



The **Antichrist** Identified

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“Truth will ultimately prevail where there are pains to bring it to light.”

—*George Washington*, First U.S. President (1732–1799)

“Antichrist is coming” (1 John 2:18), predicted the Holy Bible nearly two thousand years ago. Let’s say this devilish antichrist appeared before your very eyes on TV as you watched the nightly news. How would you recognize him? By his beady red eyes? By the pitchfork he carries? By the numbers 666 emblazoned on his forehead? Hardly. Even Hollywood versions of the antichrist are more subtle than that. The truth is that the only way to detect the real antichrist is to inspect closely what God’s Book actually teaches about this topic. The facts are shocking.

First, let’s examine the word “antichrist” itself. This mysterious word is a combination of a prefix, “anti,” with its primary word, “Christ,” which refers to Jesus Christ Himself. The same chapter in God’s Word that first mentions “antichrist” (1 John 2:18) also exalts Jesus Christ as our Savior (1 John 2:1–2). Get it? Antichrist is only antichrist in relation to Jesus Christ and His free gift of salvation. Thus, it is necessary to understand the real Jesus—and His offer of salvation—in order to discern His archenemy.

The core message of the Bible is that God not only created and loves us, but that He also sent His eternal Son to be the “Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). About two millennia ago, Jesus was born in a humble Bethlehem barn in fulfillment of ancient prophecies (see Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1). He lived a holy life and was finally crucified on a cruel cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. “It is finished!” He shouted triumphantly after an awful period of unimaginable anguish. Then He breathed His last breath (John 19:30). “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3), reports the Word of the Lord.

His lifeless body was then placed in a clammy tomb; but He didn’t stay dead. On the third day after His crucifixion, a shiny angel proclaimed to His grieving followers, “He is risen”! (Matthew 28:6). Forty days later, “He [Jesus] was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”

(Mark 16:19), which is where He sits enthroned today—for a little longer—until He returns “with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). Now, watch closely. In order to enter heaven, we must “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [we] will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Thus, salvation comes to us when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior—personally, directly, one-on-one. The Bible is equally clear that as we journey toward paradise: “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

In other words, Jesus is the only door to the kingdom of God. No man, no woman, no rabbi, pastor, priest, or pope can be our primary go-between. We must repent of our sins (see Luke 13:3), and believe directly in Jesus as our Savior. He is our Mediator and Advocate with the Father (see 1 John 2:1). Jesus also clarified the same truth when He stated so clearly, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, *except through Me*” (John 14:6, emphasis added).

Thus, Jesus Himself is the only way to the Father’s house. No sinner can approach our holy God except through Him. So, don’t be fooled in any way by anyone anywhere.

The Meaning of Antichrist

Back to antichrist—the Greek prefix “anti” has two shades of meaning. The first—the most obvious—means “against.” Thus, antichrist is against Jesus Christ as the only path to heaven. The second meaning is more subtle. “Anti” also means “in the place of.”¹ Therefore, the biblical antichrist is not only against Jesus as our only Savior, but his infernal strategy is to take His place too—so that people look to him for salvation, instead of to Christ Himself. If the antichrist can somehow dupe us into thinking that he sits in the place of Jesus, then we’re ensnared. Like a fish that bites a hidden hook, we’ve been captured by the devil.

The exact word “antichrist” is used only four times in the New Testament, in two little books—1 and 2 John. The particular references are 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 7. John wrote, “Even now many antichrists have come” (1 John 2:18). Many Bible scholars consider those “many antichrists,” who were active in John’s day, to be preliminary antichrists foreshadowing the primary “antichrist” of Bible prophecy.

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, this primary “antichrist” is symbolized as an abominable “little horn” with “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words” (Daniel 7:8). In the New Testament, Paul referred to the same wicked one as “the man of sin ... the son of

perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4). Notice that this antichrist not only “opposes” God, but “sits as God ... showing himself that he is God,” which fits the definition that he is both against Christ and seeks to take Christ’s place. Finally, the book of Revelation describes this same deceptive horror as the beast:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. (Revelation 13:1)

Who is this diabolical “little horn” (Daniel 7:8), this sinister “man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), and monstrous “beast” (Revelation 13:1)? Obviously, the word “beast” is highly symbolic. ABC, CNN, or Fox News will never run a news story about a seven-headed, ten-horned creature, slithering out of the Mediterranean, Pacific, or Atlantic Oceans. Of course not. These prophetic terms are sacred symbols that must be decoded. In a short time, these symbols will be interpreted and the beast identified. Prepare yourself. Like I said earlier, the true facts are shocking.

But first, let’s discover a key clue from those preliminary “many antichrists” that will help us to correctly detect the primary villain. John wrote:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist [primary] is coming, even now many antichrists [preliminary] have come, by which we know it is the last hour. *They went out from us.* (1 John 2:18–19, emphasis added)

Look closely. In New Testament times, those “many antichrists” were not blatant, openly anti-God persons as so many today assume the primary antichrist must be. Instead, John wrote that those early tricksters “went out *from us*.” In using that little word “us,” John meant himself and other Christian leaders. Thus, those early antichrists arose *from inside the church*. Professing to believe in Jesus themselves, they were actually counterfeit Christians led by the devil. “These things I have written to you,” John informed the early believers, “concerning those [the many antichrists] who try to deceive *you*” (1 John 2:26, emphasis added). Thus, the target of those ancient deceivers wasn’t worldly souls lost in sin, but Christ’s own followers. In fact, those first battles raged *within* the church, *not outside* of it.

Further elaborating about “the spirit of the Antichrist ... now already in the world” (1 John 4:3), John exhorted true believers saying, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [the many antichrists], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (verse 4). The only way the early true Christians were enabled to overcome those first-century false Christians (those “many antichrists”) was because the real Jesus lived in their hearts. The same principle applies during earth’s final conflict. In order for us to detect and conquer the master seducer, we must have Jesus and His Word abiding in us.

Here’s one more clue about the nature of the antichrist; yet, this time it applies not to those preliminary “many antichrists” of two thousand years ago, but to the great deceiver predicted in Bible prophecy. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul called the primary antichrist “the son of perdition” (verse 3). What lessons can we learn from this mysterious phrase: *the son of perdition*?

Significantly, the phrase appears only twice in the New Testament. The first time, it was spoken by Jesus Christ Himself, the second time by Paul in reference to the antichrist. The first use illuminates the second use. The first use was spoken by Jesus during a prayer to His Father about the salvation of His own disciples. Jesus said to His Father, “none of them is lost *except the son of perdition*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12, emphasis added). That “son of perdition” was Judas. Now, notice carefully as we read a short time later:

While He [Jesus] was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called *Judas, one of the twelve*, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him [a signal to Christ’s enemies]. But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you *betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?*” (Luke 22:47–48, emphasis added)

This passage reveals deep spiritual insights. Judas, “the son of perdition,” was “one of the twelve” original disciples of Christ. He acted—not from outside the church—but from within its inner circle; Judas had become an apostate, possessed by the devil. “Satan entered Judas” (Luke 22:3), penned Luke. But notice that even when possessed by Satan, and even when he betrayed his Lord, Judas carried out his infamous deed under a pretense of loyalty to the Savior. He even said, “Hail, master” (Matthew 26:49 KJV), before he kissed Jesus.

Behold, the slyest work of the devil. Again, Judas was a disciple of Jesus Christ. With his own lips, he professed loyalty to the Savior. He even kissed Him. Yet, beneath that warm kiss of affection was a cold-hearted

Lucifer waging war on God's Son. Such was "the son of perdition" at work! Now, don't miss this: Paul called the primary antichrist "the son of perdition" too. In this same manner, we can expect the great deceiver to verbally honor Jesus Christ—just like Judas did.

The Importance of Studying the Bible for Ourselves

I've never heard anything like this! you may be thinking, *even from prophecy teachers*. True enough. But if you think about it, what is commonly believed is often dead wrong. People thought the Titanic was unsinkable; yet, she sank like lead. Many techno-experts believed the infamous Y2K computer glitch would trigger a global economic meltdown as the world's clocks ticked over to A.D. 2000; yet, January 1, 2000, arrived with hardly a hiccup. It's obvious, isn't it? We humans often make mistakes. It's the same for the Bible teachings about the antichrist—most people widely miss the mark.

To further illustrate, a few years ago I held a prophecy seminar in Corinth, Mississippi. En route by plane, I landed in Memphis, Tennessee. After picking up my rental car, I asked the man behind the desk for directions to Corinth. "Take this map," the attendant said calmly, "Get on I-55 and head south. You'll get there by and by." I had no reason to doubt this man. Trustingly, I was soon rolling down Highway 55. But after twenty minutes or so, a still small voice started nagging my conscience. *Check the map yourself*, the voice urged.

At first, I ignored that voice. Finally, I reached over, grabbed the map, and took a look. To my amazement, I discovered that I-55 was heading straight south to Jackson, Mississippi, while Corinth was dead east! Like a sheep that had temporarily lost its shepherd, I quickly turned around, drove back to Memphis, found the right road, and finally made it to my seminar.

I learned this lesson: no matter how much I trust someone to give me directions, I must check the map for myself. The same principle applies to the truth about the antichrist (or any biblical topic). We may trust that today's prophecy teachers know their stuff and won't lead us astray; but in the final analysis, we must look at God's map (His Book) for ourselves. So far, as we have done this, we have discovered that in the first century, those "many antichrists" were *deceptive persons inside Christianity*, which the early Christians themselves had to face and overcome. Next, we also read that Judas, one of Jesus Christ's own followers, was "the son of perdition"—which is the same phrase that Paul applied to the great deceiver. *That's what God's map says.*

Keep reading. You are about to discover many other things you won't learn at the movies.

The Quest to Discover the Beast

It's almost time to unmask the real antichrist of Bible prophecy. What does the book of Revelation actually teach about the beast? In chapter 13, John wrote:

I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. (verse 1)

The beast ... was like a leopard ... a bear ... a lion. (verse 2)

The dragon gave him [the beast] his power, his throne, and great authority. (verse 2)

He [the beast] was given a mouth speaking great things. (verse 5)

It was granted him [the beast] to make war with the saints. (verse 7)

Authority was given him [the beast] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (verse 7)

If you study prophecy carefully, you will discover that there is one Old Testament chapter that perfectly parallels Revelation 13—like a key fits into a lock. It's Daniel 7. Notice the parallels:

Four great beasts came up from the sea. (verse 3)

The first was like a lion. (verse 4)

A second, like a bear. (verse 5)

Another, like a leopard. (verse 6)

A fourth beast, dreadful and terrible [dragon-like] ... had ten horns. (verse 7)

Another horn, a little one. (verse 8)

This horn ... [had] a mouth speaking pompous words. (verse 8)

The same horn was making war against the saints. (verse 21)

Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 both mention a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a dragon-like beast with ten horns. In Revelation 13, the main beast has “a mouth speaking great things” and makes “war with the saints.” In Daniel 7, the little horn does exactly the same: he also has “a mouth speaking great things” and makes “war against the saints.” Therefore, most scholars agree

—whether Protestant or Catholic—that Daniel’s little horn is identical to the primary beast in Revelation 13.

Now here’s a key question: *what does a beast in prophecy represent?* A man? A computer? We don’t have to guess, for the Bible provides a plain answer. In Daniel 7—the chapter that perfectly parallels Revelation 13—an angelic interpreter explained, “The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon the earth” (Daniel 7:23). Thus, a beast is a kingdom. That’s settled. The four beasts are four kingdoms.

In Daniel 7, the first beast was “a lion” with “eagle’s wings” (Daniel 7:4). Daniel was living during the rule of ancient Babylon (7:1); and in fact, a winged lion was a symbol of that ancient power. Most scholars agree that the lion represented Babylon, which was conquered by Persia (symbolized by the bear), which was defeated by Greece (symbolized by the leopard), which was then absorbed by the mighty Roman Empire (symbolized by the strong, dragon-like beast). Visit any library. Study history. These are facts. It’s also a fact that the classic date for the fall of the Roman Empire is A.D. 476, after which it was divided by ten primary nations—the Vandals, Heruli, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Suevi, Burgundians, Lombards, and Alemanni.

Now, notice carefully the following eight prophetic details about the “little horn” in Daniel 7—which, remember, is the same power as “the beast” of Revelation 13. The “little horn” in Daniel 7 would:

1. Rise out of the fourth beast, or Roman Empire (Daniel 7:7–8). Thus, it would be specifically a Roman power.
2. Rise among the ten horns—which pinpoints its location as Western Europe (Daniel 7:8).
3. Rise into its greatest power after the ten horns (Daniel 7:8, 24) were in place—that is, after A.D. 476, the classic date for the fall of the imperial Roman Empire.
4. Uproot three of the first horns, plucking them out of history by the roots (Daniel 7:8).
5. Have “eyes like the eyes of a man” (Daniel 7:8). Thus, it would be centered in a man, and have human leadership.
6. Have “a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8 KJV). It would be exceedingly boastful, making astounding claims for itself.
7. Make “war against the saints” (Daniel 7:21). Thus, it would persecute the church of God.

8. It would continue throughout history, all the way until the day of “judgment ... [when] the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom” (Daniel 7:21–22).

Don't miss this point: the primary “antichrist” of prophecy—the ultimate villain, the great deceiver, the master seducer—must fulfill each of these prophetic specifications. Not one detail can be missed. Not only that, but the little horn or beast must also share the same characteristics of the preliminary many antichrists of 1 and 2 John that arose *from within the church*. Plus, it must be like Judas, “the son of perdition” who, while verbally professing loyalty to Christ, betrayed Him with a kiss. Are you ready to find out who the real antichrist is?

Ready or not, you are about to discover the fulfillment of prophecy.
Hold onto your seats.

Unmasking the Antichrist

The simple equation $2 + 2$ has only *one* answer. There's also only *one* TV talk show host named Oprah Winfrey, and only *one* basketball player named Michael Jordan. Of all the nations existing on planet earth today, only *one* can claim 1776 as its birthday: the United States of America. It's the same with the “little horn” of Daniel 7, which is the same as the “beast” of Revelation 13. A careful inspection of those eight prophetic details, compared to history, yields only *one* possible fulfillment. In the 1500s, as the Protestant Reformation in Germany was gathering steam, the bold Martin Luther—who founded the Lutheran Church—hit the nail on the head when he wrote that the prophet Daniel:

Saw the terrible wild beast which had ten horns, which by the consent of all is the Roman empire, he also beheld another *small horn* come up in the middle of this. *This is the Papal power*, which rose up in the middle of the Roman empire.²

Luther wasn't alone in this conclusion. Church historian John Foxe, author of the Christian classic, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, echoed the same conviction when he wrote:

Thus far our history of persecution [against Christians] has been confined principally to the pagan world [the pagan Roman Empire]. We come now to a period when persecution, *under the guise of Christianity*, committed more enormities than ever disgraced the annals of paganism. Disregarding the maxims and

the spirit of the Gospel, *the papal Church*, arming herself with the power of the sword, vexed the Church of God and wasted it for several centuries, a period most appropriately termed in history, the “dark ages.” The kings of the earth, *gave their power to the “Beast.”*³

Here, Mr. Foxe refers to “a period of persecution” even worse than that propagated by pagan Roman emperors such as Nero, Decius, or Diocletian. This time, however, during the Dark Ages, horrible atrocities were perpetrated “under the guise of Christianity” by “the papal church” led by popes who waged war on other Christians in the name of Jesus Christ. Judas-like, such popes and priests professed a kiss of loyalty to Jesus, essentially saying, “Hail, Master!” However, they denied Him by burning His followers at the stake. Some historians estimate 50 to 100 million martyrs were butchered as heretics because they disagreed with the Roman Church.

One group of Bible-believing Christians living peacefully in northern Italy, called the Waldenses—the “martyrs of the mountains”—were mercilessly slaughtered by papal armies, especially in the horrific campaigns from 1665–1686. Atrocities are too grotesque to be described. Men, women, and children perished together. For sober details, read *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, or *History of the Waldenses*, by J. A. Wylie.

Back to Martin Luther. He didn’t come to the conclusion that papal Rome was the “little horn” of Daniel 7 overnight. In the 1500s, the Roman Church dominated much of Europe, and Luther—for a while—was a committed Roman Catholic priest. While teaching at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, he began a closer study of the Bible. With trembling, he compared its sacred teachings to what his own church taught.

Luther was astonished and confused. He discovered that the Bible taught salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone (remember Acts 16:31), that sinners can approach the Father directly through His Son (John 14:6), and that Christ Himself was the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). Yet, the pope advocated confessing to priests, works of penance, indulgence certificates, collecting money to release dead souls from purgatory, prayers to Mary, and a host of other manmade traditions such as the mass, a celibate priesthood, and infant baptism.

Oh my, Luther must have thought to himself, *what a mess we’re in!* Moved by genuine loyalty to God, Luther at first tried to reform the church he loved, but he was fiercely opposed as a heretic by the Vatican hierarchy and threatened with death. As the conflict intensified, Luther turned to the

prophecies. Little by little, he put the pieces together. To his amazement and horror, he realized that he had discovered not only Christ but also the antichrist. Compelled by the Spirit of God, Luther finally cast political correctness aside, went public, and declared, “We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist” (August 18, 1520).⁴

His message shook Europe. Church historian Merle D’Aubingue, author of *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, correctly reported that one of the main reasons the Reformation in the 1500s became unstoppable was because Martin Luther boldly preached from the Holy Scriptures that the antichrist, predicted in prophecy, was seated in the city of Rome.

Luther ... proved, by the revelations of Daniel and St. John, by the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude, that the reign of Antichrist, predicted and described in the Bible, was the Papacy. ... And all the people did say, Amen! A holy terror seized their souls. It was Antichrist whom they beheld seated on the pontifical throne. This new idea, which derived greater strength from the prophetic descriptions launched forth by Luther into the midst of his contemporaries, inflicted the most terrible blow on Rome.⁵

This shocking conclusion that the Roman Church was the primary antichrist of prophecy was shared by John Calvin (founder of the Presbyterian Church), John Wesley (founder of the Methodist Church), the notable translators of the King James Bible (1611), John Bunyan (author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*), the Westminster Confession (1647), scientist Sir Isaac Newton, Baptist pastor Charles Spurgeon, David Benedict’s *History of the Baptist Denomination*, scholars Bishop J. C. Rylie and Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, and countless other historic Protestants—many of whom died for their faith as martyrs. These all interpreted the “little horn” of Daniel 7 to be the Roman Catholic Church that had “a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8 KJV), and was waging “war against the saints” (Daniel 7:21).

The evidence was overwhelming. As a result, the Reformation altered the course of history. Its influence was felt throughout Europe, in England, among the Puritans, and was a major factor in the eventual establishment of the United States of America with its Bill of Rights, its separation of church and state, and its glorious commitment to religious liberty.

Even an October 31, 1999, *Newsweek* article entitled, “The Way the World Ends,” admitted not only that “Martin Luther” did “identify the papacy as such with the antichrist,” but that this was “a view that was to

become dogma for all Protestant churches.”⁶ Such historical facts may be unpopular today, but they are as true as the throne of God Almighty.

Notice how those eight prophetic predictions in Daniel 7 perfectly align with history and point unmistakably to the papal power:

1. The Roman Church did rise out of the Roman Empire, fulfilling Daniel 7:7.
2. The Roman Church did rise up “among” the ten primary divisions of the Roman Empire in Western Europe, fulfilling Daniel 7:8.
3. The Roman Church did become even more politically powerful “after” the “ten horns” were in place, and “after” the imperial Roman Empire collapsed in A.D. 476, becoming a dominant player in European politics, fulfilling Daniel 7:24.
4. The Roman Church did influence the armies of the eastern Roman Emperor Justinian, to attack, slaughter, and “pluck up by the roots” three specific powers that resisted its rise—the Vandals, Heruli, and the Ostrogoths—so that these “horns” have disappeared from European history, fulfilling Daniel 7:8, 24.
5. The Roman Church does have “eyes like the eyes of a man,” with its primary power being centered in one unique office, the supposed infallible authority of the pope, fulfilling Daniel 7:8.
6. The pope does have “a mouth speaking great things” when he claims to be the representation of the apostle Peter, the true head of the church, an infallible authority in matters of faith and doctrine, and the primary representative of God on earth, fulfilling Daniel 7:8.
7. The Roman Church has made “war against the saints” by creating the so-called “Holy Office of the Inquisition,” which for more than 600 years hunted, tried, tortured, and executed those who disagreed with its dogmas, fulfilling Daniel 7:21.
8. The Roman Church has indeed continued throughout history, is active today, and will remain a primary player in geopolitics until the close of time, fulfilling Daniel 7:21–22.

What about “the beast” of Revelation 13? Do exact fulfillments continue there too? Indeed, and perfectly. First of all, the Roman Church is more than just a church. With more than 100 embassies on Vatican Hill, it qualifies as a kingdom itself, being a church/ state combination, which fits the biblical definition of a “beast” in Bible prophecy.

Revelation 13:2 also predicts that the “dragon” creature—which

parallels the fourth beast of Daniel 7, the Roman Empire—would give to the beast “his power, and *his seat*, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2 KJV, emphasis added). A “seat” represents a seat of government. The seat of government of the United States is in Washington, D.C. The seat of the Canadian government is in Ottawa, Ontario. Where was the seat of the ancient pagan Roman Empire? In the city of Rome itself. Where is the seat of government of the Roman Catholic Church today? In the same city of Rome, fulfilling Revelation 13:2 exactly.

Here’s one more key prophetic detail: Revelation 13 also predicts that this beast will finally be given authority “over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (verse 7). In other words, right before the day of the Lord hits, it will become a major player in global politics.

Is this happening today? Open your eyes and see for yourself.

The Beast on the Move

Concerning the present pope—Pope Francis—notice these news headlines that appeared throughout 2014:

- January 21: Pope Francis called for unity between Protestants and Catholics.⁷
- January 23: Pope Francis called for Christian unity and denounced divisions between Christians as a “scandal.”⁸
- March 13: The US Congress extended an invitation to Pope Francis to address a joint session of the US Congress.⁹
- March 27: President Obama met with Pope Francis at the Vatican.¹⁰
- May 9: Pope Francis advocated to the United Nations the redistribution of global wealth.¹¹
- May 25: Pope preached about peace and invited leaders for prayer on his visit to the Holy Land.¹²
- June 1: Pope Francis attended a charismatic convocation at Rome’s Olympic Stadium.¹³
- June 8: Pope became part of the Middle East peace process at a prayer summit.¹⁴
- July 3: Evangelical televangelists met with Pope Francis “to work toward tearing down the ‘walls of division.’”¹⁵
- July 22: Pope Francis selected eight consultants to form a council to promote global Christian unity.¹⁶

- September 4: Former Israeli president Shimon Peres met with Pope Francis to discuss a “UN for religions.”¹⁷
- November 17: Pastor Rick Warren spoke at a Vatican conference on family and marriage.¹⁸
- December 15: Pope Francis led what is considered to be the “most progressive year for Catholic Church.”¹⁹
- December 19: The Pope entered the diplomatic world when he helped the US and Cuba mend a decades-old rift.²⁰
- December 29: Researchers disclosed that Pope Francis is very well liked across much of the world.²¹

In the midst of escalating global chaos, world leaders are increasingly looking to the pope to solve humanity’s unsolvable problems. Whether its religious divisions, climate change, the Middle East mess, economic woes, or the increasing threat of Islamic terrorism, more and more politicians are convinced that the pope has the answers. Chosen by *Time* magazine as 2014’s “Man of the Year,” he can gather larger crowds than President Obama, Oprah Winfrey, or Mick Jagger. In fact, Pope Francis has arguably become *the most popular* person on Planet Earth today. Brace yourself. The Word of God predicts, “*All the world wondered after the beast*” (Revelation 13:3 KJV, emphasis added).

Obviously, the masses of humanity who wonder after, or follow, this beast don’t know that it is really “the beast” of Daniel and Revelation. If they did, they wouldn’t be wondering. But Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). Believe it or not, this is your chance to know the truth.

For those who remain skeptical, here’s one more piece of intelligence information. “Vicar of Christ,” is one of the pope’s official titles. The April 16, 2013, cover of *Life* magazine pictured Pope Francis as “Vicar of Christ, From Saint Peter to Today.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, in an article entitled, “Vicar of Christ,” states that “the title Vicar of Christ” is “expressive of his [the pope’s] supreme headship of the Church on earth.”²² The same article states that “*Vicarius Christi*” is the Latin phrase. Among its definitions for “vicarius,” Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary lists, “serving instead of someone” and “as a substitute for another.”²³ Jesus Christ died in our place, as our Substitute, which is why His death is often called “a vicarius [substitute] sacrifice.” Thus, the phrases “Vicar of Christ,” or “*Vicarius Christi*,” literally mean “in the place of Christ; a

substitute Christ.”

This is the exact meaning of the word “antichrist”—one who is against Christ and takes His place. Significantly, in seeking to define “antichrist,” the *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* testifies that during the Reformation, “Martin Luther and other protestant leaders identified the papacy itself as the Antichrist.”²⁴ Contrary to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Jesus Christ is the true “head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18), not the pope!

How can this be? you may be thinking. *Pope Francis is such a nice man!* Let me clarify something. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation should never be interpreted as personal attacks on sincere individuals who don’t fully understand the Bible, including Pope Francis himself. Yes, the current pope may be a nice man, and there are many nice, unselfish, and godly Roman Catholics around the world, many of whom will be in heaven because they are following God the best they know how (see James 4:17). God alone is the Judge. It’s not people, per se, that Holy Scripture’s prophetic finger pinpoints, but a global religious system—centered in the office of one man, the pope. The official teachings of this institution not only deny that sinners are saved through personal faith in Jesus Christ alone, apart from any papal influences, but the papal system has also introduced myriads of dangerous traditions into Christianity.

Even the common title for the pope, “Holy Father,” belongs to God alone, not to any man. See for yourself: “Holy Father” (John 17:11) is what Jesus Christ called God. Pope Francis’ real name is Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Scripturally speaking, he is a mere mortal, a sinner like the rest of us, who needs a Savior (see Romans 3:23). And just to clarify again, Jesus loves him too, and died for his sins, just like He loved Judas, and washed his dusty feet (see John 13:1–30). Truly, we’re all sinners—Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, atheist, etc.—who are loved by Jesus. Without His grace, and without faith in Him, we’re all doomed.

In these last days, the battle rages over Jesus Christ Himself (see John 14:6), His Word (see 2 Timothy 3:16–17), His law (see Revelation 14:12), His gospel (see Galatians 1:6–9), and His free gift of salvation from every sin, granted to all who repent and have faith in Him alone (see Luke 13:3; Ephesians 2:8–9)—apart from any other devilish Christ-usurping mediators.

In essence, it’s Christ vs. antichrist. That’s the real issue.

A Lesson in Mistaken Identity

“FBI Apologizes to American Lawyer Wrongly Arrested in Connection with Spanish Bombings” was the title of an *Associated Press* story that

appeared in newspapers across the country in May 2004. A terrorist bombing in Madrid, Spain, killed 191 people, and FBI fingerprint evidence pointed to Portland attorney Brandon Mayfield—a Muslim convert—as the guilty one. Mayfield was incarcerated for two weeks until the FBI discovered they had the wrong man. The article declared, “Court documents released Monday suggested that the mistaken arrest first sprang from an error by the FBI’s supercomputer for matching fingerprints.” The embarrassed agency then acknowledged the need to “review its practices on fingerprint analyses.”²⁵

When it comes to the correct identity of the little horn (Daniel 7:8), “the man of sin . . . the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), and the beast (Revelation 13:3), modern prophecy teachers need to “review [their] practices on fingerprint analysis.” When they anticipate a future antichrist who hasn’t arrived yet, and expect him to arise outside of Christianity, they’re unwittingly allowing the real antichrist to continue his infernal operations right beneath their noses—undetected. Like the FBI in 2004, most have identified the wrong man.

Make no mistake about it: the biblical beast is quite active on earth today. Not only that, the real Jesus is speaking to our consciences. He loves us all.

Will you let Jesus into *your heart today*?

Note: To discover more amazing facts about the closing fulfillment of Revelation 13’s end-time prophecies, see the author’s other pocketbooks, *The United States in Bible Prophecy* and *Decoding the Mark of the Beast*.

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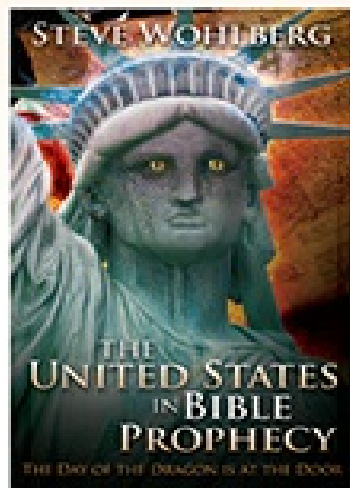
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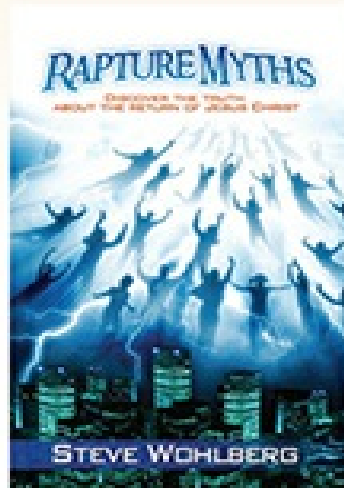
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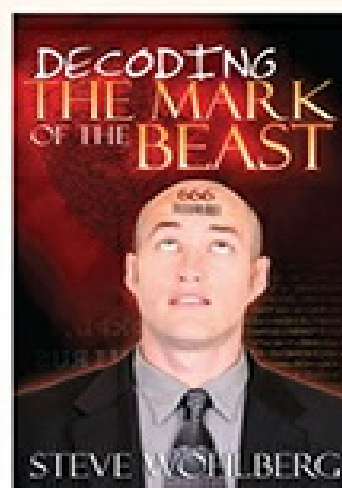
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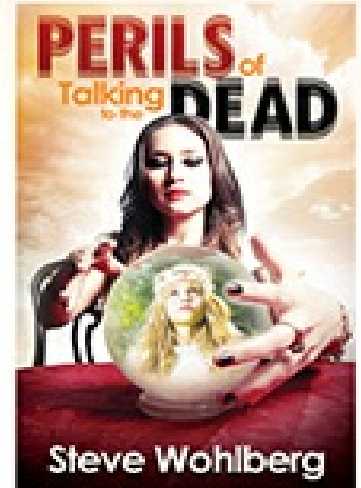
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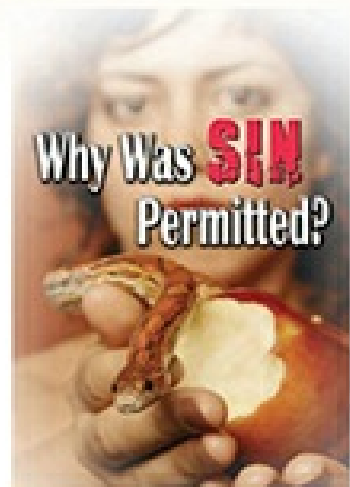
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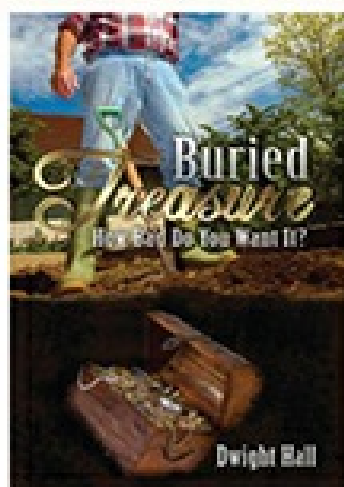
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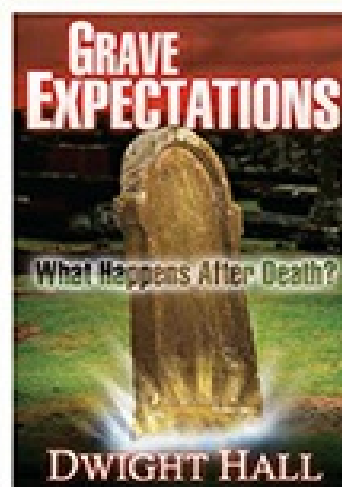
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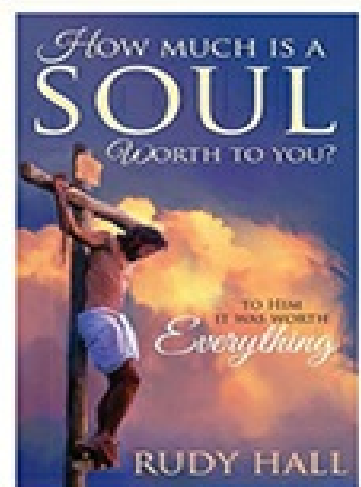
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