

Worship the Beast

G O D ' S L A S T M E S S A G E T O T H E W O R L D

As we move into the third and final message of Revelation 14, let's review a couple of points. We have learned that three angels' messages are joined together as one basic declaration called the third angel's message, each announcement building upon the last. The first proclamation outlines the everlasting gospel. The second proclaims the fall of Babylon for making all nations believe false doctrine regarding God and salvation. Babylon brings confusion to the world about the character of God and the plan of salvation. When the preaching of the gospel as a witness clearly contrasts Babylon's teachings with the everlasting gospel, Babylon falls and the confusion about God comes to an end. The third angel follows these first two.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name'" (Revelation 14:9-11).

Here we find a clear warning from heaven against receiving the mark of the beast. This is probably the most solemn warning found in the Bible. It reads like a label on a bottle of poison: (WARNING: DO NOT WORSHIP THE BEAST OR HIS IMAGE AND RECEIVE HIS MARK. THEY ARE DEADLY!) The

antidote to such a poisonous threat is a good dose of heavenly knowledge. Therefore, it would be wise, even common sense, to learn the identity of the beast, its image and its mark. Let's begin in this study with the beast.

A Symbolic Beast

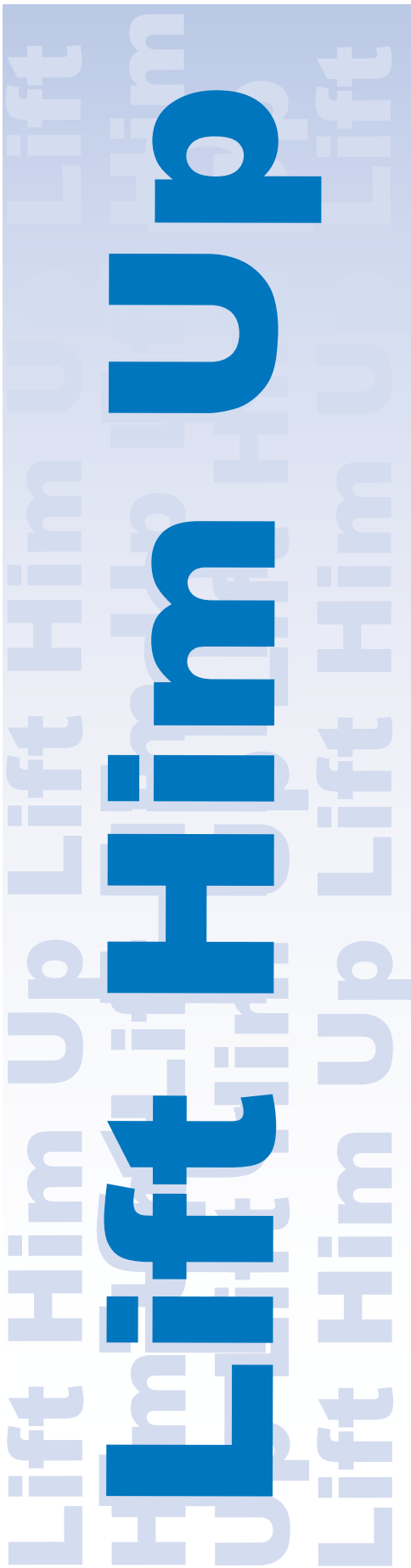
Revelation chapter 13 brings to focus not one beast but two. Bible prophecy is, in fact, full of various beasts. These two beasts in Revelation 13 are allies in the whole issue of the mark of the beast. The first beast is described in the following verses:

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" (Revelation 13:1-3).

This is not a literal beast. The unique characteristics—the body of a leopard, the mouth of a lion, the feet of a bear—make that obvious. This beast is symbolic.

In order to understand what the beast represents, we need to turn to the Old Testament book of Daniel. Interestingly enough, Daniel and John were given very similar visions. Daniel and Revelation are complementary prophetic books. By comparing their prophecies, we can unravel their meaning. Listen to Daniel:

"I saw in my vision by night," Daniel explains, "the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from



another” (Daniel 7:2, 3).

The *sea* is symbolic of many nations, a great populace of humanity. Revelation supports this interpretation: “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues [languages]” (Revelation 17:15).

The *four winds* stirring up the sea represent war and strife between nations. In Daniel 11:40 a “whirlwind” is associated with “chariots, and horsemen, and with many ships,” all of which signify war. The prophet Jeremiah also saw that “the four winds” symbolize one “nation” warring against another as “enemies” (Jeremiah 49:36, 37; see also Jeremiah 25:31-33).

What, then, are the “four beasts” that arise out of this windswept seascape? The answer is crystal clear in Daniel 7:17: “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” Verse 23 says the beasts represent “kingdoms.” So there we have it—a beast in prophecy represents a kingdom. Now the logical next question is—what kingdom does the first beast in Revelation 13 represent? The answer again is tied to Daniel 7 because the first beast pictured in Revelation 13 is like a bear, a lion and a leopard, fitting the description of the beasts in Daniel 7. Let’s follow Daniel, then, as he continues.

“The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and

terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:4-7).

These four kingdoms, represented by the symbolism of beasts, are reminiscent of what God showed to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. There the king had a dream in which he saw a large statue divided into four sections of different metals. Daniel was shown the interpretation of the dream. The head of gold, he said, symbolized the kingdom of Babylon. The chest and arms of silver represented Medo-Persia. The belly and thighs of brass stood for Greece. The legs of iron depicted the Roman Empire.

These are the four principle kingdoms dealt with in the book of Daniel. The four beasts of chapter 7 reveal the same succession of empires as outlined in chapter 2. Throughout history nations have been symbolized by the use of animals. Even today we think of the American eagle, the Russian bear and the Chinese dragon. In Bible prophecy God simply uses language familiar to us.

The Ten Horns

Then there are ten horns which represent “ten kings that shall arise” (verse 24). After almost six centuries of universal dominion, repeated invasions into the empire by barbarian Germanic tribes began to take its toll. Rome finally crumbled in 476 A.D. There were, eventually, ten separate mini-monarchies established to form what we recognize today as the foundational nations of modern Europe:

1. The Franks (modern France)
2. The Anglo-Saxons (England)
3. The Alemanni (Germany)
4. The Lombards (Italy)
5. The Visigoths (Spain)
6. The Suevi (Portugal)
7. The Burgundians (Switzerland)
8. The Heruli (extinct)
9. The Vandals (extinct)
10. The Ostrogoths (extinct)

The Little Horn

Daniel’s vision of earthly kingdoms did not end with the fourth beast. The Pagan Roman Empire was never conquered by another single political-military force. But it was absorbed into a rising religious force whose presence would continue to the end of earth’s history (see Daniel 7:22). It is this power that Daniel next sees in his impressive dream:

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8).

Here a fifth power is represented. It arises out of the divided Roman Empire. All one really needs to do is consult the history books in order to identify this “little horn” power. Ask one simple question: What kingdom inherited the authority of the Roman Empire as it ebbed away off the stage of history? Historical annals give us one clear answer: The Papal Roman Church-State.

Although the “little horn” is that easily interpreted, Bible prophecy goes to great lengths to fasten this vital nail in its sure place. There are at least ten unmistakable identifying characteristics given in Daniel 7 to pinpoint Papal Rome as the “little horn.”

1. *Geographical Location:* Daniel was told that the “little horn” comes to power “among” the ten horns that existed before it. It would arise out of the rubble of divided Rome, among the Western European nations. This first characteristic fits the Roman Church perfectly.

2. *Time of Ascendancy:* The second characteristic is the logical counterpart to geographical location. Since the little horn arose out of the crumbling Pagan Roman Empire, it follows that it would emerge “after” (Daniel 7:24) Pagan Rome falls. Imperial Rome reigned from about 168 B.C. to 476 A.D. By 538 A.D., the Roman Church was established as the uncontended, new empire of dominance.

3. *A Different Kind of Power:* The little horn kingdom would be “diverse” or different from those that reigned before it (Daniel 7:24). All the previous powers were primarily political kingdoms. The Papacy arose as a primarily religious power.

4. *Destroys Three Kingdoms as It Rises to Power:* Daniel was shown that “three” of the ten horns were “plucked up by the roots” as the little horn amassed its empire. The Heruli, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths were, indeed, “plucked up by the roots.” They are non-existent due to their vehement opposition to the church’s rule. They were literally exterminated.

and children to martyrs’ deaths because they chose to worship God according to conscience (see *Foxes Book of Martyrs*).

7. *Attempts to Change God’s Law.* Verse 25 reads: “He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws.”

The contextual setting clearly links the “times and laws” to “the Most High” God. And this is exactly what we discover as the historical evidence is considered.

There are two areas in which the Papal Church has fulfilled this prophecy:

a. She has completely omitted the

ing of truth. Rather, this power is under human guidance apart from God. A human figure occupies a very lofty position as arbiter of truth. This characteristic is accurately fulfilled in the status of deity conferred upon popes.

9. *To Reign for a Period of 1260 Years:* One of the last identifying characteristics of the little horn is the length of time this power would exercise its authority over God’s people. Daniel says, “and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (Daniel 7:25). The Revised Standard Version gives a more accurate translation, describing the period as “a time,

Whatever the future holds will mean very little to us unless we accept the salvation that has been extended to us in Jesus Christ.

5. *A Mouth Speaking Great Things Against God:* Verses 8 and 25 warned that the little horn will use its authority to speak shocking words against God Himself. The Roman Church claims the power to forgive sins through her priesthood, apart from which there is no pardon from God. She claims to stand as mediator between God and mankind, and unabashedly exalts her human leader, the pope, to the status of deity. He is, as it were, God on earth, accepting titles such as “Holy Father,” and “Your Holiness” (see Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 6).

6. *A Persecuting Power:* Daniel was shown that this powerful kingdom employed its influence and made “war with the saints and prevailed against them” (Daniel 7: 21, 25). Through the period of the Dark Ages, the Papacy was the catalyst that brought 50-100 million men, women

second commandment, which forbids the worship of man-made images. Compare the Ten Commandments in most Catholic catechisms with the Ten Commandments as recorded in the Bible, in Exodus 20. The second commandment, which forbids image worship, is deleted. The tenth commandment has been divided into two in order to maintain ten in number.

b. The second attempted change of God’s law by the Papacy is the substitution of Sunday observance in the place of the fourth commandment, which specifies the seventh day as God’s holy Sabbath.

8. *A Human Authority to Dictate Its Belief System:* “In this horn,” Daniel says, “were eyes like the eyes of man” (Daniel 7:8). In the Bible, eyes symbolize understanding. Paul prayed that “the eyes of your understanding” might be “enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18). The little horn is not divinely led with heavenly understand-

two times, and half a time.”

The same language occurs in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32. In these passages Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom is taken from him “till seven times pass over him.” Here “seven times” is undoubtedly seven years. “A time, two times, and half a time” is three and a half years.

Parallel prophecies in Revelation call our attention to the same time period. In Revelation 12:14 we again read of “a time, and times, and half a time.” In verse 6 this same period is calculated as “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (NKJV). In chapter 11:2, 3, “forty-two months” is equated with “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (NKJV).

Therefore, three-and-a-half-times and forty-two months and 1260 days are all equal time periods, given that the Bible allots 30 days to a month. We conclude, then, that the period of time Daniel renders “a time, two times and

half a time” is 1260 days. But we must go one step further to define this symbolism. In Bible prophecy, a prophetic day is equal to a literal year. To the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord said, “I have appointed thee each day for a year” (Ezekiel 4:6).

According to the prophecy, therefore, we should expect the little horn of Daniel 7, the Papal Church, to rule for a period of 1260 years. Remarkably, this is exactly what historical records confirm. The Roman Catholic Church-State did, indeed, possess unconquerable religious and political power for 1260 years—no more, no less.

A.D. 538, therefore, marks the beginning date for the 1260 years of Daniel’s prophecy. It is truly amazing to count down through time 1260 years from A.D. 538 and realize where we are. With breathtaking accuracy, the prophecy leads right to the year 1798, the very year that papal rule was broken. After exactly 1260 long, dark years, the French general Berthier, under the command of Napoleon, imprisoned the Pope and declared the church’s reign at an end.

10. *To Remain as a Power Until Jesus Returns*: Finally Daniel was told that this power would continue on the earth “until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22). In other words, though its allotted reign of persecution would end, this kingdom would continue. It would, in fact, be restored to power just before the Second Coming of Jesus, as we are about to find out in Revelation 13.

The Little Horn and the Sea Beast

What does all this information about the little horn in the book of Daniel have to do with the sea beast of Revelation 13? Everything! John, in the book of Revelation, picked up just where Daniel left off, reviewing some of

the same history and then moving forward to our day. Let’s compare the two prophecies carefully, noting our ten marks of identification, nine of which are found in Revelation 13.

1) John “saw a beast rise up out of the sea” (verse 2). “Sea” representing a populated area, the geographical location points to the center stage of the world where many nations, tongues and peoples are present. Papal Rome emerged from this setting.

2) This beast has features of a lion, a bear and a leopard (verse 2). These are the same characteristics of the kingdoms previous to Rome. Papal Rome, then, arises after them and receives “his power, and his seat, and great authority” as their successor.

3) In verse 4, the question is asked, “Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” This prophetic question points us to a religious power, especially one whose leader is seen as a symbol of peace.

4) This point is not mentioned in Revelation 13.

5) We also find in this power “a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” (verses 5, 6).

6) This power makes “war with the saints” in verse 7.

7) We are told in verse 8 that “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.” By attempting to revise God’s law to allow the worship of images, idols, and in Sunday observance, the Papacy is receiving the homage due to God.

8) John was told to calculate the number of the beast for it is “the number of a man” (Revelation 13:18). Here we find, as in Daniel 7, a human authority as the leader of this kingdom.

9) Also John was shown that the Papacy would be given power to “continue forty and two months” (verse 5). That equals 1260 *prophetic* days or 1260 *literal* years,

given the prophetic day-for-a-literal-year principle of prophecy (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6).

10) And finally, the Papacy would be “as it were wounded to death” but the “deadly wound” would be healed and the world would wonder after this power (verse 3). We are living to witness fulfillment of this prophecy today. Religious and secular leaders the world over are acclaiming the pope. He has been called the man of the year, a prophet for our time, and the most influential moral leader in the world today!

Summary

The first kingdom of Revelation 13 that is brought to view is Papal Rome. But who is the second beast (kingdom) referred to in verse 11 that enforces the mark of the first power upon the world? Only the Bible, which foretold all that has transpired so far, can open the future to us. The prophetic agenda has been accurate so far. What can we expect to happen next?

Whatever the future holds will mean very little to us unless we accept the salvation that has been extended to us in Jesus Christ. Christ is still the theme of this book, even of chapter 13.

Right in the middle of this amazing prophecy we find the words, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 13:8). Here is the gospel. Jesus is your Savior; predestined to die for your sins before you were even born; willing to take upon Himself the mission of your redemption; pledging in the courts of heaven to come to your rescue. Jesus Christ did not count heaven a place to be desired while you were lost. He loves you. He died for you. He is coming back again for you very soon. He wants you to be ready. Amen.



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