

Who Is The Image Of The Beast? #3

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 13:14-15

1 John 2:22

April 7, 2013

Rev. Greg L. Price

One significant objection that is raised when it is affirmed by Historicists (like myself) that the Pope or Papacy is specifically the Antichrist that was prophesied to come by the Apostle John (in 1 John 2:18) is that (according to 1 John 2:22) the Antichrist will deny that Jesus is the Christ. But since no Pope in history has ever denied that Jesus is the Christ or has denied that Jesus has come in the flesh (according to 1 John 4:3), it is claimed that the Pope or Papacy cannot be the Antichrist prophesied to come by the Apostle John. This seems like an ironclad objection offered by Preterists (who claim that Nero was the Antichrist because he did deny the Jesus of the Bible to be the Christ) or an ironclad objection offered by Futurists (who claim that either a future global political leader is the Antichrist or a future Islamic Mahdi is the Antichrist, both of whom will deny the Jesus of the Bible to be the Christ). Clearly, the Apostle John says that Antichrist will deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22). But in what sense does the Antichrist deny that Jesus is the Christ? Now that is the question that we must answer this Lord's Day.

Let us, therefore, focus our attention on the following question in today's sermon: (1) Does Antichrist Confess or Deny Jesus is the Christ?

I. Does Antichrist Confess or Deny Jesus is the Christ?

A. In seeking to answer this question, I propose that there is a sense in which Antichrist confesses that Jesus is the Christ, and there is a sense in which Antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ.

1. First, how does the Antichrist confess Jesus is the Christ?

a. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to provide a brief review of the previous sermon, wherein we saw that the Apostle John prophesies that the Antichrist is coming.

(1) John distinguishes this one Antichrist from many antichrists (in 1 John 2:18). For this one Antichrist that is coming (but is not yet come in John's time) is in the singular (Antichrist) and has the singular definite article ("the" in the Received Text and in all of the other places that Antichrist is used— 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). The definite article, "the" (in the Greek text), draws attention to this particular Antichrist, as distinguished from all the other "many antichrists" (in the plural) that already existed in John's day. Thus, though the many antichrists are already working their deceit and false teaching in John's time, they point to a particular Antichrist, whose coming is future to that of John's time, and who will deceive the world by his deceit and false teaching.

(2) This Antichrist that is to come is not a single individual, but is rather a single immoral institution—just as the individual Beasts of Daniel 7 were immoral civil empires with many kings that lasted for hundreds of years; just as the first Beast (in Revelation 13:1) with seven heads and ten horns is an immoral civil institution though consisting of many kings; just as the second Beast (in Revelation 13:11) with two horns like a lamb is an immoral ecclesiastical institution though consisting of many bishops and cardinals; just as the False Prophet is an immoral ecclesiastical institution though consisting of many bishops and cardinals; just as the Great Harlot is an immoral ecclesiastical institution though consisting of many clergymen; and just as the faithful Bride is a moral ecclesiastical institution though consisting of many faithful Christians—so the Antichrist is not a single individual, but is an immoral institution, consisting of many popes through history that is united with the civil Beast and with the ecclesiastical Beast to war against the faithful Church of Christ for 1,260 years.

b. Another very important truth that was presented in the previous sermon that will help us in understanding how Antichrist denies Jesus as the Christ is this: Antichrist is not one who professes to be hostile to Christ or professes to be the enemy of Christ. To the contrary, Antichrist is one who presents himself as representing Christ, who is Christ's substitute upon earth. In other words, Antichrist's opposition to Christ is not expressed by professing himself to be the enemy of Christ, but is rather expressed by professing himself to be the Vicar of Christ, who assumes to himself and usurps the office and prerogatives of Christ as earthly head of the Visible Church. In the previous sermon, it was demonstrated from Scripture and from credible Greek sources that the Greek preposition *anti* (in *antichristos*, i.e. Antichrist) yields the meaning "in the place of", i.e. one who stands in the place of Christ. Amazingly, this is likewise the meaning of the title taken by the Pope or Papacy, the Vicar of Christ (from the Latin, *vicarius*), i.e. one who is a substitute in the place of Christ. Thus, whenever the Pope declares himself or is declared by others to be the Vicar of Christ, it is published far and wide for all who have ears to hear what John here prophesies, namely, that the Pope and the Papacy is the Antichrist that was to come (for Antichrist and Vicar of Christ mean essentially the same thing, one who comes in the place of Christ).

c. But one last piece of information that was noted in the previous sermon was that the historical reference of John to "many antichrists" (in 1 John 2:18) likewise demonstrates that the meaning behind the words, antichrist (in the singular) or antichrists (in the plural), is not professed hostility as the enemy of Christ, but is rather deceitful subterfuge as the representative of Christ. For the Apostle John states that these "many antichrists" were once united with the faithful Church of Christ, but departed from it over their false and deceptive teachings about Christ (1 John 2:19; 1 John 4:1-3). In other words, these "many antichrists" (1 John 2:18) and "many false prophets" (1 John 4:1) did by

their words confess Jesus to be the Christ, but they perverted and wrested the Scriptural teaching concerning Christ and the work of Christ to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). These “many antichrists” did not profess themselves to be the enemies of Christ (neither does the Papal Antichrist), but rather the “many antichrists” claimed to be the true representatives of Christ (as does the Papal Antichrist), even in promoting their heresies and false teachings among professing Christians at that time. That is why the Apostle John warns the faithful Church to test those who say they are prophets (1 John 4:1)—because they would come from among the sheep, but were liars (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Peter 2:1). The “many antichrists” professed to be Christ’s representatives, but they were actually liars in perverting the truth concerning Christ, His humanity, His office of Mediator, and His work of redemption. Thus, just as these “many antichrists” profess to be the representatives of Christ and to proceed from within the Visible Church of Christ, so likewise does the Antichrist that was yet future to the Apostle John (i.e. the Pope or Papacy).

d. Now with that bit of review from the previous sermon, it becomes obvious how the Papal Antichrist confesses Jesus is the Christ. He does so by taking upon himself the mantle of Christ (as the Vicar of Christ), claiming to be the representative of Christ, in outwardly professing that Jesus is the Christ who became man in order to atone for sinners. There is a profession of many truths taught about Jesus Christ on the part of the Papal Antichrist. But as we shall see, it is not only what is professed, but what is meant by what is professed that determines whether the profession is the truth or whether the profession is actually a lie. For even the “many antichrists” in John’s day would have professed various truths concerning Jesus Christ, and yet it was not only what they professed, but what they meant by what they professed that revealed them to be antichrists, who claimed to represent Christ, and yet were actually liars in opposing the Christ of the Bible.

2. **Second, how does the Antichrist deny that Jesus is the Christ?**

a. We read in 1 John 2:22: “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist (literally, “**the** antichrist”), that denieth the Father and the Son.” The Antichrist, whom John prophesies is to come, is a liar, i.e. he speaks contrary to the true doctrine concerning Jesus Christ. He lies against the truth concerning the person of Christ, the office of Christ, and the work of Christ. In what different ways can Jesus be denied to be the Christ sent by the Father?

b. First, one can and does deny Jesus is the Christ directly by his actual words in claiming oneself to be the avowed enemy of Christ (as did the Jewish religious leaders of Christ’s time who delivered Christ up to be crucified and denied Christ to be the Son of God as we see in Acts 3:13-14). Although this is to deny Jesus to be the Christ sent by the Father, this is not the way in which the Papal Antichrist denies Jesus is the Christ, for we have already noted that the Papal Antichrist does not profess to be the avowed enemy of Christ (like the Jewish leaders), but rather claims to be the representative of Christ, the Vicar of Christ upon earth. Thus, the Antichrist must deny Christ in another sense than the sense in which the Jewish leaders denied Christ.

c. Second, one can and does deny Jesus is the Christ sent by the Father indirectly and by consequence (even if one claims to be the representative of Christ) by introducing heresies that undermine the doctrine revealed concerning Christ in Scripture (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1-3).

(1) Dear ones, because the faith once delivered to the saints is bound together (as a seamless garment) in one system of truth, no truth within that system of Divine truth will contradict itself, any more than the one true living God can contradict Himself. Thus, a false doctrine that undermines Christ’s humanity is a denial of who Christ is, as revealed in Holy Scripture.

(2) Thus, when the Gnostic Christians taught that Jesus was not born with an actual body of flesh, did not preach the Gospel and heal the sick in an actual body of flesh, was not crucified and did not bear the wrath of God in the place of guilty sinners in an actual body of flesh, was not gloriously raised from the dead in an actual body of flesh, did not ascend into heaven in an actual body of flesh, and will not come again in an actual body of flesh, these Gnostic Christians denied that the Jesus revealed in Holy Scripture is the Christ, the anointed Mediator sent by God the Father to redeem His elect. For they did not believe in the Jesus Christ sent by the Father and revealed in Holy Scripture. The Gnostic Christians (whom John calls “antichrists”) did not directly deny Jesus to be Christ, but by their heresy that Christ could not have an actual body of human flesh, because they claimed human flesh is material is therefore sinful, they did by consequence deny that the Jesus of the Bible is the Christ sent by the Father (and that is how these Gnostic Christians denied the Father, by denying the Son according to 1 John 2:22-23). Again by consequence, to deny that Christ became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), was to deny the Father as revealed in Holy Scripture. The doctrine of the Son and the doctrine of the Father are bound together as a cohesive unit and system of truth.

(3) I submit that the Papal Antichrist likewise indirectly denies the Jesus of the Bible to be the Christ sent by the Father by consequence of various heretical doctrines that he proclaims.

(a) The Papal Antichrist denies Christ is fully and truly man by making His body omnipresent in every location throughout the world where the blasphemous mass is observed (contrary to Luke 24:39; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 8:34).

13. When you receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church do you receive bread and wine? You do not receive bread and wine. You receive Jesus Christ himself. After the priest says the words of Christ: “This is my body . . . This is my blood,” the bread and wine have been changed into the body and blood of Christ (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith*, p.66).

If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that he is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue, let him be anathema (*Council of Trent, Session 13, Canon 1*).

(b) The Papal Antichrist denies the office of Christ as Mediator by robbing Christ of His headship over the Visible Church and by introducing a host of other mediators besides Christ (Mary being mediatrix who is given the Divine titles and prerogatives of Christ) contrary to 1 Timothy 2:5 and 1 John 2:1. But all these mediators and intercessors (the Pope, Mary, and the saints) must become omniscient or omnipresent (after death) in order to hear all of the prayers offered to them by all Roman Catholics throughout the whole world at the same time. Thus, essential properties of Deity are necessary for such to be the case.

Question: Why is the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, the visible Head of the Church?

Answer: The Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the visible Head of the Church because he is the successor of St. Peter, whom Christ made the chief of the Apostles and the visible Head of the Church (*The Baltimore Catechism, Question 118*).

Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic—GLP] Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 969*).

The Confiteor

I ask Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith* Read p. 128).

Morning Prayers

O my God, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers . . . (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith* Read p. 129)

Evening Prayers

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. . . .

May the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints pray for me (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith* Read pp. 128,129).

The Hail Holy Queen

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears! Turn, then most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O Holy Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith* Read pp. 130).

(c) The Papal Antichrist denies the finished work of Christ as Redeemer by teaching that He is re-sacrificed each time the host in the mass is lifted up and consecrated by the priest (contrary to Hebrews 9:24-28).

If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; or, that it profits him only who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities: let him be anathema (*Council of Trent, Session 22, Canon 3*).

(d) And this is just a brief representative list, and hardly exhaustive of the many more ways in which the Papal Antichrist denies Christ by undermining the person, office, and work of Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture.

B. Dear ones, the objection that the Pope cannot be the Antichrist because he does not deny Jesus is the Christ is simply not true. In fact, the Pope and the Papacy do deny Jesus is the Christ by the introduction of many blasphemous doctrines that deny Christ His full humanity, that rob Christ of His offices as sole Mediator between God and Man (no Mediatrix is ever mentioned in Scripture), as sole Head of the Church Militant upon earth and of the Church Triumphant in heaven, and blasphemous doctrines that fabricate an on-going sacrifice of Christ upon an altar under the authority of the Papal Antichrist. If the false prophets within the early Church who professed to be the representatives of Christ

denied Him by means of their heresies (which undermined the true doctrines of Christ), then the Papal Antichrist who is enthroned in the Harlot Church of Rome and who claims to be the Vicar or Representative of Christ upon earth also denies Christ by means of his heresies (which undermine the true doctrines of Christ). And for this very reason, I submit that the Antichrist cannot be Nero, cannot be an Islamic Mahdi, or cannot be a future global political leader, for none of these will live for 1,260 years (“the little horn” of Daniel 7:25), and none of these arose from within the Church of Christ and claimed to be the Vicar or Representative of Christ as head of the Visible Church upon earth. Only the Papacy fulfils the meaning, the origin, and the characteristics that the Apostle John prophesies concerning the Antichrist.

In conclusion, let me be clear that it is not only by introducing and teaching heresies that one indirectly denies Christ, but that is also by contradicting in one’s conduct and affections what one professes to believe the Scripture to teach that Christ may also be denied (1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16). I was appalled at the recent contradiction in practice of the Papal Antichrist (Francis I) who declares that abortion is murder, but who allowed U.S. politicians who support a woman’s “right” to murder her child to participate in the recent Papal Mass conducted by the new Pope Francis. We can all see how blatant is the denial of the Sixth Commandment (in preserving and protecting life) in such a contradictory practice when it is the Papal Antichrist that is denying the truth by his practice. But are we as quick to see how we indirectly deny the truth revealed in Scripture by our contradictory life and behavior? And more importantly, do we care? Are we indirectly denying the holiness of Christ by angry words of cursing, using God’s name in vain, allowing our mouths to become sewers of filth in communication to others, or our eyes and ears to be filled with all manner of immoral filth from the television or internet? Are we indirectly denying the faith by

treating those within our own household with less love and respect than we would even strangers? Are we indirectly denying the sovereignty of God by our incessant worry and fears about our circumstances in life or our discontentment with what God has graciously given us? Are we indirectly denying the love of Christ by giving our deepest affection to the things that are vanishing all around us rather than to Christ, who is to be our first love? Dear ones, let us not be deceived into thinking that it is only by verbally denying Christ that we deny Christ in our lives. But let us never, ever forget that Christ died to redeem us (who trust in Christ alone for our eternal salvation). Yes, Christ died to redeem us from all of the ways that we deny Him. Peter also denied Christ, but Christ prayed for Him (not Mary, not the angels or the saints in heaven) as we see in Luke 22:31-32. Praise God for the intercession of Jesus Christ our only Advocate at God's right hand, who pleads His own righteousness before the Father (Romans 8:33-34).

Copyright 2013 Greg L. Price. Distributed by Still Waters Revival Books (<http://www.puritandownloads.com>) by permission of the author, Greg L. Price. More free online written Reformation resources by Greg Price (John Calvin, John Knox, Samuel Rutherford, et al.) are at <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/newslett.htm> and more free audio (MP3) Reformation resources by Greg Price (and many other Puritans, Covenanters, and Reformers) are at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/go/699> or at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/swrb>.