



8. ANTI-CHRIST: THE GREAT IMPERIAL COUNTERFEIT

The 4 beasts of Daniel 7:1-7 parallel the four metals of the great image in Daniel 2. The 4 beasts represent 4 kingdoms (Daniel 7:17). The lion with eagle's wings represents Babylon; the bear with 3 ribs in its mouth represents the dual empire of Medo-Persia; the 4 headed leopard represents Greece; the terrifying beast symbolized the mighty Roman Empire; and the 10 horns represent the kingdoms into which the Western Roman Empire broke up by 476 AD. These kingdoms eventually became the nations of Western Europe.

Daniel's attention was now drawn to a little horn that began to arise after, and among the 10 horns, and which replaced three of them as it came to power (Daniel 7:8). This horn arose out of the fourth or terrifying beast – the Roman Empire. At the peak of its power (the third century AD), Rome ruled from Britain to North Africa and across to Palestine. Christianity spread rapidly from Jerusalem to Rome in the first century AD. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, the city of Rome gradually became the centre of Christian influence and power. As Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean region it became a threat to the Roman Empire. As a result the Romans began to persecute the Christians, resulting, however, only in greater growth of the new movement. In 313 AD, the emperor Constantine became a Christian, and by 324 AD Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Meanwhile Barbarian tribes were attacking the Western Roman Empire. The Romans could see that the future of their empire lay not in the west but in the east, and under Constantine the capital of the Roman Empire was moved to Constantinople, (Istanbul today) in Turkey. By 476 AD, the Western Roman Empire had broken up into a number of kingdoms. Daniel 7 made a number of predictions which make it very clear that the little horn is the Medieval Christian Church:

1. The little horn came out of the 4th beast or Roman Empire, after and among the 10 horns (Daniel 7:8,24). Christianity moved its headquarters from Jerusalem to Rome and the bishops of Rome eventually became the leaders of the entire Christian church.
2. It made war against the people of God (Daniel 7: 21,25). History records that for centuries the official church persecuted those who followed the plain teachings of scripture. Millions of people were killed by the church during the dark ages. Sadly, the church believed it was right to exterminate people. Notice the following church statement: "*The church may by divine right confiscate the property of heretics, imprison their persons and condemn them to the flames*" (*Public Ecclesiastical, Vol 2, p142*).
3. It would think to change the times and laws of God (Daniel 7:25). Tragically the Christian church has attempted to change God's law of Ten Commandments. In the church's teaching books, such as Gierman's Catechism, the second commandment forbidding the worship of images has been left completely out. The tenth commandment has been divided into two to make it appear that there are Ten Commandments.

However one of the greatest attacks on God's law by the church was in the changing of God's law dealing with time - The Sabbath or fourth commandment of Exodus 20:8-11. We saw in our last program that the 7th day Sabbath of the Bible is on Saturday. The obvious question is, "Why do so many Christians worship on Sunday? How, and by whom has the change occurred?"

Obviously Jesus never changed the Sabbath because it was His habit to attend church (the synagogue) on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). He even instructed His disciples to keep the Sabbath 40 years from the time He returned to heaven (Matthew 24:20). The apostles certainly did not change the Sabbath for Paul kept it in Pisidian Antioch, in Thessalonica, Philippi and Corinth (Acts 13:14,15,42,44; Acts 16:13; Acts 17:1,2; Acts 18:4,11). John kept it on Patmos – the LORD'S DAY, which Jesus said was the Sabbath day (Revelation 1:10; Mark 2:27,28).

History records that the official Christian church, especially in Rome, gradually changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday over the first 3 to 4 centuries of Christianity. At first, both Sabbath and Sunday were observed by Christians from the 2nd Century to the 5th Century – “Keep the Sabbath (Saturday), and the Lord’s day festival (Sunday), because the former is the memorial of creation, and the latter of the resurrection.”... “Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath day (Saturday) and the Lord’s day (Sunday) let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety (Apostolic Constitutions, book 7, sec. 2, chap 23, and book 8, sec. 4, chap. 33 in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers (ANF)*, vol. 7, pp. 469,495).” “The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria” (Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 7, chap 19, in *NPNF*, second series, vol. 2, p132).

The Churches in Rome and Alexandria led in changing Sabbath to Sunday - “Almost all the churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries (the Lord’s supper) on the SABBATH of every week..., yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this” (*Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 5, ch. 22 *NPNF 2nd series*, V. 2, p. 132). The change occurred for a number of reasons during the 2nd to 5th centuries: Firstly, a desire on the part of Christians in Rome to distance themselves from the Jews who were being persecuted by the Romans. Thus the Christians in Rome began to fast, rather than feast on the Sabbath like the Jews did; Secondly the influence of Easter Sunday, which was celebrated by Christians in Rome on the Sunday closest to the Passover, and did not move with the Passover day each year as other Christians celebrated it (just as Christmas occurs on a different day each year); Thirdly, the influence of Pagan Roman sun worship, which took place on Sunday; Fourthly the influence of the Emperor Constantine who made civil laws for Sunday rest; and finally the influence of Church councils prohibiting Saturday rest.

Official church writings claim the church changed the Sabbath. One example follows in *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*: “Ques. Which day is the Sabbath day? Ans. Saturday is the Sabbath day. Ques. Why then do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Ans. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday, because the Catholic Church at the council of Trent, by virtue of its divine authority, changed the Sabbath from Saturday the 7th day of the week to Sunday the 1st day of the week, a change for which there is no scriptural authority.”

But why would Satan want to change the Sabbath? Because the Sabbath is the day of the LORD Jesus Christ, and Satan is against (Anti) Christ (Mark 2:27,28). Anything he can do to pull Christ down suits his evil purposes. What better way to attack Christ than to pull down the memorial set up by God to remind humanity that Christ is our creator, our friend who cares and sustains us, and our redeemer who makes us whole and gives us everlasting hope as we put our trust in Him. In one bold stroke the enemy of our souls has pushed Christ aside. Christianity unwittingly, by forgetting the Sabbath, has been responsible for allowing the human race to forget the creatorship of God.

Jesus once told the Jews that they turned aside from the commandments of God for the traditions of men (Mark 7:5,7,8). The church, as it departed from the teachings of the Bible, has replaced one of the commandments of God for a human tradition. God in His grace overlooks our times of ignorance of His word, but now as the light of His truth shines on our pathway, He urges us to repent and follow the example of His son who also kept the Sabbath holy (Acts 17:31; John 15:10). The issue is this: Are Jesus and His commandments more important to us than the traditions of the church and the opinions of men? “Because you love me,” Jesus said, “you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Why not decide right now to keep the 7th day, Saturday Sabbath of Jesus?