

20th Century Bible Course

LESSON TWENTY-SIX

Dear Student Friend:

If we are to comprehend the plan of salvation and the ministry of our Saviour, we cannot ignore the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. They bring into bold relief the whole conflict between Christ and Satan, and trace prophetically the details of the struggle between Christianity and paganism throughout the Christian era. Genesis portrays Paradise lost; Revelation discloses Paradise regained. In Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation. The two books explain each other.

Have you ever wondered why God gave these prophetic pictures through symbols instead of spelling them out in easy-to-understand language? While we cannot presume to know the mind of God, a few rather obvious reasons may be of interest.

First, have you ever noticed how much a single cartoon can "say"? And with much less danger of personal offense? By symbols God can portray complex events in a capsule.

Second, like the parables Jesus told, which presented vital truths in such a way that His enemies could find nothing by which to condemn Him, symbols veil the subtle and deceptive plans of Satan. Through parables Jesus spoke truth so cutting in character that had it been spoken outright in direct denunciation, it would have prematurely ended His ministry. Likewise, had God unmasked the forces of evil in plain language, those who were denounced would have spared no efforts to obliterate the Scriptures. Even as it was, Satan tried desperately to destroy the Scriptures in the Dark Ages.

Third, Daniel and John were both prisoners-Daniel a captive in Babylon; John an exile on the Island of Patmos. Imagine the Roman censors reading John's letters before forwarding them on to his friends on the mainland! "Look at all this nonsense about bottomless pits and women riding beasts, and seven-headed animals!" they must have chuckled. Little did they dream that those symbols cloaked messages of great importance for God's church. Here, indeed, is seen heaven's wisdom!

Fourth, a person must really be determined to understand God's will and where he stands in God's timetable of events, to be willing to expend the time and effort necessary to decode symbolic prophecy. Thus it tests the depth of one's devotion and sincerity. God gives a special blessing to all who make this effort (Revelation 1:3, NT 212 [168]). If it did not contain important material, would God have given it to us?

Remember the great image of Daniel 2 (Lesson 3), and how God represented four world monarchies by the different parts of the metal-and-clay man? In Daniel 7 the prophet again is shown the panorama of the centuries. But this time the nations are represented by beasts-just as today we speak of the British lion, the Russian bear, the American eagle. God then focuses on a specific period of the prophecy and introduces the mysterious antichrist, who opposes God's will, persecutes His followers, and seeks to change His law. It is the antichrist who challenges our loyalty to God.

Before you begin this lesson, read prayerfully chapter seven of the book of Daniel.

Most sincerely, Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 26: THE GREAT HISTORICAL APOSTASY

SCRIPTURE READING: DANIEL 7

Part 1-- INTERPRETING SYMBOLIC PROPHECY

1. What kind of interpretation is unacceptable to God when we study prophecy?

2 Peter 1:20, 21 _____

2. Who gave inspired prophecy? (verse 21) _____

3. What is another name for the Holy Ghost? 1 Peter 1:10-12 "Searching what, or what manner of time the _____ which was in them [the prophets] did signify."

4. Who will aid us in understanding prophetic truth?

John 16:13 _____

Part 2--THE LEOPARD BEAST OF REVELATION 13

Describe the beast John saw. Revelation 13:1, 2

Heads and horns _____ What name was on its head? _____

Feet _____ What animal did it look like? _____

Mouth _____ Who gave the beast its power? _____

2. Who is the dragon? Revelation 12:9 _____

Who, or what does this strange looking beast represent? Here is where one of Daniel's visions will help us, for Daniel sheds light on Revelation, while Revelation expands the prophecies of Daniel.

Part 3-- THE FOUR BEASTS OF DANIEL 7

1. What did Daniel see come out of the sea? Daniel 7:2, 3 _____

2. What does a beast represent (verses 17, 23) _____

In Daniel 2 we learned that there were to be but four great empires, after which the fourth kingdom would be divided, followed by God's kingdom. History has confirmed this. Since Daniel 7 also tells of four successive kingdoms, it is apparent that this prophecy parallels the great image of Daniel 2. Because God identified the first kingdom in Daniel 2 as Babylon, we know that the other three would have to be Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

These beasts came out of the sea ("peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," or a thickly populated territory-Revelation 17:15. Daniel saw a sea tossed about by a strong wind (verse 2). Winds depict strife and war (Jeremiah 49:36, 37). Thus each of these nations emerges from war and strife. Isn't this exactly how most nations make their debut? When a segment of people become powerful enough, they enlarge their borders by force. In contrast, the leopard-like beast of Revelation 13 came up from the sea, but no winds were mentioned, for it was *given* its power (verse 2). This is a good example of how many details can be conveyed through symbols.



Both Daniel 2 and 7 end with God's kingdom (Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14) further indicating that these prophecies parallel each other.

3. Describe the lion (Babylon). Daniel 7:4 _____

It is common knowledge that the winged lion was one of Babylon's symbols.

4. What did the bear (Medo-Persia) look like? (verse 5) _____

In this dual monarchy, the Persians were stronger than the Medes (raised on one side). (Compare with Daniel 8:3, 20).

5. How many wings and heads did the third beast (Grecia) have? (verse 6) _____

The extra wings portray the rapidity of Alexander's conquests. After his death Grecia was divided among his four leading generals, and so remained until the time of Rome.

6. Describe the fourth beast (Rome), (verses 7,8) _____

This dreadful beast with great iron teeth corresponded to the iron kingdom of Daniel 2

7. What do these ten horns represent? (verse 24) _____

Rome's long iron rule was finally broken by the barbarian tribes of the north (Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Alemanni, Lombards, Visigoths, Burgundians, Suevi, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Heruli), the forerunners of modern Europe.

Note the many similarities between the image of Daniel 2, the four beasts of Daniel 7, and the leopard-like beast John described in Revelation 13.

When Daniel was given this vision, Babylon was about to fall. By John's day, Medo-Persia and Grecia had also passed into history. So in his vision God ingeniously picks up the thread of continuity by caricaturizing Rome as a composite beast—predominantly like Grecia (therefore, leopard-like) in language, architecture, religion, and general culture, but with a strong trace of Medo-Persian ruthlessness (the flesh-tearing feet of a bear), and the arrogant, proud, lion-like characteristics of old Babylon, its great-grandparent.

Part 4--THE LITTLE HORN

1. What came up among the ten horns? (verse 8) _____

Here we are introduced to the mysterious antichrist, who opposes God and seeks to draw to himself the loyalty that belongs only to God.

2. What does this little horn have power to do? (verse 8) "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up _____ them another little horn, before whom there were _____ of the first _____ by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of _____, and a mouth _____."

(verses 24, 25) "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise _____ them; and he shall be _____ [different] from the first, and he shall _____. And he shall speak great words _____, and shall _____ of the most High, and _____ to change _____: and they shall be given into his hand until a _____."

3. Which of these characteristics apply also to the leopard-like beast? Revelation 13:5-7

"There was given unto him a mouth _____ and _____."
"Power was given unto him to continue _____."
"It was given unto him to make _____ with the _____."

A Jewish year contained 12 months of 30 days each, or 360 days. Forty-two months would be 1260 days, or years, according to the year-for-a-day principle for symbolic prophecy (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). A year was sometimes called a "time," as when Nebuchadnezzar was with the beasts of the field for "seven times," or seven years (Daniel 4:32). Allowing 360 days for a "time," 720, or twice that much, for "times," and 180 days for a half of a time, it totals the same as 42 months, or 1260 prophetic years. Compare this with Revelation 12:6,14), where this terminology is specified as 1260 days.

4. What additional identifying characteristics does John give? (verses 3-5) "I saw one of his heads as it were _____; and his deadly wound was _____; and all the world _____ after the beast. And they _____ the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they _____ the beast."

5. How did Paul describe antichrist? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11 "That day [second coming] shall not come, except there come a _____ first, and that _____ be revealed, the _____, who _____ above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he _____ sitteth in the _____, shewing himself that _____."
(verse 7) "For the mystery of _____ doth _____ work."

Anti means not only *against*, but also *in place of* (as used 15 out of 20 times in the New Testament. "An eye for [anti] an eye" (Matthew 5:38); that is, an eye in place of an eye.

Thought question: Would antichrist fool Christians if he announced himself against Christianity and openly opposed it? _____ Why not? _____

Think of it! An imposter so clever that most of the world-Christians included-will be deceived!

6. What kind of deception does this antichrist use? 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13. "With all power and signs, and _____ wonders."
"He doeth _____, so that he _____ fire to _____ from _____ in the sight of men."

Anyone with a high school knowledge of history can solve the riddle of antichrist, the power that God said would challenge His authority. With sincere regard for the millions of honest souls-many of them devoted Christians--who have been deceived through the centuries, ask yourself what religious power the following characteristics describe. The sad truth is all too evident. Only one power in all the world fits the specifications of this prophecy. (Additional identification marks given by other prophets make this even more certain.) The answer is papal Rome. Note the documentation that follows:

It began to develop in the apostles' day (2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 John 4:3)

It rose to power in western Europe (geographically *among* the nations that emerged from the breakup of the Roman Empire).

It was *given* its power and throne by the dragon. Satan never works in the open. When he tried to kill the infant Jesus (Revelation 12:4), he worked through the Roman ruler Herod. Likewise, the Papacy received its power from a Roman emperor. "When the Roman Empire became Christian, and the peace of the Church was guaran-

teed, the Emperor left Rome to the Pope, to be the seat of the authority of the Vicar of Christ " (*Papal Rights and Privileges*, pp. 13, 14).

It did not begin to wield complete power until after 476 A.D., the time of the ten horns.

While the roots of the Papacy were present earlier, it did not rise to power and prominence until 538 A.D., about 60 years following the break-up of the Roman empire.

It uprooted three powers (generally recognized as the Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals, who opposed some of the teachings and claims of the papal hierarchy).

It was to be diverse (different)-a mixture of religion and politics, Christianity and paganism.

It would persecute dissenters. All who are familiar with medieval history know how millions of people were tortured and killed in the Inquisition.

It would speak great words against the Most High. "He [the pope] is likewise the divine monarch and supreme emperor, and king of kings." ("Papa," article II in *Ferraris' Ecclesiastical Dictionary*, a Roman Catholic publication). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "This judicial authority will even include the power to pardon sin " (Vol. XII, p. 265). This power claims to have prerogatives that belong only to God.

It would think to change God's times and laws. Ferraris says, "The Pope can modify divine law" (*Prompta Bibllothea*, "Papa," art. 2, tr.). Catholic catechisms omit the second commandment entirely, and the fourth is greatly abbreviated. The tenth is made into two commandments in order to maintain the required number of ten. A power that tries to change God's law, certainly exalts itself above God!

It would wield power for 1260 years (see note under Question 3, Section 4). In 1798, exactly 1260 years after the Papacy began its rule (538 A.D.), the French General Berthier took Pope Pius VI prisoner. He died in Paris 18 months later.

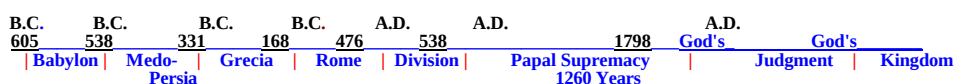
It would receive a deadly wound, but the wound would be healed. When the pope was taken prisoner, Napoleon pronounced the death of the church. But God said, "Not so"! The wound would be healed. In 1929 Mussolini returned Vatican City to the church. The wound was healed, just as God said.

7. What two events follow this 1260-year period?

Daniel 7:9,10 _____

Daniel 7:18, 27 _____

The following diagram will help to make these kingdoms and events clear:



Sometime between A.D. 1798 and the setting up of God's kingdom, God sits in judgment in heaven. Christ will bring His reward with Him when He returns, which means that all cases must be decided beforehand. After the judgment, Daniel's prophecy pictures Christ receiving His kingdom and the saints entering into their eternal rest with Him. Thus we see that the second coming of Christ is very near at hand!

Sin is almost a forgotten word today. Nevertheless, Jesus came to save sinners and transform them into saints for His kingdom. We are "called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). And you, my friend, may be numbered among them.