



Babylon Rising

#15

In Revelation 13:1-3, John sees a mysterious beast crawl up out of the sea. It is a conglomeration of other animals with lion parts, bear parts, leopard parts and horns. What does it represent? Revelation 17:15 explains that in Bible prophecy, *waters* represent “peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.” This beast comes up *among* the nations of the earth. What does it all mean? The key is to be found in Daniel 7, where Daniel sees not *one* beast, but *four* crawling up out of the sea. Daniel 7:17, 23 explains that a “beast” represents a king and his kingdom. It is a political entity, not a single individual.

The first beast (Daniel 7:4) is a lion, representing the kingdom of Babylon (605—539 B.C.) Babylon was often portrayed in ancient times as a lion; Bible passages such as Jeremiah 51:37, 38 explicitly refer to Babylon as a lion. Why does the lion have wings? To represent speed (for example, see Habbakuk 1:6-8, Jeremiah 4:13 and Exodus 19:4).

The second beast (Daniel 7:5) is a bear “raised up on one side”—representing the coalition government of the Medes and the Persians (539-311 B.C.) Although clumsy and undisciplined like a bear, the Medes and the Persians managed to overthrow the Babylonian empire. Why three ribs in its mouth? It is interesting to note that Babylon had three provinces, and the bear devours three parts of a beast!

The third beast (Daniel 7:6) is a four-headed leopard with four wings. This represents the Greek empire (331-168 B.C.) as it was established by Alexander the Great. It has two sets of wings denoting unusual speed—Alexander conquered the world faster than anyone had ever seen! After his untimely death, his empire was divided among his four generals (Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus and Cassander), thus the four heads on the leopard.

The fourth beast (Daniel 7:7) represents the Roman empire (168 B.C.—476 A.D.) (Note the iron teeth, which correspond with the iron legs of the statue in Daniel 2.) This kingdom was so powerful no ordinary animal would do. It quickly subdued most of the known world—but Rome eventually collapsed.

The Western Roman Empire succumbed to the 10 barbarian tribes of Western Europe (the Alemanni, Visigoths, Lombards, Suevi, Burgundians, Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Ostrogoths, Heruli, and Vandals). These 10 tribes are the 10 horns that come out of the Roman empire (Daniel 7:7, 24). This is where the beast of Revelation 13 fits in. Daniel 7:8 speaks of a “little horn” that appears in among the 10 horns. An *additional* kingdom appears among the 10 tribes. This horn is the beast of Revelation 13!

The Bible gives us at least eight clear points by which we can identify the little horn:

1. It is a small, influential European nation (Daniel 7:8).
2. It must show up after 476 A.D. among the 10 horns that overthrew the Roman empire that year.
3. It uproots three of the other horns (Daniel 7:8, 24).

4. It is different from other kingdoms (Daniel 7:24).
5. It speaks great words, or blasphemy (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5). What is blasphemy? John 10:33 and Mark 2:6, 7 reveal that it is blasphemy.
6. It is a persecuting power, “wearing out” the saints and making war against them (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:7).
7. It thinks to change God’s times and laws (Daniel 7:25).
8. It rules for a “time, times and the dividing of time” or 42 months (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5).

A “time” is a year (compare with Daniel 4:16). “Times” is two years; “dividing of time” is half a year. This is three and a half years—42 months (at 30 days apiece) is also three years. So are the 1,260 days of Revelation 12:6 (which is also described as time, times and half a time in Revelation 12:14). They are all an equivalent period of time. In prophecy, a day is symbolic of a year (see Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34). Thus, the beast power rules for 1,260 years.

Hebrews 4:12 warns us that the truth can hurt sometimes, especially when it hits close to home. What is the Bible describing when it warns us about a “little horn”? The sad truth is that this is a description of our own Christian history! The horn is not some atheistic power or political tyrant—it is us! Each of the points fits with mind-numbing accuracy:

1. Historically (in the Dark Ages), the headquarters for organized Christianity was a small European nation.
2. This nation rose to power after 476 A.D. as its autonomy and authority were established in 538 A.D.
3. Three of the barbarian tribes were obliterated by organized Christianity: the Heruli, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths.
4. Christians throughout the Dark Ages created a *church state*—combining the authority of the church with the authority of secular power. This led to many misunderstandings and abuses of power.
5. Historically, Christians have made claims about themselves that were outside of the scope of authority granted to them by Scripture.
6. The Dark Ages signalled massive persecution by Christian entities. As many as 100 million people were put to death for matters of conscience during the Dark Ages.
7. The church of the Dark Ages clearly claims responsibility for changing God’s law and introducing a false Sabbath.
8. The abuse of power in the Christian church lasted—in an organized fashion—for 1,260 years, ending in 1798 when General Berthier marched on Rome.

The Bible is the story of God’s people—both in a saving relationship with Him, and in moments of rebellion. The Old Testament is honest enough to point out those times when Israel was in rebellion against God, and the New Testament is no different. It points out a great “falling away” that would take place in Christianity, and reveals that our worst problems do not come from outside—they come from within!

A God of love warns us with an everlasting love that we have a choice to make. Will we stand on the Word of God—on safe ground—or will we follow the dictates of human beings?



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The Bible doesn't shrink from pointing out the flaws in its greatest figures of faith. King David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), but he also had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. (2 Samuel 11) Abraham lied (Genesis 20:1-3), and Peter denied Jesus with cursing. (Mark 14:66-71) These, and others like them, repented and found forgiveness. Their stories encourage us that no matter what sins we may have committed, we can be forgiven, too.

What is true of individual Christians is also true of the whole body of Christ—His church. The Bible is honest enough to predict that a great "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) would take place within Christianity itself. A time would come when the Christian church would fall into error and sin. Our worst problems do not come from outside; they come from within!

History confirms that during the Dark Ages, the church became more concerned with maintaining its authority and worldly power than with remaining faithful to Jesus. The prophecies of Daniel 7 outline the details.

PARALLEL PROPHECIES FORETELL THE FUTURE

1. In vision, what did the Apostle John see rising out of the sea? (Revelation 13:1, 2)

This strange animal was part lion, part bear, and part leopard, with seven heads. It rose out of the sea. What does this mean? The key is found in Daniel 7, where the prophet saw four animals—not one—coming up out of the sea. The animal John saw was made up of parts of the four animals in Daniel's vision.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation often share symbols. They build upon each other, repeating broad outlines and adding new details.

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2. What four animals (beasts) did Daniel see rising from the sea, and what do they represent? (Daniel 7:2-7, 17)
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These four animals represent four kings—or kingdoms—that would rise to rule the earth. We have seen this sequence before.

DANIEL 2

Head of gold

DANIEL 7

Lion with eagle's wings

BABYLON
605 – 539 BC

Chest & arms of silver

Bear raised up on one side

MEDO-PERSIA
539 – 331 BC

Stomach & thighs of bronze

Leopard with four wings & four heads

GREECE
331 – 168 BC

Legs of iron

Dreadful animal with iron teeth

ROME
168 BC – AD 476

THE LITTLE HORN POWER AND THE "FALLING AWAY"

3. How many horns does the fourth animal have in Daniel's vision?
(Daniel 7:7)

The statue in Daniel 2 has 10 toes, and the fourth animal in Daniel 7 has 10 horns. These represent the 10 "barbarian" tribes of Western Europe following the end of the Roman Empire.

4. What arises among these 10 horns? (Daniel 7:8)

An additional power—the "little horn"—appears among the 10 tribes that followed the Roman Empire, uprooting three of them. It is the successor of all the kingdoms that have gone before it. Likewise, the animal John sees in Revelation 13:1, 2, is a composite of all the animals of Daniel 7. This "little horn" is the same power as the animal of Revelation 13:1, 2. It is the link between the two prophecies.

5. What are some characteristics of this "little horn" power that can help us identify what it represents? (Daniel 7:24, 25)

It will arise after the _____ horns (kings or kingdoms).

It will subdue _____ kings.

It will speak _____ words against the Most High.

It will persecute _____ of the Most High.

It will intend to _____ times and law.

It will hold power over God's people for a _____ and _____ and half a time. (NKJV)

The sad truth is that this description points to the Christian church itself. Hebrews 4:12 warns that the truth sometimes hurts. The Bible is honest enough to point out that Christianity would lose its way significantly during the Dark Ages. This little horn is not some political tyrant or anti-religious power. It is the church! Each identifying mark given in the prophecy fits it accurately.

The prophecy says that the church would persecute those who remained faithful to God for "a time and times and half a time."
(Daniel 7:25)

A “time” is a year. (Daniel 4:16) “Times” is two years. A “half a time” is six months. Together, this time period equals 3 ½ years or 42 months. A “day” in Bible prophecy equals a year of real time. (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34) So 42 months—30 days per month in the Jewish calendar of the biblical era—equals 1,260 literal years.

History records that the established Christian church did rule for this period of time during the the Dark Ages, and it did persecute faithful Christians. As many as 100 million people were put to death for matters of conscience.

The church rose to power following the collapse of the Roman Empire. In doing so, it subdued three of the 10 tribes (horns) just as the prophecy predicted—the Heruli, Vandals and Ostrogoths. It exercised political power as well as religious authority. It made presumptuous unscriptural claims for itself. The church attempted to change God’s law, especially the Sabbath commandment regarding holy time.

All these things confirm the great “falling away” within the church that the New Testament predicted. (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

GOD CALLS FOR A DECISION

6. What appeal does God make to those who have fallen away from following Him? (**Ezekiel 33:11**)

The story of the Bible is the story of God’s people—both when they are in a saving relationship with Him and in moments of rebellion. A God of love warns us that we have a choice to make. Will we stand on the Word of God and be faithful to Him? Or will we follow the human traditions of those—even within the church—who have lost their spiritual compass?

MY DECISION

- Father, I choose to stand with You and Your faithful people. I ask You to guide me each day to make the right decisions for eternity.

MY PRAYER

Father, thank You for the assurance that You are always there for me. Come into my heart anew and live daily in me. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.