we have to ask - should follow the Bible or tradition? Does anyone have the authority to change God's law which was written in tables of stone with his finger? In **Psalm 89:34** God says, "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips."

It's a matter of authority. Will we follow Jesus or the leaders of the church? Will we follow the Bible, or what man says? According to the Catholic Church, "The authority of the church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scriptures, because the Church had changed . . . the Sabbath to Sunday, not by command of Christ, but by its own authority." (Canon and Tradition, p. 263) When you love Christ, He is your final authority and the church must obey Him and His word.

Popular thinking says that tradition—if old and long-standing—should be honored. If that were so, then prostitution, as "the world's *oldest* profession," deserves great respect from all of us! But how old a practice is has no bearing at all on how valid it is. *Antiquity of error* proves only that we've been going wrong for a long time! Besides, if a tradition's long-standing practice is what should impress us, then it's no contest—the seventh-day Sabbath of the Lord, going all the way back to Creation, wins hands down!

Jesus voiced Heaven's view of man-made tradition in **Matthew 15:3, 6, & 9** and says quite plainly it is worshipping Him "in vain."

A Question of Authority

People ask me, "What difference does a day make?" The whole issue is not a matter of *days* but a choice of *masters*. We're not talking about mere days. We're talking about masters and allegiance to, loyalty to, the master of our choice. In the final analysis, who is our Master? Jesus—or church leaders? Days, as such, may not be important, but the Bible is. Will we follow the traditions of misguided men or the Word of God? The choice is yours. The Apostle Peter boldly declared: "We ought to obey God rather than men." **Acts 5:29**.

From Genesis to Revelation: The very first cardinal appointed by the Roman Catholic Church in the United States was Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore. He was a brilliant scholar. His book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, sold millions of copies in America. This is what he said on page 89 of that book: "You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day we (Catholics) never sanctify."

Won't you choose to follow Christ and pray about keeping His Sabbath? Won't you consider the joy of a deeper friendship with Jesus? Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love." (John 15:10) Jesus wants you to have a rich and full relationship with Him and you calls you leave behind old traditions and follow the way of the Bible. It will be worth it!

