

## CHAPTER 13

***"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (13:1,2).***

Much confusion reigns about the identity and role of the two beasts who come to light in chapter 13. Two views seem to predominate: that which sees the two beasts as men, and that which sees them as entities. In this study, we will concentrate on the first view--the two beasts are in fact truly men.

This first beast, described in our text above, is further described in 17:9-17. John also wrote of him in 11:7, where he overcame and killed the two witnesses. But we will confine ourselves to the words recorded here in chapter 13, and in doing so one cannot help but see the similarity with Daniel chapter seven. There we read,

*And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: "Arise, devour much flesh!" After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.*

Most premillennial commentators agree that the four beasts in Daniel represent four empires: the first beast that of Babylon, the second that of Medo-Persia, the third that of Greece, and the fourth that of Rome. The beast which is described by John here in chapter 13 incorporates some aspect of each. It would therefore seem probable that this beast also is an empire. But an empire has a king, and thus Walvoord probably is correct in asserting that this beast "is both the empire and its ruler. As ruler he is the symbol of the empire and the executor of its power."<sup>1</sup>

Seiss agrees:

Daniel's beasts were successive empires . . . But the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the nameless ten-horned monster, each distinct there, are all united in one here. This Beast is therefore the consummation and embodiment of the whole world-

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 207.

power or political dominion from the beginning, as it presents itself at the final outcome. . . . We cannot consistently speak of imperial power and dominion apart from a personal head which represents and embodies that power. A person is necessarily included in the conception, as well as an imperial dominion which that person holds and exercises.<sup>2</sup>

Kelly also provides some insight which, though lengthy, is quite good:

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard." This was the general resemblance of its body, and it refers to the Macedonian empire, so notoriously marked by its swiftness of conquest. "His feet were as the feet of a bear," which refers to the Persian, and implies great tenacity of grasp; "and his mouth as the mouth of a lion," denoting its voraciousness, as in Nebuchadnezzar's career and kingdom. Thus the Roman empire, in its last stage at least, would unite in itself the several characteristics of the former empires. And indeed such was the ordinary policy of the Romans. They did not interfere with what they found in the various nations they conquered. They endeavoured to incorporate into their own system whatever had helped on the power of those nations. They did not force their own customs upon others, but cultivated whatever they found advantageous, and turned it to their own use. So this beast, as we see here, was made up of the diverse qualities of power that had given weight to its imperial predecessors.

But there is one remarkable difference from all of them, and even from its own original condition. "The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority" (verse 2). This notable distinction is subsequent to Satan's fall from heaven. He wants to have a medium for acting universally upon men, in the centre of the world's civilization and activity, for the short time that he is allowed to do as he pleases on earth. Accordingly, to the Roman beast which had imperial authority providentially from God he gives his own peculiar dragon power. This is a thing that has never yet been seen on the earth in the full sense of the word--this union of the imperial authority with the positive impartation of Satanic energy. But the prophet sees more than this connected with the beast's investiture by the dragon. "And [I saw] one of his heads as it were slain to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast" (verse 3). I am inclined to think that the wounded head was the imperial form of government. (Comp. chap. xvii. 10.) The heads that were, as we have seen, connected with the dragon (chap. xii. 3) as well as with the beast, represent the different forms of power which had existed successively. Of these one was to be lost, as it were wounded to death, but at this time was to be revived again through Satanic agency. All the world is surprised, and no wonder. They will be seized with extreme astonishment at the revival of the Roman empire, with more than its ancient splendour.

And now, if we look at Daniel, we find a remarkable fact introduced there, connected with its divided state at the close, and of course also with its previous divisions after it had ceased to exist as an empire. The image in Dan. ii has got feet, "part of iron and part of clay." There is weakness consequently. That metal

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2 Seiss, *Lectures*, pp. 392-393.

represents the original Roman element in its strength, while the clay was a foreign ingredient, which brought in weakness when it sought to coalesce with the iron. "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay" (verse 43). This exactly accounts for the state of things found in Western Europe. The history of this part of the world was completely changed by the inroads of the barbarians about the fifth century after Christ. There was a time when one vast consolidated power had universal and undisputed sway--the iron power of Rome. But at the epoch named swarms of barbarians, near about the same time and from the north and east, came down on the empire and assailed it at almost every point. It fell. But mighty as these barbarians were in overthrowing, they could only establish little separate kingdoms; and since then no hand has been able to gather up the broken fragments and put them firmly together again. It has not been for want of the disposition to do so; for, on the contrary, all sorts of expedients have been tried--sometimes the sword, sometimes policy, sometimes intermarriage--but in vain. And thus it has remained under the providence of God. There has been no unity, so that the prevailing and favourite expression of modern policy has been and is "the balance of power." It means really keeping a respectable distance among the scattered members of what was once a united body. Mutual jealousies and the spirit of independence in each have ever effectually hindered re-union. The ordinary aim has been, by the formation of parties among the power, to check and prevent the preponderance of any one.<sup>3</sup>

We see today a so-called European "Union", but it is far from "united" in reality.

For now, a revived Roman Empire seems to be a warranted conclusion. Also, seeing that the beast ascends from the sea, it seems probable that Frost may be correct when he states that this beast will be a Gentile: "This monster of iniquity then, is seen rising up out of the Gentile nations--the sea standing for 'people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.'" <sup>4</sup>

In verse three John states, "And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast." This subject will be discussed more fully in chapter 17, but a comment from Johnson is of interest:

The "wound" unto death or fatal wound, must be carefully examined. In the Greek, the word for "wound" is *plege*, which everywhere in Revelation means "plague," in fact, a divinely inflicted judgment (9:18, 20; 11:6; 15:1ff.; 16:9, 21; 18:4, 8; 21:9; 22:18). Elsewhere in the NT the word is used of "beatings" or official "floggings" (Luke 10:30; 12:48; Acts 16:23, 33; 2 Cor 6:5; 22:23). In 13:14 we find that the beast has the plague of the "sword" (*machaira*), which supposedly refers to Nero's dagger. Elsewhere in Revelation the "sword" (*machaira*, or *rhomphaia*) (1) symbolically refers to the divine judgment of the Messiah (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21); (2) is the sword of the rider on the red horse and equals divine judgment (6:4, 8); and (3) is a sword used as a weapon against the saints of God (13:10). We are, then, nearer to John's mind if we see the sword, not as referring to an emperor's

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3 Kelly, *Lectures*, pp. 277-279.

4 Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and the Revelation*, pg. 225.

death, but as the symbol of God's wrath that in some event had struck a death blow to the authority of the beast (and the dragon), yet which had been deceptively covered up or restored (for a probable antecedent, see Isa. 27:1).<sup>5</sup>

*"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon" (13:11). Who, or what, is this beast?*

We are told that this second beast exercises great authority, causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast, and performs great signs by which he deceives the people. Frost believes that this second beast will be Jewish, seeing that he ascends from the earth and not the sea, the earth being the land of Palestine. This beast has the power to command all people to receive a mark in their flesh in order to buy the necessities of life. A literal reading can only mean that we are speaking here of a man. A "system" cannot perform great signs to the amazement of the people. As noted above in chapter 12, Walvoord thinks this second beast is the false prophet and religious leader of the world.

Again, Seiss agrees with him:

The religious element is one of the most powerful in humanity. Its great potency appears in all the history of mankind. It cannot be ignored, suppressed, or put aside. It may be misled and perverted, but its presence and power are inevitable wherever man is man. Nothing can securely stand against it. No other power can be sustained without its aid. True or false, human nature must have a religion . . . And so the Antichrist, though opposing and exalting himself "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped," still finds it essential to have a religion.<sup>6</sup>

This topic will be covered in more depth in chapter 17.

We have no way today--right now--of ascertaining who the first beast is (speaking in terms of him as a man). Identifying a "revived Roman Empire" is also extremely difficult. Will this "new" empire consist solely of countries within the original bounds of the "old" or will subsequent conquests be included? Benjamin Newton has a lengthy chapter on this subject in which he states

that it is doubted by some whose opinions are of weight on these questions, whether the prophecy before us pertains to the *fullest* extent of the Roman Empire when enlarged by conquest, or to its more limited extent when first constituted under Augustus Ceasar.

If we decide the question by the second chapter, the answer would, I suppose, be, that all countries in which the *iron* character of power was governmentally *established* by Rome--in other words, all districts that were formally *incorporated into* the Roman Empire during the period that its power was symbolised by iron, must be regarded as coming under the symbols used in that vision. Britain and other districts conquered subsequently to the time of Augustus were thus

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5 Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 526.

6 Seiss, *Lectures*, pp. 414-415.

incorporated into the empire as provinces.<sup>7</sup>

The second beast, however, might be more easily identified. He could be a religious leader of an apostate church, or perhaps of a conglomerate of an apostate form of Christianity and other world religions.

Horns are the symbols of power; but these horns have no diadems, and are like the horns of a gentle domestic animal. Political sovereignty, war, conquest, and the strength of military rule are therefore out of the question here. This Beast is a *Prophet*, a spiritual teacher, and not a king or warrior. His power has a certain softness and domesticity about it, which is sharply distinguished from the great, regal horns of the first Beast, although in reality of the same Wild Beast order, and belonging to the same Dragon brood. . . . He is lamblike in that he proposes to occupy only the mild, domestic, and inoffensive position of spiritual adviser. What more gentle and innocent than the counseling of people how to live and act, for the securement of their happiness! But the words are like the Dragon, in that such professions and claims are in fact the assumption of absolute dominion over the minds, souls, consciences, and hearts of men, to bind them irrevocably, and to compel them to think and act only as he who makes them shall dictate and prescribe.<sup>8</sup>

The Reformers generally considered the Pope to be the Antichrist.<sup>9</sup> This was due mainly to the Pope's antagonism to the rediscovery of the Gospel, which in turn inspired the Reformation. Although this view is not widely held today among Protestant scholars, it is not wise to completely dismiss a view so pervasive among the leaders of the Reformation.<sup>10</sup> One need only to refer to Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, and there he reads of the absolute power the Pope held over the subjects of his realm. This helps us understand an additional reason why the Reformers might have taken such a position--for what other mortal man could bring a king to his knees to beg forgiveness?

### CANOSSA, 1077

*A few days before Christmas, Henry IV left Spire on a journey across the Alps as a penitent, seeking absolution from the pope. It was one of the coldest and longest winters within the memory of men, the Rhine being frozen to a solid mass. He was accompanied by his wife with her infant son and one faithful servant.*

*The royal couple passed through Burgundy and Susa under the protection of Count William and the mother of Henry's wife. The queen and her child were carried up and lowered down the icy*

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7 B. W. Newton, *Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms*, pg. 69.

8 Seiss, *Lectures*, pp. 425, 427.

9 See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VII:529-533. The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter XXV, § VI, takes the same view. In *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, we read, "Those that understand the first beast of the secular power of the papacy take the second to intend its spiritual and ecclesiastical powers, which act under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men" (at Rev. 13:11-17).

10 For more on this view, see Appendix 7.

*slopes in rough sledges of oxhide. When Henry reached the plains of Lombardy, he was received with joy by the anti-Hildebrandian party, but he hurried on to meet the successor of Peter, who alone could give him absolution. He left his wife and child at Reggio, and, accompanied by his mother-in-law and a few friends, he climbed up the steep hill to Canossa, where Gregory was then stopping on his journey to the Diet at Augsburg, waiting for a safe conduct across the Alps.*

*Henry arrived at the foot of the castlesteep, Jan. 21, 1077, when the cold was severe and the ground covered with snow. He had an interview with the abbot of Cluny and declared his willingness to submit to the pope if he was released from the interdict. But Gregory would only absolve him on condition that he would surrender to him his crown and forever resign the royal dignity. The king made the last step to secure the mercy of the pope. He assumed the severest penances that the Church requires from a sinner, as a sure way to absolution. For three days he stood in the court between the inner walls as a penitent suppliant, with bare head and feet, in a coarse woolen shirt, shivering in the cold, and knocked in vain for entrance at the gateway. Gregory refused admittance until he was satisfied that the cup of humiliation was drained to the dregs, or that further resistance would be impolitic. He first exacted from Henry, as a condition of absolution, the promise to submit to his decision at the approaching meeting of the German nobles under the presidency of the pope as arbiter and to grant him and his deputies protection on their journey to the north. In the meantime he was to abstain from exercising the functions of royalty. The king made the promise, and two bishops and several nobles, in his behalf, swore upon sacred relics that he would keep it.*

*After these preliminaries, the inner gate was opened. The king, in the prime of life, the heir of many crowned monarchs, and a man of tall and noble presence, threw himself at the feet of the gray-haired pope, a man of low origin and of small and unimpressive stature, who by his word had disarmed an empire. Henry burst into tears, and cried "Spare me, holy father, spare me!" The company was moved to tears, and even the iron pope showed signs of tender compassion. He heard the confession of Henry, raised him up, gave him absolution and his apostolic blessing, conducted him to the chapel, and sealed the reconciliation by the celebration of the sacrifice of the mass.*

*Henry gained his object, but at the sacrifice of his royal dignity. He confessed by his act of humiliation that the pope had a right to depose a king and heir of the imperial crown and to absolve subjects from the oath of allegiance. The head of the State acknowledged the temporal supremacy of the Church. Canossa marks the deepest humiliation of the State and the highest exaltation of the political papal Church of Rome.<sup>11</sup>*

When the power of the pope was so great over a king, what must it have been like for a poor peasant to be the scorn of a mere bishop?

## **EXCOMMUNICATION**

*Excommunication was the exclusion from the sacraments, especially the communion. The bishop could excommunicate anyone who refused canonical obedience. A bishop could be excommunicated only by the pope, and the pope by no power on earth. The sentence was often*

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11 See Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, volume V, for the full history.

*accompanied with awful curses upon the bodies and souls of the offenders. The popes, as they towered above ordinary bishops, surpassed them also in the art of cursing and exercised it with shocking profanity.*

*Hardened sinners might despise such imprecations, but their effect on believers was necessarily unutterable, when, amid the gorgeous and impressive ceremonial of worship, the bishop, surrounded by twelve priests bearing flaming candles, solemnly recited the awful words which consigned the evildoer and all his generation to eternal torment with such fearful amplitude and reduplication of malediction, and as the sentence of perdition came to its climax, the attending priests simultaneously cast their candles to the ground and trod them out, as a symbol of the quenching of a human soul in the eternal night of hell. To this was added the expectation, amounting almost to a certainty, that Heaven would not wait for the natural course of events to confirm the judgment thus pronounced, but that the maledictions would be as effective in this world as in the next.<sup>12</sup>*

In our age the Pope does not wield such power over monarchs; yet his power over the common man is not to be taken lightly. The Pope claims for himself the right of absolution; he claims to hold the keys to heaven and hell. Let us not be fooled by the kindness and gentleness of a Pope John Paul. As the Vicar of Christ, he believed in his own power over the souls of men as deeply as did the corrupt popes of the medieval ages. How disturbing it is to contemplate the power a man can have over another man's conscience. How much harder to fathom the effects when it does.

It is true that Islam seems to be the religion making the strongest advance in the world today. However, Islam is a false religion. Their god is a false god named Allah; ours is the true God named Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It seems likely that the apostate church of the last days will claim, in some fashion, to worship Yahweh; but it will be "another gospel." On the other hand, if, according to Frost, this second beast--the religious leader--is Jewish, then it would be surprising to find him the head of the Christian church, apostate as it may be.

Verse 18 has captured the imagination of believers since John first wrote it: *"Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666."*

"Because of its contrast with 7 we may be content with an interpretation which sees in 666 an allusion to incompleteness, to the demonic parody in the perfection of 7, to the deceptiveness of the almost-perfect, to the idolatrous blasphemy exemplified by false worshipers," . . . This interpretation of 666 as a symbolic number referring to the unholy trinity of evil or to the human imperfect imitation of God rather than a cipher of a name is not restricted to Minear. It has been held by a long line of conservative commentators--A. C. Gaebelein . . . J. A. Seiss . . . J. F. Walvoord . . . T. F. Torrance . . . L. Morris, J. Ellul . . . and others.<sup>13</sup>

I think Kelly's advice is best: "May we not be satisfied that this is one of the points of detail left for 'the wise' of the latter day, and that when the time comes the clue will be given, and all the

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<sup>12</sup> Also found in Schaff, volume V.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 535.

light that may be required?"<sup>14</sup>

Before closing this chapter, let us hear these words of Alexander Reese: "Here then we have two chapters (Rev. 12-13) that were actually written to describe the origin, nature, and course of the Great Tribulation--chap. 14:1 to 15:4 gives the issue. It is Satan through the Antichrist and the False Prophet falling on the saints of the Last Days, who *will follow the Lamb at all costs and will not do homage to the powers of darkness.*"<sup>15</sup>

Now in closing this chapter, let us take to heart these words of Benjamin Newton:

It is surely an awful scene; but it will be limited both as to time, and as to place. The time is 1260 days; its place the Roman world, and more especially the land of Israel. God might have allowed, if it had so pleased Him, the whole earth to be full of this maturity of evil. The seeds of it, doubtless, are sown everywhere,--wheresoever the mind of man under Satan has put forth its powers; but the merciful providence of God has checked, and will check, their growth in other regions; so that it is in the Ten Kingdoms only that the full harvest will be found. .

. .

We who are dwelling in these western limits of the Roman world, should of all men most peculiarly beware; for we live in the very countries from which the principles which are especially forwarding this mystery of iniquity are deriving their impulse and their power. Many of these principles are fascinating in their aspect, and fruitful of prosperity in result; they breathe of amity, and good-will, and brotherhood; their fruits are seen in the taste, the literature, the commerce, and the decorated religion of the day. Education too, for the most part, is made to foster the tendencies of the hour, for what is there that we are ordinarily taught to admire and to cultivate that does not fall under the symbol of the lion, the leopard, or the bear; so that, thus far, there will be no strange features of hideousness in Antichrist to terrify into separation from evil, those who refuse to be separated from it by the Truth now.<sup>16</sup>

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14 Kelly, *Lectures*, pg. 309.

15 Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 286.

16 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pp. 197-198.