

## The 'Beast'

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The "beast" against which the solemn, worldwide warning is given, as described in Rev. 14:9-11, is not first mentioned in connection with this message of the "third angel." The prophet here speaks in reference to what has been introduced and described in the preceding chapters; the character and work of the "beast" are already before the eye when the message of the "third angel" is proclaimed.

Turning therefore to the thirteenth chapter, we find a description, beginning with the first verse, of the rise of the "beast," and the characteristics of its appearance. "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I 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" (Rev. 13:1, 2). The work and character of this beast are set forth in the verses which follow, to verse 11.

In prophetic language, a beast is the symbol of an earthly government or power. This we are plainly told in the prophecy of Daniel. In the seventh chapter of that prophecy Daniel describes a vision given him, in which he saw "four great beasts," concerning which the angel who explained the vision to him said, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings that shall arise out of the earth" (Dan. 7:17). That they were not symbols of individuals but of kingdoms is evident from the words of the angel: "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth" (Dan. 7:23).

In the eighth chapter of Daniel also are described a "ram" and "he goat," of which it is said, "The ram which you saw, having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia, and the rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king" (Dan. 8:20, 21). "That being broken," the angel said, "whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."

The beast which John saw arise out of the sea had many and diverse features. It had the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion. If we are familiar with the prophecy of Daniel we shall note at once a connection between this description and that of certain beasts seen in a vision by that prophet. (See Daniel 7:3-7). The prophet saw "four great beasts" come up out of the sea, the first of which was like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and the fourth "dreadful and terrible" and evidently quite dissimilar to all created beasts.

As previously noted, the angel explained to Daniel that these great beasts were four kings, which should arise out of the earth; and that the fourth beast should be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which was to be "diverse from all kingdoms" and should "devour the whole earth," and "tread it down and break it in pieces" (Dan. 7:17, 23).

In the second chapter of Daniel the four kingdoms are quite explicitly designated in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Nebuchadnezzar (representing his kingdom) was the head of gold of the great image (Dan. 2:38), and "after these," said the prophet, "shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." The fourth kingdom, represented by the iron legs, should "be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdues all things," said Daniel "shall it break in pieces and bruise" (Dan. 2:40). The description of the vision of chapter 7 states that the fourth beast had "great iron teeth," and that "it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it" (Dan. 7:19).

These four great kingdoms then began with the kingdom of Babylon, which was ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. That kingdom was succeeded by the kingdom of Media and Persia. Daniel lived to see Babylon captured and the kingdom taken by "Darius the Median" (Dan. 5:30, 31), and the beginning of "the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan. 6:28). Medo-Persia was succeeded by Grecia, with Alexander the Great at its head, and Grecia was succeeded by Rome. The overthrow of Medo-Persia by Grecia is described in the vision of Daniel 8 as we have previously noticed.

When Babylon was overthrown by Medo-Persia, "Darius the Median took the kingdom." The kingdom of Medo-Persia ruled over all the territory of the kingdom of Babylon, and included all the people formerly subjects of it. The kingdom of Grecia, in turn extended over all the kingdom of Medo-Persia; and Rome embraced in her kingdom all the territory of the kingdom of Grecia. Each successive kingdom incorporated into itself all that had existed before it. Thus Rome, the fourth kingdom, and the strongest of all, included the three kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Grecia, symbolized respectively by the lion, the bear, and the leopard. This points very clearly to the identity of the beast of Revelation 13:1-13. It is a symbol of the great empire of Rome, which, first as a pagan kingdom under the Cæsars, and again as a great spiritual empire—the Papal—has trodden down the earth, and broken the nations in pieces.

Some further points of similarity may be noted. In the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the fourth kingdom was shown divided into ten kingdoms (Dan. 2:41-44), and the fourth beast of Daniel 7, which was the fourth kingdom, had ten horns, and upon the horns ten crowns. (Rev. 13:1).

It has also an additional feature in its "seven heads." The head is that which governs or directs the body. Rome has had various forms of government since it became a power in the earth. One of these heads was seen by the prophet to be "wounded to death," which wound, as we learned from Rev. 13:14, was inflicted by the sword. Such a wound was given to the papal head, beginning in 1798, when the French general Berthier entered Rome with an army and took the Pope prisoner. From that time the power of the Papacy diminished until in 1870 the Pope's temporal power was limited to the Vatican, and his influence among the nations was utterly gone. But the "deadly wound" was to be healed, and this we now see in a fair way of accomplishment. The growing prominence of the Pope in the political affairs of the world, within the last few years, is marvelous, and Protestants seem to be vying with Catholics and showing respect to him. At the present rate it cannot be long until all the world will wonder after the beast,

saying, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

This beast received "his power and his seat, and great authority" from the "dragon." The preceding chapter describes this "dragon," and identifies it as the power which sought to destroy the infant Son of God. (Rev.12:4). That attempt was made by Herod, the Roman governor of Judea. But Herod, and the pagan empire which he served, were agencies of Satan, through which he manifested his hatred and his power against Christ and His followers. The "dragon," representing primarily the devil (Rev. 12:9) also stands for that which then visibly represented the devil's power in his opposition to Christ, and through which his evil purposes were carried out. That was pagan Rome; and this power gave to the "beast" his "power, and his seat, and great authority." This is exactly what was done for the Papacy when, by the removal of the pagan seat of the empire to Constantinople, Rome, the "eternal city," with all the prestige and authority which were hers from having been for centuries the "mistress of the world," became the seat of the Papacy.

But this beast is still further identified by his character and the work, which he does. "There was given him," we read, "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:5-7).

The power, which, above all others, has spoken blasphemies and overcome the saints, is the papal power. It is the "man of sin" "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). The Pope claims titles and prerogatives, which belong alone to God. Leo X. was "the Lion of the pride of Judah;" Leo XII., "the Lord our God." Martin V. called himself "the most holy and most happy, who is the arbiter of heaven and the lord of the earth, . . . the anointed of the Lord, the master of the universe, the father of the kings, the Light of the world." One of the latest encyclicals of Leo XIII is addressed "To the Princes and Peoples of the Universe;" and in it he says, "We hold the regency of God on earth;" that is to say, he governs in God's minority, absence, or disability! For that is the office of the regent. He assumes to be infallible when he speaks "from the chair of blessed Peter" touching a doctrine of faith or morals. He claims the power to forgive sin. In brief, he sets himself forth as God on earth, a visible head to the Church, supplanting the invisible One who is the church's real head, and who has said to His church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20)

The Papacy has made "war with the saints" and "overcome them." During the long dark period when it wielded temporal as well as spiritual power, it put to death scores of millions of "heretics," employing in its terrible work the civil arm, and that instrument of its own creation, the Inquisition. The modern claim of Rome, that she has never persecuted, since it was the civil authority which passed and executed sentence of death upon the "heretics," is as baseless as the claim made by the Jews that their

ancestors did not persecute Jesus Christ, since He was put to death by the power of pagan Rome in the person of Pontius Pilate.

This blasphemous and persecuting power was to continue “forty and two months,” three and one half years, or 1260 days (thirty days making a month by the ancient Bible reckoning). In prophetic language a “day” signifies a year. (Eze. 4:6). The establishment of the Papacy as a kingdom possessing what it has ever claimed as its right—spiritual authority and temporal power—dates from the overthrow of the last of the temporal powers that opposed the claims of the Bishop of Rome, which was accomplished in A.D. 538. Previous to this the Emperor Justinian had declared the Bishop of Rome to be head over all the churches. But two Arian powers, the Vandals and Ostrogoths, still opposed the claims of the Papacy. A third Arian power, the Heruli, had been overthrown in A.D. 493. Justinian turned his arms against the two remaining powers, subduing the Vandals in 538, and the Goths, who held possession of Rome, in 538.

Thus was “taken out of the way” that which “hindered,” and “that wicked,” the “man of sin,” was “revealed,” and left in undisputed supremacy at Rome, where, ever since the removal of the seat of the empire to the East by Constantine, he had been centering upon himself, as its chief person, the glory and prestige which still clung to the “eternal city.”

From this date 1260 years reaches to the year 1798; at that date the “forty and two months” end. And in that year, as we have noticed, the French general Berthier entered Rome with an army, took the Pope prisoner, and carried him into exile, where he died. From that day the temporal power of the Pope has waned, until, as he now complains, he is but “the prisoner of the Vatican.”

Such are the fulfillments of history, which identify the power designated by the remarkable symbol introduced in Revelation 13. It is seen first to be a symbol of Rome; and then, by its character and work, to designate Rome in its Papal form, —that great spiritual kingdom which was to rule over men with greater power and authority than pagan Rome had known. And this is the power—the “beast”—after which the world wonders, and against which the warning is given, “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 ascends up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9-11).