

Perspective

By L. Jim Tuck

May 8, 2025

When will the last pope rule?

With the election of Pope Francis in 2013, there have been 266 popes in the history of the Catholic Church. The pope is the spiritual leader of Catholicism. Catholics claim the pope is a successor of Saint Peter, and he was the first among the apostles and the first pope of Rome. However, there is no evidence historically the Apostle Peter ever was in Rome. Scripture records the Apostle Paul working with the Romans. Paul was imprisoned in Rome during the reign of Nero for two years during which time he wrote four of his fourteen epistles. He was acquitted of all charges against him and freed in 63 A.D. The big question facing the Catholic Church with the death of Pope Francis is who will be the new pope of this largest religious power on earth claiming 1.41 billion members?

How many popes will there be?

An old prophecy, known as the "Prophecy of the Popes," predicted that there would be 112 future popes. For more than 800 years scholars have pointed to the dark augury having to do with "the last pope." The prophecy, taken from St. Malachy's *Prophecy of the Popes*, is among a list of verses predicting each of the Roman Catholic popes from Pope Celestine II to the final pope, "Peter the Roman," whose reign would end in the destruction of Rome.

Pope Francis would be the 112th pope before the day of the final judgment. The Bible admonishes us about how to know a prophet of God: *"when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."* (Deuteronomy 18:22)

"Pope Francis is seen by prophecy scholars as matching the description, and my former volume, Petrus Romanus, details how he satisfies a nine-hundred-year-old prophecy pointing toward the False Prophet or second beast in the biblical Apocalypse (Revelation 13:11). Pope Francis is confirming this identity by asserting universal salvation...: "Whether or not Pope Francis is the False Prophet remains to be seen, but it is indisputable that he is a false prophet." (Cris Putnam, *The Supernatural Worldview: Examining Paranormal, Psi, and the Apocalyptic*)

Many like Cris Putnam, who have held the belief that Pope Francis was to be the last pope, believe that as a dark figure, he would rise to take his position alongside the Beast. That prophetic idea has been obviously proven to be false; Pope Francis is now dead. Unless someone somehow figured wrongly, the prophecy about Pope Francis is dead in the water.

And yet, Revelation 17:1-5 pictures a harlot riding the Beast and causing the whole world to be spiritually intoxicated by the wine of her fornication with the leaders of this world and her abominable deceptive false doctrines which have hidden the truth from the world. Until the end of the age, she will be in lockstep with the Babylonish system which has also intoxicated the inhabitants of this world with materialism (Revelation 18:1-4). This evil Babylon system, *"...has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"* (Revelation 18:2)

The Catholic Church has had those of the priesthood who have openly acknowledged that there are those who are present in the Vatican in Rome who represent the Prince of Darkness.

Malachi Martin (1921 – 1999) was an Irish Catholic priest and writer on the Catholic Church. Originally ordained as a Jesuit priest, he became a Professor of Paleography at the Vatican's Pontifical Biblical Institute. From 1958 he served as secretary to Cardinal Bea during preparations for the Second Vatican Council. Disillusioned by reforms, he asked to be released from certain of his Jesuit vows in 1964 and moved to New York City. His 17 novels and non-fiction books were frequently critical of the Catholic Church. In an interview conducted in the 1990s with Father Malachi Martin, by Bernard Janzen of *Triumph Communications*, the priest stated: "There was this consecration, this enthronement of Satan within the Vatican, of Lucifer by the way. It's a historical fact. It was done one particular day by a certain group of people representing Luciferians all over the world, especially American Luciferians. It was done. Therefore, in a certain sense, Lucifer has power. He doesn't own yet, but I'm sure he hopes to own some Pope as his man."

Malachi Martin was strongly supported by some traditional Catholic sources and criticized by highly liberal sources. He was a frequent guest on Art Bell's radio program, *Coast to Coast AM*. In the final years before his death,

Martin was received in a private audience by Pope John Paul II. Afterwards, he started working on a book with the working title, *Primacy: How the Institutional Roman Catholic Church became a Creature of the New World Order*.

This great religious institution with offices in nearly every country on earth will be the crucible through which Satan will bring about a New World Order, which the Bible calls the Beast or Babylon.

The false prophet of the harlot church will give life to the beast

The roots of the Holy Roman Empire are in Europe, and this will be where the seventh and final resurrection will spring to reclaim worldwide power. It seems reasonable then that the next pope will have a strong connection with eastern and western Europe. It is interesting that the new pope, the first American in history, chose the name of Leo XIV, since it says in *Myers' Ancient History*: "During the reign of Leo I, the first real pope, the Church set up 'within the Roman Empire and ecclesiastical state (government) which, in its constitution and its administrative system was shaping itself upon the imperial model.'"

"The first pope, in the real sense of the word, was Leo I. (440-461 A.D.)" says the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 7, page 629. To him, the plan of government of the Roman Empire was the most marvelous thing on earth. He applied the system to the Church, forming the papacy, which is an exact image of the government of the Roman Empire!

The final religious leader will be markedly different than any previous papal leader. He will hold great power because of his direct connection with Satan through a powerful demonic spirit. He will be able to do many lying wonders which will captivate the entire world. (Revelation 16:13-14; 13:11-15). It will turn into a movement which will give life to the beast power and its political leader, and he will make laws to force the world to take some identifying mark of one's support for his new government and empire (Revelation 13:16-17).

Now, notice Revelation 13:11: "*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*"

The Bible interprets its own symbols. A "beast" is a kingdom, or government (Daniel 7:17, 23). So, this is another kingdom, or government. In these prophecies God views earthly Gentile governments as the beasts whose characters describe them. This beast appears as a lamb, but he only pretends to be a lamb; he actually speaks as a dragon. A "lamb" symbolizes Christ in the Bible (John 1:29; Revelation 17:14). And the dragon symbolizes Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). This is a kingdom. The saints under Christ will ultimately take over all the kingdoms on earth, establishing the Kingdom of God. False Christs are to appear in the last days. This "beast" must come and proclaim he is establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, but he is actually of Satan!

Notice Revelation 13:12: "*And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*"

It is clear this kingdom, claiming to be Christ's, takes all the power of the first kingdom — the old Holy Roman government after it is "healed" (Revelation 13:3). In history the Roman Catholic Church is the only one that has done that. It was a kingdom which has always ruled over the Roman civil government — the first beast. The fallen woman of Revelation 17 rides the beast for the full 1260 years!

Next let us note Revelation 13:14: "*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.*"

The Catholic Church has been the greatest deceiving power the world has ever known! It has blinded the eyes of mankind to the truth, claiming to follow Christ on earth!

They form an "image" of the beast, but what is an image? The dictionary says it is a "likeness," a "copy, representation, model, semblance, counterpart." Therefore, it must be modeled after the government of the Roman Empire. *Myers' Ancient History* says, "During the reign of Leo I, the first real pope, the Church set up 'within the Roman Empire and ecclesiastical state (government) which, in its constitution and its administrative system was shaping itself upon the imperial model.'". The government of the Catholic Church was made as an image of the Roman Empire government! The pope is a king ruling Vatican City which is a separate state or government to which the nations of this world send their ambassadors.

It is this pope, along with the beast, which will stir up the world's armies to fight Jesus Christ at His second coming. The Bible says the beast and false prophet will be captured and executed by being burned alive in the lake of fire (Revelation 17:14; 19:19-20).

Then the great kingdom of God will begin, and the saints will rule with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). The world will have peace and prosperity: *“But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.”* (Micah 4:4)