

Identifying The Antichrist

Part 1 of 2

Introduction

For centuries, many Christian leaders have identified the pope or the papacy as the Antichrist. These include the great French reformer, John Calvin; Martin Luther; Thomas Cranmer; John Knox; John Wesley; John Wycliffe; John Huss; Jerome and John Melanchthon.

Martin Luther, fourteenth century Catholic theologian turned Protestant reformer, said:

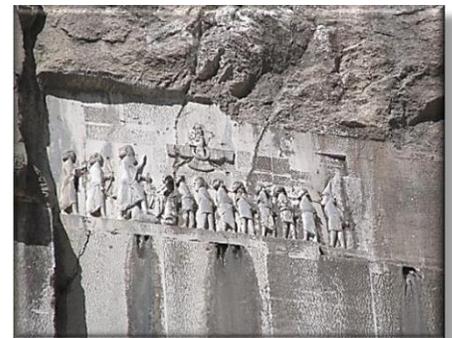
- *“We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist.... personally, I declare that I owe the Pope no other obedience than that to Antichrist.”¹*
- *“Already I feel greater liberty in my heart; for at last I know that the pope is Antichrist, and that his throne is that of Satan himself.”²*



Those Protestant convictions have continued into the twenty-first century by some. *However, as the Islamic world has become more violent and intolerant of Christianity, especially in the twenty-first century, many are identifying Islam as the end-time Antichrist.*

The Bible talks about two rises of a single power that defies God and His people. The only way we can really understand the truth on this issue is to:

1. Look at the defining **characteristics** of this “anti-God,” “anti-Christ,” power in the Bible – and
2. Look at the **timing** of when this power comes on the scene of history.



The Behistun Inscription in Northwestern Iran (Ancient Assyria/Persia) displays the "earliest" known depiction of the chiefs of the 10 northern tribes of Israel.

<http://yehweh.org/profiles/blogs/earliest-depiction-of-10-lost-tribe-chiefs-behistuninscription>

Important Background History

The *ten northern tribes of Israel* had been decimated and taken captive by the Assyrians under kings Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul), Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and his son and

¹ From, L.; *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, Vol. 2 (Washington D.C: *The Review and Herald*, 1948), p. 121.

² Luther, Martin; as quoted in *D'Aubigné*, book 6, chapter 9.

successor, Sennacherib (I Chronicles 5:26; II Kings 15:29, 17:3-6, 18:11-12). ***That “northern kingdom” finally fell in 722 B.C. to the Assyrians.***

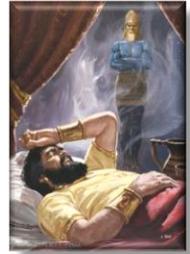
The two remaining southern tribes, ***Judah and Benjamin***, sadly and slowly also drew away from God. Jeremiah was called to warn them, over a 40-year period, that they, too, would be taken captive by a foreign country if they didn't repent.

That prophecy ***did come to pass*** (Jeremiah 25:1-11, 29:1-14). Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem in 605, 594 and 586 B.C.

- Daniel was taken captive in 605 B.C.
- Arioch was captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard at that time.
- In the last siege in 586 B.C., Solomon's temple was destroyed.

God then gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream (Daniel was now in Babylon)

This king's dream troubled him. But – he couldn't remember any of its details, let alone its meaning. His wise men and astrologers were of no help, which infuriated the king to a point that he ordered their death. Daniel heard of this and said to the king's officer: *“Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel* (Daniel 2:15 – NIV).



- Providentially, the king found favor in Daniel's promise that his God would reveal everything!
- God shared the dream with Daniel in a night vision.

The first thing Daniel did was praise God! (Daniel 2:19-23). Then he was escorted into Nebuchadnezzar's presence.

Daniel first gave God the credit: *“But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these”* (Daniel 2:28).

Here is what Daniel revealed:

Kingdom Dreams



When Papal Rome began will be addressed.

Daniel then told King Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold of a great statue he had observed in a dream (Daniel 2).

- Other nations/kingdoms would follow, descending through the image.
- Distinct nations/kingdoms would follow as symbolized in the king's dream.
- Then another fascinating part to this image story occurred.

The king saw a stone that was cut out of a mountain fly through the air, striking the image on its feet, totally destroying it – all parts at once (another “story”).

The stone then grew to cover the whole earth. This represented **God's eternal kingdom** that would eventually be made up of the saints,³ identified later in Hebrews as the **Melchizedekian** order with Christ as the reigning High Priest. It would never be destroyed (cf. Revelation 21:1).



Future

Approximately 50 years later God gave Daniel another prophecy regarding those same kingdoms! This is found in Daniel 7:1-7. The seer was given a dream of four beasts as their representations.



Lion – Babylon

Bear – Medo-Persia

Leopard – Greece

Nondescript Horrible Beast – **Rome and Papal Rome**

God does something very different in this prophecy compared to Nebuchadnezzar's dream image! THIS is where our “story” really begins.

³ Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch; *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts 01961-3473; 2006 – 2nd printing), vol. 9, pp. 560-561.

1. God's kingdom is **not** initially part of this picture, as was the "stone" that destroyed Nebuchadnezzar's image.
2. **While** that **terrible** fourth Roman Empire beast is **still living and active**, God said that the ***Antichrist would make its entrance into history!!!***
3. That means that both "powers" are *contemporary for a period of time!* This is how the prophecy unfolded.

That Roman beast had "ten horns," representing **ten powerful regions** within the Roman Empire. ***Then Daniel records this:***

"As I was contemplating the horns, another horn – a small one – came up between them, and three of the former horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it. This horn had eyes resembling human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant things" (Daniel 7:8 – NET).



This is the first detailed prophecy of the Antichrist.

Whoever its leader is, it represents a person! He is defying God by his **words** or **decrees**. He is supporting and giving power to the Roman leadership through its horn power symbol.

When the Roman Empire and a Religious Power Collaborated

The early Christian church throughout the Roman Empire was under fierce persecution during its first two centuries. Then Constantine became Rome's emperor (306–337 A.D.). He put a stop to the persecution by the ***Edict of Milan*** in 313 A.D.

- This gave Christianity protection and thereby legal status – ***BUT*** – it did not yet make Christianity the religion of the Empire.
- Constantine retained his loyalty to Mithraism, a pagan religion embedded within the Empire, and worshiped the sun.
- In 314 A.D. *Sylvester I* became Bishop of Rome (today he is called "Pope"). There is a lot of legend surrounding this man. We know that:



1. He did become friends with Constantine.

During his "reign," which lasted till his death in 335 A.D., he influenced Constantine to build several Christian churches in Rome, including the early building which would later become St. Peter's Basilica.



2. He ecclesiastically changed the Sabbath of the seventh day to the first day of the week in 316 A.D.:

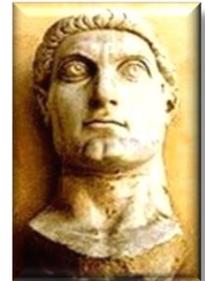
*“If every Lord’s day is to be observed joyfully by the Christians on account of the resurrection, then every **Sabbath on account of the burial is detestably Jewish**. In fact all the disciples of the Lord lamented on the Sabbath, bewailing the buried Lord, and the Jews exulted. But sadness reigned for the fasting apostles. In like manner we are sad, saddened by the burial of the Lord, and rejoice with them in the Lord’s resurrection. Neither in fact is it proper to feast [on the Sabbath] as the Jewish custom observed by the Jews.”⁴ He decreed that the rest of the Sabbath should be transferred to the Lord’s day [Sunday].*

“A contemporary of Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester I was Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine (260–341 A.D.).” He wrote⁵:

“... and all things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has precedence, and is first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath.”⁶

3. It wasn’t long afterward (321 A.D.) that Constantine issued an **Empire-wide** decree mandating the keeping of Sunday.

“On the venerable Day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits: because it often happens that another Day is not so suitable for grain sowing or for vine planting: lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.”



Isn’t it interesting: Roman Christianity wanted Sunday to be the “Lord’s Day” or “Sabbath” **and** Constantine wanted the “Day of the sun” to be a rest day. The god Mithra was also known as the sun god.



Stunning! **We now have early clues** that begin to identify the papacy as the Antichrist!

1. A powerful and unique religious power rises **during** the Roman Empire’s tenure, just like the “little horn” rises on that Roman beast.
2. Verse 25 states that this power tries to **change “set times and laws”** (NIV). We saw this in the decretals to alter the Sabbath.

⁴ <http://biblelight.net/sylvester-I.htm>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Eusebius' Commentary on the Psalms* (Psalm 92, *A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day*), in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXIII, col. 1171 & 1172, and Bernard de Montfaucon’s *Collectio Nova Patrum Et Scriptorum Graecorum* (2 vols., folio, Paris, 1706, quoted in reference 5).

3. By this act this power defies God, which is alluded to in what comes from his “mouth.”
4. With these initial observations, the “*little horn*” Antichrist would emerge in the window of time between 314 and 321 A.D.

If this is indeed the **Antichrist** that Daniel predicted, there must be expectations that this little horn’s influence would become a world power against God’s true people (7:21, 25). That would mean that this “Christianity” would become a world religion (which is predicted to be at the end of time in Revelation).

Amazingly, Civil Rome Enters Church Administration

Purity of the Christian faith, by now, had been severely tainted within the Roman Empire. It was associated with a bruising conflict between church leaders as to what was Biblical truth. Constantine saw this and resolved to bring the disagreements to a halt.

What was happening in Rome led to the deepest Christian apostasy. This Roman Czar wanted the conflict of “beliefs” to cease!



Constantine called the first “world” Christian conference named the **Council of Nicaea** (325 A.D.). He acted as the chairman, though still honoring paganism – important! Over 300 bishops and Christian leaders attended. *Sylvester I* didn’t attend but sent representatives.



Emperor Constantine began by saying: “**Division in the church is worse than war.**” He mandated resolution of questions – especially regarding the divinity of Christ. Amazing, isn’t it?!⁷

- This was the first step in making Christianity a “world” religion under secular leadership.
- Out of the deliberations came the Nicene Creed (used by Christian churches today). The divinity of Christ was upheld.

January, 379 A.D., Theodosius I (known as *Theodosius the Great*) became the last Roman emperor to rule over both the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire. His reign lasted until 395 A.D.



⁷ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-28/325-first-council-of-nicaea.html>

In 380 A.D. his ***Edict of Thessalonica*** ordered all subjects of the Roman Empire to profess the faith in the bishops of Rome **and** of Alexandria [another center of Christianity]. *Nicene Christianity* became the state religion of the Roman Empire. **Theodosius then mandated that the citizens of the empire attend the Christian churches.**⁸

Paganism, as it had existed, in effect was outlawed. *Christianity became a church/state religion, headed by a strange legal bond between civil and religious Roman leaders!*

BUT – Roman Christianity quickly morphed into paganism!

How Paganism Entered the Roman Church

In the nineteenth Century, an Episcopal Priest converted to Roman Catholicism. He quickly became known as Cardinal Newman. He was brilliant and wrote an amazing book about early Roman Christianity called *The Development of the Christian Religion*. Note carefully another of his writings and, later, that of other historians:

- He described how Roman Christianity brought pagan “things” into the church, “in order to recommend the *new religion* to the heathen:” “The use of temples ... dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles, holy water, asylums [hermitages, monasteries and convents]; [pagan] holy-days, processions, sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, ... turning to the East, images, ... all became part of the Church.”⁹
- Mary worship came from ancient Babylon, where the virgin mother goddess was worshiped under the name *Ishtar*. Elsewhere in the Near East, the mother goddess was called *Astarte*, *Ashtoreth*, *Persephone*, *Artemis*, *Diana of Ephesus*, *Venus*, and *Isis*. This goddess, considered to be greater than any god, was called by these heathen the “virgin mother, merciful mother, Queen of Heaven, and my lady” (which is what “Madonna” means in Italian). Langdon says she was often sculpted in mother and infant images or as a “mater dolorom” (sorrowful mother), interceding for men with a wrathful god. And thus ancient paganism was brought into the churches and lives of Christians.¹⁰ Laing mentions several other corruptions by which the mother goddess was worshiped by heathens, which Rome adopted into Christianity: holy water, votive offerings, elevation of sacred

⁸ <http://www.ramsheadpress.com/messiah/ch10.html>;

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2WuMyEzani8C&pg=PA6#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁹ Newman, Cardinal J. H.; *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1920 edition, p.373 [Roman Catholic].

¹⁰ Langdon, S.H.; *Semitic Mythology*, 1931 edition, pp. 12-34, 108-111, 341-344.

objects (lifting of the host), the priests' bells, the decking of images, processions, festivals, prayers for the dead, the worship of relics and the statues of saints.¹¹

During the time that *Theodosius I* oversaw some of these changes, the Bishop of Rome was *Damasus I*.

- He appointed Jerome Eusebius as his confidential secretary and commissioned him to develop a Latin Bible based on the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint Bibles.
- This, the *Vulgate Bible*, became the main Bible of the Roman Empire.

Did this new form of Roman Christianity persecute the saints of God as it said the “little horn” would do?

- The history of “forced worship” later led to persecution and martyrdom, and is recorded in numerous historical documents. The Roman Church dominated the world’s religions during those times. The true believers in the body of Christ went underground for nearly one thousand years. It was only when the Protestant Reformation emerged that these saints came into the light.
- This history is briefly outlined in <http://www.ramsheadpress.com/messiah/ch10.html> with important references to the brutality and coercion of the now-Roman Catholic Church.
- When the Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. the era of Papal Rome easily transitioned.



Daniel had more to say about this “*little horn*.”

- “*I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them*” (Daniel 7:21).
- Whatever the “new Christianity” claimed, it was in the deepest apostasy.

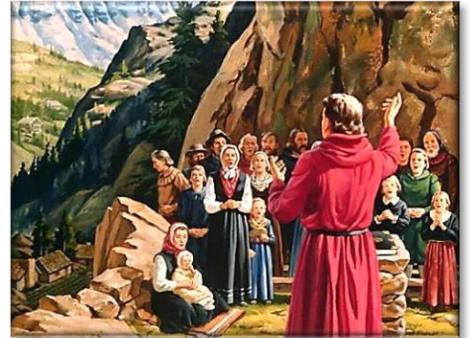
As papal power rose and, later, the Protestant Reformation emerged, the Roman Catholic Church’s history became bloody (see Appendix I).

Daniel has more to say about this “First Rise” of the Papacy!

It is important to know – and there is extensive history regarding this, that:

¹¹ Laing, Gordon J.; *Survivals of Roman Religion*, 1931 edition, pp. 92-95, 123-131,238-241;
<http://www.remnantofgod.org/whoreofbabylon.htm>

- Quietly and privately there were thousands who were keeping the pure Christian, Biblical faith. They were loyal to the early meaning of the Apostolic faith.
- The Waldensians, Albigenses and Lollards are examples of those groups, which were mainly in Italy and France. They would go out to witness by hiding pages of the Bible in things they sold. But they were hunted down. Thousands lost their lives for their faith.



Daniel said that the Antichrist would “wear out the saints of the Most High” (7:25).

Daniel 11:21-28 notes that he:

1. Would be “vile person” (vs 21): “vile” or despised is *baza* (H). It refers to a deeply negative reaction toward someone because they had contempt for God.¹²
2. Would use “flattery” (vs 21): he would make deceitful promises.¹³
3. Would be “deceitful” (vs 23): he would be treacherous and deceitful,¹⁴ falsifying what they say or do.¹⁵
4. Would “spoil” (vs 24): he would plunder others’ possessions and takes their riches.¹⁶
5. Would “overflow” (vss 26): he would lead an army that would conquer and obtain great riches from the spoils.
6. Would have “mischievous” (vs 27): he would be filled with wickedness.
7. Would be “against the holy covenant” (vs 28): he would pointedly undermine God’s redemption plan.

Isn’t it interesting that as Christianity moved further and further away from the Bible, it became intolerant of those who remained loyal to its beliefs! Isn’t it interesting that as satanic rituals and rites were adopted, evil desires to hurt and destroy those who opposed them arose?

The Holy Word of God ceased to be the standard, and tradition became the driving “code” of worship. Roman Catholicism declared:

“The fact that Scripture and Tradition belong together accounts for two rules that direct the way



¹² TWOT

¹³ BDB

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ TWOT

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the Church approaches God's revelation. The first of these rules is stated very simply by Vatican II in these words: It follows from what has been said that the Church does not draw its knowledge of all that God has revealed from holy Scripture alone. That is why both (Tradition and Scripture) must be accepted and respected with equal affection and honour. Secondly, the unbreakable bond between Scripture and Tradition accounts for the fact that for Catholics, ***Tradition is the context within which the Scriptures are interpreted, just as Tradition itself has to be understood and lived with reference to Scripture.***¹⁷

Conclusion Regarding the "First Rise" of the Antichrist

1. The rise of this Antichrist came ***during the era of the Roman Empire***, as the imagery depicts (Daniel 7:8).
2. Early on it blasphemed God, as is seen by the adoption of pagan rites into the very heart of its religion (Daniel 7:8, 25).
3. It tried to change "*times and laws*," depicted by its adoption of pagan feasts and rites, plus decreeing a "Sabbath" that comes out of paganism, worshipping on the day of the sun (Daniel 7:25).
4. It persecuted God's true people taking, perhaps, millions of their lives (Daniel 7:25).

Does the rise of Islam meet the Biblical criterion for the first rise of the Antichrist we have just gone over?

Apparently in his early years Muhammad worked as a "camel driver" between Arabia and Syria. He came into contact with many faiths and it is historically clear that he was aware of Jewish and Christian beliefs.



In his late thirties Muhammad began regularly visiting a cave in Mount Hira not far from his home in Mecca "to seek solitude and contemplation." In 610 A.D. he returned from one such visit and told his wife he had become a prophet, for he had been visited by the angel Gabriel.

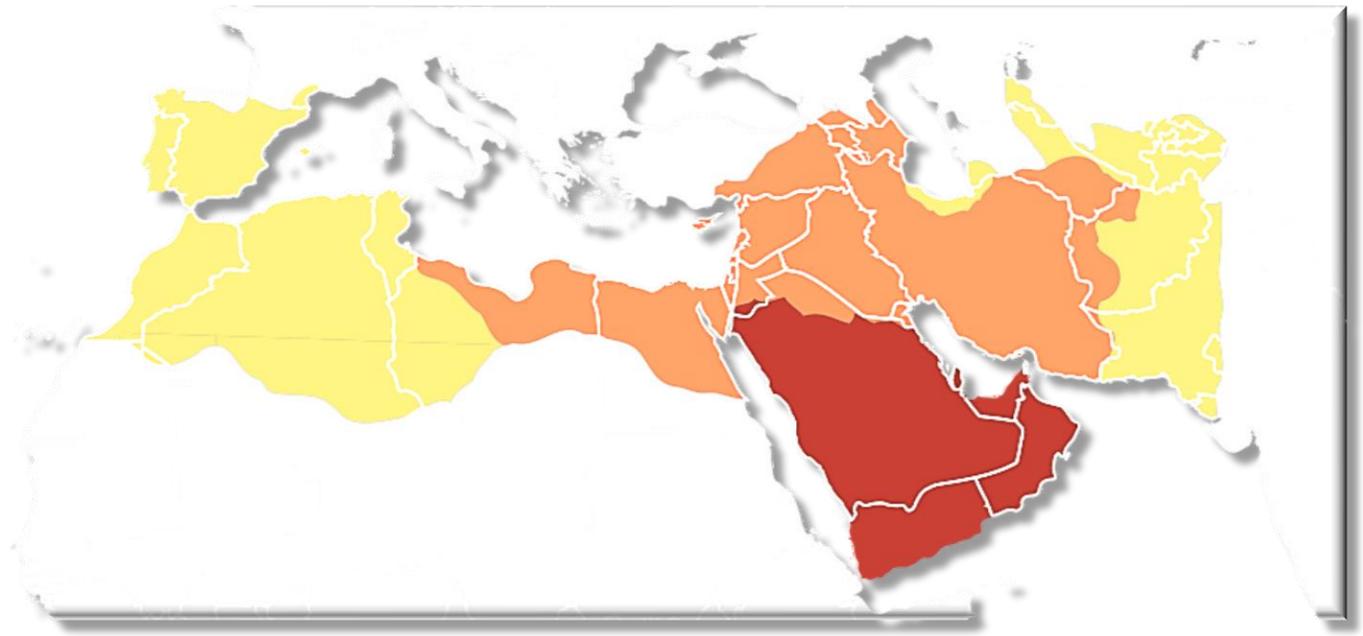
"He was told" that there was only one God – thus monotheism became central to Islam (not unlike the ancient Jewish understanding). Gabriel allegedly dictated to him messages from God which became the Quran. His early years brought few converts. Later, he and his followers developed converts through plunder, violence and coercion.

¹⁷ Hinwood, Bonaventure; *More Answers to Your Questions Catholic* (Human & Rousseau, 1983).

Might this be the Old Testament's description of the Antichrist?

1. This movement did not arise during the time of the tenure of the Roman Empire.
2. It did not arise in the European amphitheater, as is alluded to by the ten horns on the "horrible beast."
3. When Muhammad had his first "vision," the Roman Empire had already crumbled into the dust and Papal Rome was on the rise. This does not fit the introductory prophecies in Daniel.
4. There was no direct effort to "*change*" the laws or times of God. A calendar did emerge from the many dating methods used in the Middle Eastern world at that time – **but** – not to undermine what God had set!
5. The Christians and Jews were **not** enemies of the Islamic world during the life of Muhammad. He believed that they had had divine revelations also. He even made treaties with them. However, after he died, it wasn't long before expansion into the Jewish and Christian territories led the leaders of this "new Islamic world" to begin its history of violence against these peoples. The history of the Crusades followed.¹⁸
6. Daniel said that the "*vile person*" (the Antichrist) comes to power through flattery (11:21), not through military conquest.
7. The seer also notes that when wielding its flagrant power, it resists the purity of the gospel embodied in God's covenant (11:27b-29).

The land that was totally conquered by the new Islamic movement:



¹⁸ http://www.alhewar.com/Saliba_Christians_and_Jews_Under_Islam.htm

Dates: Expansion from 622–750.

Locations: Levant, Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa, Iberia, Gaul, Transoxania, Sindh and Caucasus.

Territorial  Under Muhammad – 622–632

Changes:  Under Rashidun caliphs – 632–661

 Under Umayyad caliphs – 661–750

For the first rise of the Antichrist, the Biblical identity of this leader does not match the Islamic world. Though Islam did expand later, which led to the Crusade wars against Christianity, its geographical limits were maintained. Daniel does note that at the end of time there will be a battle between *apostate Christianity* (“*king of the north*”) and *Islam* (“*king of the south*”) (Daniel 11:25-27a). Islam will fall.

Our next study will focus on the second rise of the Biblical Antichrist.

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Appendix I

1096: Roman Catholic crusaders slaughtered half the Jews in Worms, Germany.

1098: Roman Catholic crusaders slaughtered almost all of the inhabitants of the city of Antioch.

1099: Roman Catholic crusaders massacred 70,000 Muslims and Jews when they captured Jerusalem.

1208–1226: The Albigensian Crusades in southern France: Roman Catholic crusaders slaughtered approximately 20,000 citizens of Beziers, France, on July 22, 1209. Albigensian Christians and Catholics were slain. By the time the Roman Catholic armies finished their “crusade,” almost the entire population of southern France (mostly Albigensian Christians) had been exterminated. During the six centuries of papal Inquisition that began in the 13th century, up to 50 million people were killed. Read what J. A. Wylie’s *The History of Protestantism* has to say about the Crusades against the Abigenses.

1236: Roman Catholic crusaders slaughtered Jews in the Anjou and Poitou regions of western France. The Catholic crusaders trampled to death under their horses 3000 Jews who refused baptism.

1243: Roman Catholic mobs burned alive all the Jews in Berlitz, Germany (near Berlin).

1298: Roman Catholic mobs burned alive all Jews in Rottingen, Germany.

April 26, 1349: Roman Catholic mobs burned to death all Jews in Germersheim, Germany.

1348–1349: The Jews are blamed for the bubonic plague. Author Dave Hunt tells us, “Accused of causing the ‘Black Death’ Jews were rounded up [by Roman Catholic mobs] and hanged, burned, and drowned by the thousands in revenge.”

1389: Roman Catholic mobs murdered 3000 Jews in Prague when they refused to be baptized.

1481–1483: At the direction of the Roman Catholic inquisitors, authorities burned at the stake at least 2000 people during the first two years of the Spanish Inquisition.

1540–1570: Roman Catholic armies butchered at least 900,000 Waldensian Christians of all ages during this 30-year period.

1550–1560: Roman Catholic troops slaughtered at least 250,000 Dutch Protestants via torture, hanging and burning.

1553–1558: Roman Catholic Queen Mary I of England (aka “bloody Mary”) attempted to bring England back under the yoke of papal tyranny. During her reign, approximately 200 men and woman were burned to death at the stake. Her victims included bishops, scholars, and other Protestant leaders.¹⁹



1572: St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. French Roman Catholic soldiers began to kill Protestants in Paris on the night of August 24, 1572. The soldiers killed at least 10,000 Protestants during the first three days. At least 8000 more Protestants were killed as the slaughter spread to the countryside.

1618–1648: The Thirty Years’ War. This bloody, religious war was planned, instigated, and orchestrated by the Roman Catholic Jesuit order and its agents in an attempt to exterminate all the Protestants in Europe. Many countries in central Europe lost up to half their population.

1641–1649: Eight years of Jesuit-instigated Roman Catholic butchery of Irish Protestants claimed the lives of at least 100,000 Protestants.

1685: French Roman Catholic soldiers slaughtered approximately 500,000 French Protestant Huguenots on the orders of Roman Catholic King Louis XIV of France.

Circa 1938–1945: Catholic dictators such as Adolf Hitler and Monsignor Tiso slaughtered approximately six million Jews in Europe prior to and during World War II.

1941–1945: The Roman Catholic Ustashi in the fascist state of Croatia butchered up to one million Serbian Orthodox Christians. Roman Catholic killer squads were often led by Franciscan priests, monks, and friars. This genocide is choreographed by two Jesuit prelates: Aloysius Stepinac and Ivan Saric.²⁰

It is most interesting that the papacy anticipates an Antichrist^{21,22} as does the Islamic world. The latter calls “him” *Masih ad-Dajjal*, who is also an anti-messiah figure.²³ The end-time clash between those ideologies is Biblically christened between the “*king of the south*” and the “*king of the north*.” This contributes to the final chaos that fragments the world.

¹⁹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Assassinat_de_Coligny_et_massacre_de_la_Saint-Barth%C3%A9lemy.jpg (Public Domain)

²⁰ http://amazingdiscoveries.org/R-Reformation_Rome_crusade_slaughter

²¹ www.ducciodiboninsegna.org

²² Miceli, Vincent P., S.J.; *The Antichrist* (Roman Catholic Books, Harrison, N.Y.; 1981).

²³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist