

# The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Terry Carter, Editor

### The Little Horn of Daniel Chapter 7

To identify the little horn of Daniel chapter seven, we must begin by listing its characteristics as described in the text:

1. Comes up from the fourth beast which is Rome, **verses 8, 20, 24.**
2. Appears after the ten horns on that fourth beast which represent kings or kingdoms, **verses 8, 20, 24.**
3. Uproots three of these ten horns that were before it, **verses 8, 20, 24.**
4. Different than the other ten horns, greater, or more stout, than them, **verses 20, 24.**
5. Has eyes like a man, **verses 8, 20.**
6. Speaks great pompous words against the Most High, **verses 8, 20, 25.**
7. Persecutes the saints for a period of three and a half years, **verses 21, 25.**
8. Changes times and laws, **verse 25.**
9. Shall be consumed and lose his dominion, **verse 26.**

10. Ultimately destroyed when the Ancient of Days comes and brings judgment upon him, **verse 22.**

There are many ideas as to the identity of the little horn of Daniel chapter seven. This makes it a particularly difficult topic to address. It becomes necessary to address some of these various positions before we proceed to propose and defend our own thoughts.

**First**, some believe that it refers to a particular emperor of Rome, often Nero or Domitian. This makes some sense in that the little horn did come up from the fourth beast which is Rome. Further, there were certainly Roman emperors that persecuted the saints like the little horn. Nero and Domitian are only two of them. Some will argue that the emperor of their choice overcame other emperors to gain their position, thus uprooting three horns before him.

There are a few issues with this idea. It requires the ten horns to be a succession of emperors rather than ten kingdoms that exist simultaneously. There is little

agreement as to which emperors make up this succession of powers, and there are many emperors who persecuted the saints. While the little horn seems to be the final power on the fourth beast, the emperor that is named is rarely the final emperor of Rome. Also, in the text, the little horn's power is consumed over time until the judgment by the Ancient of Days. This does not seem to fit with any Roman emperor.

**Second**, some believe it is a particular man, the antichrist, who will come shortly before the return of Christ. Those who hold this opinion usually equate him with Paul's man of sin in **II Thessalonians**. While I do believe the little horn is the same as the man of sin, there are problems with this view as well.

The little horn arises from Rome while it is constituted of ten kingdoms. Further, Paul said the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in his time, but it was being restrained. Paul also said the man of sin would be destroyed by the brightness of Jesus' coming. The man of sin must be more than a single man to

already be developing in Paul's time and yet persist till the return of Christ. It must be a system or organization with a succession of men at its head. Rome has been gone since 476 A.D. and a re-established Rome is certainly not in either the Daniel or Thessalonian text.

**Third**, some equate it with the little horn of Daniel chapter eight who is Antiochus Epiphanes. This is clearly not correct as the little horn in chapter seven comes from Rome while the little horn in chapter eight comes from Greece.

My view is that the little horn in chapter seven is the papacy. Virtually all the reformers were of this opinion. In more recent times, this has been criticized as being anti-papacy. However, this is a particularly weak objection. The question is not whether it puts the papacy in a bad light, they have done that enough themselves. The question is whether the papacy answers to the description of the little horn. In fact, it is undeniable that the description of the little horn does match the papacy as we will demonstrate.

**1. Comes up from the fourth beast which is Rome.**

The papacy did come from Rome. It rose from the ashes of the Roman Empire after its fall and ruled from Rome. It is undeniable that the papacy is Roman and rules over the Roman Catholic Church. It is equally undeniable that it arose from the Roman Empire.

**2. Appears after the ten horns on the fourth beast which represent kings or kingdoms.**

The papacy appeared after the Roman Empire was constituted of ten kingdoms.

**3. Uproots three of these ten horns that were before it.**

The papacy did, in fact, uproot three of these ten kingdoms of Rome in its ascension to power.

**4. Different than the other ten horns, greater, or more stout, than them.**

The papacy is a different kind of power and stronger than the ten kingdoms before it. While the ten kingdoms wielded political and temporal power, the papacy wielded both political and ecclesiastical (spiritual) power. The power of the papacy has lasted longer than Rome's and it has extended over more of the world and into more aspects of the lives of those under its power.

**5. Has eyes like a man.**

The little horn has eyes like a man. The power of the papacy has been given to a succession of individual men over the centuries.

**6. Speaks great pompous words against the Most High.**

The papacy has certainly spoken great pompous words against the Most High. The pope issues bulls (edicts) and claims to be infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra* (from the chair). He calls himself pontiff which is Latin for "high priest". The Scriptures teach that Jesus is our High Priest. Has any power ever made more boastful and blasphemous claims than those of the papacy below?

- A. The power to forgive sins, **Mark 2:5-7**.
- B. The power to sell indulgences.
- C. Papal infallibility.
- D. The power to kill heretics.
- E. To be the vicar of Christ.
- F. The power to turn bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Jesus.
- G. Power over kings calling himself the father of kings and governor of the world.
- H. Power over all Christians.
- I. So many more beyond this brief list.

Consider what the Catholic Encyclopedia says about Boniface VIII.

"...in the famous Bull " Ausculta Fili " (Listen, O Son) of 5 Dec., 1301, he stood forth as the mouthpiece of the medieval papacy, and as the genuine successor of the Gregories and the

Innocents. In it he appeals to the king to listen to the Vicar of Christ, who is placed over kings and kingdoms (cf. Jer., i, 10). He is the keeper of the keys, the judge of the living and the dead, and sits on the throne of justice, with power to extirpate all iniquity. He is the head of the Church, which is one and stainless, and not a many-headed monster, and has full Divine authority to pluck out and tear down, to build up and plant. Let not the king imagine that he has no superior, is not subject to the highest authority in the Church.” Article Boniface VIII, Vol. 2, page 666.

“Now, therefore, we declare, say, determine and pronounce that for every human creature it is necessary for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff” (Boniface VIII in a papal bull from November 1302) Article *Unam Sanctum* (One Holy), Vol. 15, page 308

Pius XI in his papal encyclical on the Council of Ephesus wrote the following:

“...the Roman Pontiff has a God-given authority, supreme, high, and subject to none... Now all the various documents which have been rehearsed by Us, one after another, prove so

expressly and significantly that already, throughout the universal Church, there was a strong and common faith in the authority of the Roman Pontiff over the whole flock of Christ, an authority subject to no one and incapable of error...Us who, though unworthily, hold His place and His authority on earth...We specially desire that all should implore, under the auspices of the heavenly Queen. That is to say, that she who is loved and worshipped with such ardent piety by the separated peoples of the East would not suffer them to wander and be unhappily ever led away from the unity of the Church, and therefore from her Son, whose Vicar on earth We are.”

Leo XIII wrote the following in his papal encyclical On Christians as Citizens:

“But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself”

#### 7. **Persecutes the saints for a period of three and a half years.**

There is no power on earth that has persecuted the saints like the papacy. The

Spanish Inquisition is only the tip of the iceberg. Many were tortured in unspeakable ways, burnt at the stake, or killed by other horrific means for going against the official teaching of the Roman Church. So many were put to death that it is difficult to even estimate the number. Some estimate that as many as fifty million were killed over the centuries by the papacy for what they viewed as heresy.

While the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire was severe, it certainly did not last anywhere as long as what was committed by the Roman Church. The papacy wore out the saints for over a thousand years. You could be burnt at the stake for owning a Bible or not believing in transubstantiation among so many other “heresies”.

#### 8. **Changes times and laws.**

The papacy has changed the calendar in many ways. We use the Gregorian calendar today which was introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII to replace the Julian calendar. In 1752, Britain and its colonies removed eleven days from September to switch to the Gregorian calendar. The papacy has introduced many holy days (holidays) into the calendar. The papacy has made all sorts of new laws, both secular

and religious throughout the centuries as well. They have introduced all sorts of new religious practices and dogmas into Christianity. Many of these defy the very law of God as given in Scripture.

**9. Shall be consumed and lose his dominion.**

The papacy had once ruled over the kings of the entire Western world. The pope had controlled the Papal States since 754, but they were taken from him in 1809. They were returned for a season but have been out of his control since 1870. It is interesting that the name of the king who took them from the pope was named Victor Emmanuel (Emmanuel means God with us).

From 1870 to 1929, the pope was shut up in the Vatican as a prisoner. Now, he rules over the smallest independent state in the world, Vatican City. Kings no longer bow to his will as they had for centuries.

More recently, in the last half of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first century, the Roman Catholic Church has been shaken by sexual abuse scandals. In the United States alone, this is estimated to have cost the church more than three billion dollars in settlements.

The power of the papacy has been consumed slowly, but his end is yet to come.

The following quotes are from the 1987 edition of the World Book Encyclopedia.

“Napoleon ended the pope’s political power in 1809. He made the Papal States a part of his empire...Pope Pius VI fought these changes and Napoleon arrested him. After Napoleon’s downfall, the Papal States were returned to the pope in 1815...In 1848, revolutionists made Rome a republic, and Pope Pius IX fled the city. French troops captured Rome in 1849, and restored the pope to power the next year... In 1870, after the French had left, Victor Emmanuel entered the city almost without bloodshed. He ended the pope’s political power and made Rome his capital in 1871. In protest, Pius IX shut himself up in the Vatican and refused to deal with the government. All popes after him followed the same policy until 1929. That year, the government established Vatican City as an independent state, and officials of the Roman Catholic Church recognized Rome as Italy’s capital.” Article Rome/History, pages 400b-400c

“In 1870, Victor Emmanuel took Rome by force...Thereupon Pope Pius IX shut himself in the Vatican and regarded himself as a prisoner...The popes after him followed the same policy for nearly 60 years. Then an independent Papal State was created in 1929 through an agreement between Pius XI and the Italian government. The agreement was called the Treaty of the Lateran...The Italian Parliament ratified a revision of the Treaty of the Lateran in 1985. The new treaty maintained the independence of the Vatican City. But it ended other privileges of the Catholic Church in Italy, including its status as the state religion.” Article Papal States, pages 112-113

“The temporal powers of the pope suffered a severe blow when Napoleon Bonaparte annexed the Papal States in 1809. The Congress of Vienna restored the states to the papacy in 1815 under the protection of Austria. But, during the struggle for unification in Italy, from 1848 to 1870, all the papal provinces were confiscated by the state. To show their resistance, Pope Pius IX and the three popes who followed him during the next 60 years made themselves voluntary prisoners in the Vatican...On July 25, 1929



Pius XI emerged from the Vatican and entered St. Peter's Square in a huge procession witnessed by about 250,000 persons. His appearance signaled the return of the papacy's temporal power and the end of the controversy with the state in Italy." Article Pope, pages 592-593

"Vatican City...is the smallest independent state in the world... [it] covers only 108.7 acres...The 300 yards (270 meters) of track that connect the station in Vatican City with an Italian railroad carries only freight." Article Vatican City, pages 228-229

#### 10. **Ultimately destroyed when the Ancient of Days comes and brings judgment upon him.**

While the power of the papacy today is nothing like it had been for centuries, it has not yet been destroyed. Paul's man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of Jesus' coming. Similarly, the little horn will be destroyed when the Ancient of Days brings judgment on him. I fully expect the papacy to continue, even in its diminished role in world events, until the return of Christ destroys it once and for all.

The ten descriptions of the little horn in the text fit perfectly with the papacy. This is not true of any of

the other ideas concerning its identity. It cannot refer to something or someone yet to come as Rome is long gone and it comes out of Rome. What has ever come out of Rome that fits this description so completely?

#### **Three and a Half Years of Persecution**

I have made what I believe to be a strong case that the little horn is the papacy. The description that Daniel gives fits the papacy like no other individual or system the world has ever known. This is true whether the three and a half years it persecutes the saints is understood literally or as prophetic days equaling 1260 literal years. So, how should we understand these three and a half years?

For those who understand the little horn to be a specific emperor of Rome, a single man (antichrist) near the end of time, or Antiochus Epiphanes, the three and a half years must either be taken literally or in reference to a relatively short period of time.

If the little horn is understood to be the papacy, the time could be either literal or a prophetic time of 1260 literal years. It is certainly true that the papacy has persecuted the saints for multiple short periods of time as well as literal three and a half years of time. However, it is certainly also true that the papacy has persecuted the saints for 1260 literal years (three and a half prophetic years, 1260 days, or 42 months).

This does not prove that the little horn is the papacy, but it does

demonstrate that the papacy fits the description regardless of how you understand the three and a half years of persecution. The same cannot be said for other views regarding the little horn.

If we understand the three and a half years to be literal or symbolic of a brief period of persecution, we have some questions that must be answered.

1. Which brief period of persecution does it refer to?
2. What is special about that period of persecution as opposed to the many others?
3. Why would a brief period of persecution be predicted and a centuries long persecution not be mentioned?

It seems to me that this persecution must be much more significant than any brief period of persecution could be.

It is for these reasons that I believe the three and a half years in this passage should be taken as prophetic years. That is, 1260 prophetic days that represent 1260 literal years.

I did not come to this conclusion in order to identify the little horn as the papacy. Rather, I came to this conclusion because I am convinced that the little horn is the papacy. In other words, I concluded that the little horn is the papacy and therefore the time must refer to 1260 years. That is very different logically than concluding that the time must refer to 1260 years and thus the little horn must be the papacy.