

The Beast of Revelation 13, part 2

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Text

13:1 Now I was standing on the seashore, and I saw a Beast of prey coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten diadems and on his heads blasphemous names. 2 The beast that I saw was similar to a leopard, his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. 3 And one of his heads was as if it had been mortally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the Beast.

4 And they did obeisance to the dragon who had given the authority to the Beast, and they did obeisance to the Beast saying, "Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?" 5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy; and he was given authority to make war forty-two months. 6 So he opened that mouth of his in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in Heaven. 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given him over every tribe and language and ethnic nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world.

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone has captivity, he goes away. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

I. Introduction - review

We saw last week that the Beast of Revelation is a very controversial figure. There are literally hundreds of candidates that people have put forward for the identity of this monster. Yet we also saw that even though there is disagreement on the exact identity of the beast, the vast majority of commentators do agree with two things. First, they agree that the Beast of Revelation is involved in some way with civil government. And second, they agree that the Beast is thoroughly statist. A statist is a person or belief that promotes more and more centralization of government and more and more involvement of government in the private sector. And so the bulk of our applications from this chapter should really not be controversial at all.

Whether you think that the Beast was in the first century (as I do), or whether you think the Beast will be still future to us (as Dispensationalists do), we can at least agree that demons try their hardest to move civil governments towards more and more statism. So I find it cool that there is so much agreement on at least the application of this chapter.

A. *The symbols of verse 1*

Mediterranean sea points to Rome

Before we dive into verses 2-4, let me review what we discovered last week. We saw that the first two clauses in verse 1 are clearly tied to the fourth beast of Daniel 7, and most people agree that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is tightly connected to the empire of Rome. There are some who think that Rome will be revived in the future. I don't. But at least they agree that it started with first century Rome and that the characteristics of this chapter fit first century Rome.

And even if we had not looked at Daniel 7, we would have still guessed that to be the case simply because of where John was standing. He was standing on the Mediterranean sea shore looking toward Rome. And of course, the whole Mediterranean was controlled by Rome. So when the beast comes up out of the Mediterranean, it is coming from the direction of Rome.

Beast = Daniel 7's fourth beast = equals demon

But we also saw that John had earlier identified the beast in Revelation 11:7 as a demon who came up out of the Abyss. So which is it? Is it the Roman Empire, or the demon who ruled the Roman Empire? Well, the only reason the empire is called the Beast is because it is named after the Beast who controlled it. The only reason the emperors Nero, Vespasian, and Titus were called the Beast is because of the demon who controlled them. But first and foremost, the beast was a demon who was assigned by Satan to rule over Rome. That is absolutely key to understanding puzzles in this book.

Knowing that Rome was controlled by a demon is scary enough. But knowing that both the demon and Rome are likened to this terrifying beast should clue us in that God does not want your kids cuddling up to Rome in their homeschooling. Rome is idealized in many modern homeschool circles, but both Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 want us to be so disgusted by the ugliness of this beast that we are not even remotely tempted to nurse at its side or receive of its dainties. Listen to this description of the same beast that Revelation 13 describes. This comes from Daniel 7.

Dan. 7:7 “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.

It was dreadful and terrible. If you would not send your children out to the playground with this monster as a pet, then I would say that you should not look to this monster to tutor your children in classical education. Last week we saw that the wisdom of Rome was thoroughly demonic. And if you want a fabulous vision of how God wants us to distance ourselves from Rome and its demonic wisdom, read Daniel 2 and Daniel 7.

Seven heads = first seven human emperors of Rome

Let me very quickly identify the features of this beast that are listed in verse 1. We saw that the seven heads are the first seven human emperors of Rome, starting with Julius Caesar and ending with Vespasian.

Ten horns = ten demonic kings who rule under the beast

We saw that the ten horns are ten demonic rulers who rule under the beast and help the beast to maintain power. But those demons are certainly over the human heads and help the human heads. So the ten horns are not humans; they are the demons behind the humans.

Ten crowns = rule by power versus true authority

The fact that the ten crowns are on the horns rather than on the heads shows that it really wasn't the emperors who were the true power behind the throne. The true power was demonic. It was the demons who were ruling through these human emperors.

B. Statism is demonic

And so we saw that statism is demonic through and through. And that is true of any form of statism, whether it is the dictatorship found in North Korea, or the elected centralized government found in modern America, or the democratic statism found in Sweden. Satan doesn't care what form of government a nation may have, so long as it manifests the core characteristics of statism. Statism is the religion of this demon. Statism enables the demon to control more of its citizenry. And it is antithetical to Christianity. It is imperative that Christians grasp this. That's why I am not hurrying over this chapter.

C. Statism is expansive

And looking at these symbols, we saw last week that statism is expansive. All four bestial empires were constantly growing, as was Rome. When the state becomes huge, it becomes dangerous. When it exerts its military all over the world as Rome did, it becomes dangerous. When it is constantly expanding its power-base, it becomes dangerous. So statism is expansive and growing.

D. Statism is centralized

Next, we saw that statism is centralized in one executive head. And you might say, "Now, wait a minute. This beast had seven heads." But keep in mind that the seven heads don't all rule at the same time; they are seven sequential emperors. It was the first head, Julius Caesar, who first usurped executive powers that Roman rulers did not previously possess. And each head represents an increasingly centralized executive office. So statism is centralized.

By the way, that is the antithesis of our constitution which only delegated to the Federal government limited powers which were specified and enumerated in the Constitution. All other powers were reserved to the states and the people. In other words, according to the Constitution, the Federal government cannot do anything that is not explicitly laid out in the Constitution.

Statism erodes that idea that there are limited, delegated, specified, and enumerated powers. It is always pushing for more and more centralization under one head. When you see people arguing for less checks and balances, more efficiency, and more power for the executive to deal with emergencies, you are smelling a demon in the room and in that conversation. Am I demonizing politics? Yes I am - because God does.

E. Statism seeks to be Messianic

We also saw that statism seeks to be Messianic. Why not? Satan is the great imitator of Christ. Verse 1 says, "and on his heads blasphemous names." Keep in mind that each head is a human emperor. So how were blasphemous names written on their heads? Well, we looked at Roman coins that had blasphemous names written above the heads of each of those seven emperors. I referenced coins that had names and titles like "Lord," "Father," "Life-Giver," "Son of God," "high priest," "gracious savior," "God," "of the gods," "savior," and "the citizens having been saved." Those are all blasphemous names because they are calling each head of state, God and

Savior. And those names were literally on their head - at least on the coins they were. Though we don't literally worship the state in America and though we don't literally call Caesar lord, we often act as if the state is lord and Savior.

II. More features of the beast (continued from last week)

A. Incorporates demonic characteristics of the previous three empires mentioned in Daniel 7

Well, verse 2 continues the description of this fourth beast of Daniel. It says, "The beast that I saw was similar to a leopard, his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth." The three beasts mentioned here are the beasts that represented the previous three empires listed in Daniel 7, with the lion being Babylon, the bear being Medo-Persia, and the leopard being Greece. And Rome had features of the previous three empires. And I believe one of the reasons it had features of the previous empires is that the demons of those previous empires were inherited by Rome and continued to rule in Rome. And this made Rome worse. Daniel 7 said that the fourth beast was much worse than the previous ones. Why? Because it was even more demonized. So it is possible for statism to get increasingly worse.

Did the demon himself look a bit like these animals? It is very possible. I doubt it, but it is possible. But commentators point out that John's use of the Greek word meaning "similar to" or "like" indicates that something symbolic is being written. So we want to look at what each of those symbols means.

B. like a leopard - cruelty & bloodthirstiness

First of all, the leopard. Verse 2 says, "The beast that I saw was similar to a leopard." Since this is a Hebraic book, we always try to look at the Old Testament background, and since Daniel 7 likened Greece (or the demon behind Greece) to a leopard, it is helpful to understand what it says the leopard symbolized. Both the third and fourth Beasts looked like a leopard. The third beast of Daniel 7 was a winged leopard with four heads. Thomas Robinson represents many when he says that the wings spoke of the speed with which Alexander the Great conquered the world. The spots represent the variety of nations within the empire. The four heads represent the four parts of the empire divided under four generals. And the leopard's body

represents the cruelty and bloodthirstiness of Greece.¹

Well, this beast is lacking the wings and the four heads. So the only part of Rome that is comparable to Greece was the body of the leopard and its spots. Was Rome a spotted beast? Yes it was. Historians say that there was an enormous ethnic diversity within the Roman empire, with every skin color and language being represented even in the legions that came to Jerusalem. So Rome was definitely a spotted beast. It was multicultural.

And commentators point out that the cruelty and bloodthirstiness of the leopard are a perfect symbol of Rome as well.² Animal lovers might say that it is an unfair characterization to speak of a leopard as being cruel or bloodthirsty, but if you do much reading at all on the subject of surplus killing, you will not question the symbolism. You will find that the leopard often kills far more than it can eat, sometimes apparently killing just for the fun of it. One recent study at an African game reserve showed that 42% of the leopard kills in that reserve involved wanton multiple kills that went way beyond anything the leopard would or could eat. Last year, conservationists were outraged that a leopard killed 33 African penguins at a nature reserve outside of Cape Town, South Africa. He didn't kill the penguins for food; he just killed them for the fun of it. And if you have watched leopards play and tease their prey, you can see the cruelty part of that animal coming through.

And what a perfect symbol of Rome. Was Rome cruel? Everyone admits that it was. The cruelty can be seen in how the slave rebellions were put down, or the routine crucifixions - sometimes tens of thousands of people hanging on crosses. And crucifixion was the most gruesome death that you can imagine. Josephus records that at Jerusalem there were upwards of 500 Jews crucified each day, eventually resulting in a virtual forest of crosses around Jerusalem. Or you can consider the cruelty at the circuses and Gladiatorial contests. Caligula and Nero were perhaps the most notorious for finding delight in torture, but other emperors had their moments as well. So Rome was definitely noted for cruelty.

1 One example he gives is of Gaza. "When Gaza, after a protracted resistance, was at length taken, Alexander manifested the cruelty of his character by ordering a thousand of its inhabitants to be put to death, and its governor to be dragged round the walls by ropes passed through his heels till he died. The spots of the leopard supposed to indicate the variety of the nations that constituted the Grecian empire, as the four wings plainly pointed to the rapidity of the Grecian conquests." Thomas Robinson, Daniel, *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary* (New York; London; Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892), 116.

2 Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 8–22 An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995; Swete, Henry Barclay. *Commentary on Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977; Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Revised ed. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.

But it was also noted for surplus killing, or bloodthirstiness. At the very same time that Rome claimed to be a Savior and Provider to those that submitted, it very quickly put down any rebellion with killings that were way out of proportion to the problem. It was not Just War theory. It was intimidation theory. It was blood-thirstiness. It was surplus killing. 1.8 million died in Rome's Punic wars. And you look at that, and you wonder - Really? Was it really necessary to kill off that much of the population? Rome killed off 1 million in the Gallic wars. It killed 2-8 million Jews between AD 67 and 74 (depending on which studies you read). It is staggering when you add up the death tolls in both Rome's standard warfare as well as in its so-called war against terror. And I believe the leopard quality of this demon finds delight in killing large numbers of people.

I was rather humored to see the favorable comparison that one scholar gave to America's war against terror and Rome's war against terror. From my perspective, it was not a favorable comparison, and I was surprised that any American would compare the two. Anyway, the authors listed the rebels of Israel as the terrorists and Rome as the peace-keeper. And the books listed numerous other freedom fighters around the empire as terrorists (despite the fact that they were resisting because of the unbearable conditions Rome had left them in). And the authors portrayed Rome as the model for our own war against terror. But when you compare the number of Romans killed by the rebels (a really small number) with the number of deaths inflicted by Rome in retaliation, one wonders who the real terrorist was. It's one way of evaluating whether modern wars have this demonic feature to them - are the killings proportional? Do they follow Just War theory? Most modern conflicts really do not. We start bloody wars where not a single American had previously been killed by the regime we are overthrowing.

The bottom line with the bulk of this image is Rome did not value life. And this is what the demons of statism produce in every country that they influence. The more power they get, the more cruel the leaders become. And more people have been tortured and killed under communism during the last century than in any previous century. But it's not just communists; all statistes tend to devalue life while pretending to be the defenders of life. It is really hypocritical for America to consider itself to be the champion of liberty and life when our laws have resulted in more than 50 million abortions since 1973. Who is the terrorist - people who kill thousands or a nation that murders 50 million babies? And it is even worse worldwide. All one has to do to compare the rhetoric of compassion with reality in virtually every modern nation is to see how many abortions take place. This demon of

statism is a master at deception when it tries to redefine the cruelty of abortion into compassion. Even Wikipedia estimates that 56 million abortions are performed every year worldwide.³ The picture that John wants us to have of all statism is that this demonic stronghold eventually produces an utter disrespect for life. It is bestial. It is cruel. It is leopard-like.

C. feet like a bear - power, brute force, strength

The next symbol is that "his feet were like those of a bear." Who wants to meet up with a bear? Not very many. Its paws can crush and its claws can eviscerate. This is not rule by authority, but rule by brute force. Read Plato or Aristotle's views on civics and you see this demon at work. It is statism through and through. You see the paws of the bear in Hitler's Mein Kampf, in Marx's Communist Manifesto, and in America's Manifest Destiny. "Might makes right" is the motto for statist. If the state passes a law, you better obey it - or else. No one considers whether the law itself is lawful or constitutional. If the state makes it, then people treat it as if it is right. Might makes right. Well, that's not the original American civics, and it is not Biblical civics.

D. mouth like a lion - ferocity, intimidation, devouring policies

The next symbol is that of a lion. "and his mouth was like a lion's mouth." Daniel 7 describes the mouth of this beast this way: "It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring..."

Modern professors of civics look at all the wonderful things that the state gives to its citizens and they see it not as a ferocious devourer, but as a harmless benefactor. I took a quick survey of the "services" that city, county, state, and federal government provide, and it truly is astounding. To the uninformed citizen it looks like generosity. The Federal Services page lists numerous "services" under the categories of earth and environment, health care, legal services, small business aid, grants or loans, education, housing, travel, disaster response, providing jobs for the unemployed, consumer issues, food quality, and the list goes on and on. The county & city websites list "services" such as county clinics, parks, libraries, education, welfare, transportation, public safety, environmental oversight, housing, licensing, etc. To the uninformed citizen that looks like anything but a devouring mouth. It looks like a loving mother who cares for her children and who is so generous in providing for her children.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abortion>

But we need this image of the devouring lion's mouth burnt into our memories. Federal programs are not true generosity. Every dime the civil government gives to Citizen A, it steals for Citizens B and C. And if Citizens B and C object to being stolen from, the state threatens to harm them. Pay or else. That is not generosity. That is the lion's roar threatening violence. It is evil. That is a devouring mouth. It devours the productivity of Citizens B and C.

And the political discourse of today obscures this fact of violent devouring with the language of rights. And it's not a Democrat or Republican thing - there are statists of the right and left. I listened to a video of Bernie Sanders asserting that every man, woman, and child has a right to top quality medical care and he said that if they have the right to medical care, then the state must provide that. Rand Paul then spoke as a medical doctor and said that Bernie's view of rights means that the state has the right to enslave the doctor and force him to labor for certain segments of society for free, and if need be, to break down his door if he does not comply with state directives to give his medical care. It is not rights; it is violence and theft. He said that he provides free care out of his own generous heart, but he objects to the government forcing doctors to provide care on threat of violence. That short little dialog shows the violent side of the beast of statism rather well - yet it is all cloaked in the rhetoric of compassion.

When either tribe advocates for the civil government providing the so-called "right" of free education, one must reinterpret it to mean that they are advocating the right of the lion to steal money from me with the threat of harm if I do not comply so as to pay for someone else's education and in the process to skim off a large percentage to pay for the government's coercive services. The lion eats the bulk of the loot it is stealing. How else do you pay for big government? Now that analysis may seem harsh, but it is God's perspective on all the welfare and services that Rome provided for its citizens. Rome saw itself as generous and as the answer to man's problems. God did not view it as generosity. He viewed it this way:

Dan. 7:7 ... 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...

And as you read more about the beast in Revelation 13 and 17, you realize that we need to avoid the beast at all costs. Saint Augustine was probably one of the greatest theologians of the past. He lived from 354-430. And here was his evaluation of all civil governments that were not limited by Biblical justice. And I am reading from his book, *The City of God*. He said, Justice removed, then, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers? What are bands of

robbers themselves but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is governed by the authority of a ruler; it is bound together by a pact of association; and the loot is divided according to an agreed law. If, by the constant addition of desperate men, this scourge grows to such a size that it acquires territory, establishes a seat of government, occupies cities and subjugates peoples, it assumes the name of a kingdom more openly. For this name is now manifestly conferred upon it not by the removal of greed, but by the addition of impunity. It was a pertinent and true answer which was made to Alexander the Great by a pirate whom he had seized. When the king asked him what he meant by infesting the sea, the pirate defiantly replied: 'The same as you do when you infest the whole world; but because I do it with a little ship I am called a robber, and because you do it with a great fleet you are an emperor.'⁴

Augustine is recognizing that when states do not see their authority as derived from God, as limited by the Scripture, and as accountable to God, then the state itself becomes a pirate that devours what you have earned with never so much as a thank you. He calls the state a pirate; the apostle John calls the state a beast.

Between the body of a leopard, the paws of a bear, and the mouth of a lion with iron teeth, this beast characterizes most modern governments to one degree or another. Their paws trample so many good businesses into the ground with myriad taxes, regulations, rules, licenses, antitrust laws, employment laws; etc. The mouth devours liberties, taxes, business opportunities, owns our properties, is beginning to claim ownership of our children, and knows no bounds to its authority. Modern America and most western states have drifted far from their Christian roots. We have the rhetoric of compassion, limited government, one nation under God, and in God we trust, but the reality is quite different. But don't try to immigrate - it's even worse in other countries. We must begin to view statism as God does. It is not a nursing mother; it is a devouring beast of prey.

E. Distinguished from Satan (v. 2d). Though the beast (v. 1) is the mirror image of the dragon (12:3) who gives him authority (13:2), they are different beings

Now, this beast has some similarities to the dragon of chapter 12, so some people identify the beast as being Satan himself - just a different image of him. I don't see how you can do that because verse 2 goes on to clearly distinguish the two. It says, "And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority." Note the "him." The dragon gave the demonic beast his power, his throne, and his great authority. It is true that the beast has seven heads like the dragon did, and has ten horns and ten crowns like

4 Augustine in R. W. Dyson (ed), Augustine. The City of God Against Pagans, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 147-148.

the dragon did (only difference being that the crowns were on the dragon's heads, not on his horns). Yet this verse clearly distinguishes the beast from the dragon. Sure, in some ways it looks like the dragon because it is reflecting the dragon's authority. But it is a unique individual demon who rules a unique empire.

F. Satanic authority. What gives Satan the right to give power, throne, authority when Christ has all authority.

But one question that might come up is, "What gave Satan the right to give power, throne, and authority to anyone? Didn't Christ receive all authority in heaven and on earth?" Yes He did. He did in the same way that Joshua was given Canaan after the Jordon River crossing. But Hebrews indicates that just as Joshua had to possess His possessions, Jesus is systematically taking over the world through His church and the two-edged sword of Scripture. So Satan and various demons will continue to have some authority over regions until apostles, missionaries, and others bind the strongmen in those regions and begin plundering that portion of Satan's kingdom. And if we are not willing to Christianize every aspect of a nation, including the state, demons will fill the void. There is no middle ground. Either Christ claims every inch or Satan will squat on every inch.

G. The difference between Biblical and demonic authority (v. 2e-g)

The next thing to notice is the stark contrast between Satan's kingdom and Christ's kingdom on the issue of power and authority. Notice the order of what Satan gave. He first gave power, then throne, then great authority. When the only authority that is recognized is that which is wielded because a person has power and is on a throne, you have statism, and it is a usurped authority. The only reason people obey such authority is because it is backed up by a gun; by force; by power. They are not inspired to follow such leaders; they are intimidated into following such leaders.

Godly authority is the exact reverse. It starts with the delegated authority that God has explicitly specified in Scripture, and because God Himself backs up that authority, and because the leaders is passionately glorifying God with his authority, there is a legitimate throne and a legitimate power to carry out tasks. It is the power of attraction. People gladly follow a leader who is a servant to the people and a servant to God. They are inspired by that kind of sacrificial leadership. There is no need to force followership. They simply exemplify godly authority.

But the power is co-relative with the authority. With limited authority comes limited powers. With absolute power for the humanist comes absolute authority. Those are two quite different ways of looking at any exercise of authority. Humanists think they have authority because they have the power to do something. We believe we have no power to do anything that God has not authorized in His Word. And God is the one who backs up His Word. He is the one who gives power.

H. Statism is not invincible, indivisible, omnipotent, or unconquerable. One of his heads was mortally wounded (v. 3a)

But we move now to some interesting history in Rome. Verse 3 says, And one of his heads was as if it had been mortally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the Beast.

Let's consider the mortal wound - or as the Greek literally says, the wound that killed. This first of all shows that statism is not invincible. It is not omnipotent. With a word, God overthrew the entire empire. And He did so in a matter of hours or days. This is an encouragement that if God's people will be faithful, they can indeed see statism reversed.

Chapter 17 goes into more detail on this wounding, death, and resurrection of the beast. Here it is rather cryptic. Later we discover that Nero was the sixth head of the beast. And I will give you a little history on how this sixth head was mortally wounded. He was becoming increasingly capricious, ugly, vengeful, and tyrannical, and the legions and Senate were getting fed up with him. Finally, after Nero returned from a tour of Greece where he pretended to win all races and win all acting contests, and generally made a fool of himself, things snapped. Galba, the governor of Spain was asked by his legions to rule, and he declared himself legate of the Senate and of the Roman people. The Praetorian Guard were delighted, and immediately declared allegiance with Galba. The Senate followed suit by declaring Nero to be an enemy of the people. Nero attempted to flee, but when he discovered that his arrest and execution was imminent, he took his own life (with the help of his secretary) on June 9 or AD 68 by putting a sword into his neck and up into his head. So the head of state was literally mortally wounded in his head.

But there were unintended consequences of this revolution. Not all legions were thrilled with Galba. Some wanted Otho, some Vitellius, and others wanted Vespasian, and some just wanted out. So with Nero's death, the empire fell apart, and it appears that the Beast demon was bound by God in

the pit. That bit of information is found in Revelation 17 and 19. Those chapters go into more detail of what happened between the time that the empire fell apart and when Vespasian fought his way into the city of Rome and established himself as emperor. But this is briefer and more cryptic. It simply says that the wound that destroyed the empire was healed and the whole earth was amazed that the Beast was healed.

1. But since statism is demonic, it is resilient.

The deadly wound healed (v. 3b)

So the question comes, "What was healed?" Was it the sixth head or the beast? There was a minority theory that persisted for the first three centuries of church history that Nero himself would be resurrected. But the text does not say that. In the Greek there are masculine, feminine, and neuter words, and the pronouns match the gender of what they are modifying. Well, the gender of "his" in "his fatal wound was healed," does not modify head, but modifies beast. So even though the beast was given a fatal wound in the head (Nero), the beast is healed, not the head. That destroys the idea that Nero would be revived. It is the demon beast who is released and his empire which is restored. I think the Greek is quite clear on that point. Well, if the death of Nero was the deadly wound to the empire, then the healing of the empire did not happen until Vespasian took the throne in AD 69, one and a half years after Nero's death. And later in Revelation we will see that the demon beast appears to have been bound during that same period of time. But we will look at that when we get to those details.

The whole land (γῆ) of Israel was amazed (v. 3c)

But verse 3 goes on to say, "And the whole earth marveled after the Beast." The word for "earth" is γῆ and refers to Israel. Now, it would have been no surprise that the Roman world marveled and even worshiped, but this indicates that it was the land of Israel that was amazed at the recovery of the beast, and verse 4 indicates that it was the land of Israel that bowed down to Satan and the beast. How could that be? That seems utterly unthinkable. Some people say that this just reflects what the crowds said to Pilate at the trial of Jesus, "We have no king but Caesar." But I think there is more to it than that.

Let's look at the amazement first. When Nero died, the revolutionaries in Israel gained a great boost. And they were delighted to hear that Rome had disintegrated into three fighting factions and numerous provinces declaring

independence. This was their answer to prayer - or so they thought. In fact, things got so bad, that even the Roman historians look at it as a miracle that Vespasian brought the empire back together again. The pro-Roman forces mourned, while the pro-independence forces rejoiced. It didn't look like Rome would be able to sustain this war, and Israel might indeed gain its independence. Things looked positive for the revolutionaries.

But when both Vespasian and his son Titus were declared Caesar, and when he actually pulled off the revival of the Roman Empire, the whole land of Israel was amazed. They were not expecting this.

J. The demon of statism longs for blind loyalty. The pro-Roman Jewish leaders did obeisance to Satan (occult) and to the Beast (state worship), recognizing that they could not fight him

And verse 4 goes on to say something that is absolutely staggering. It shows first of all that the demon of statism longs for blind loyalty. But what is amazing is that the demon was able to get the whole land of Israel to bow down to Satan (through the occult) and to bow down to the Beast (through state worship). It just seems so out of character. But it happened. Let me read verse 4.

And they did obeisance to the dragon who had given the authority to the Beast, and they did obeisance to the Beast saying, "Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?"

Obeisance means to bow down before. One of the things that I did not realize before was the degree to which the post-war Jewish leadership was willing to wear Caesar's name, declare him Lord and Savior, and to bow down to him and his Satanic images. The surviving Israelites finally did what Christians refused to do and were martyred for. And those Jews who refused were killed.

And to anticipate next week, the forty-two months of verse 5 cannot refer to AD 67-70. That's where most preterists put it. But I believe the verses refer to the second half of the seven year war - AD 70-74. The context demands it. Very briefly, if the killing of Nero in verse 3a is June 9 of AD 68, and if the healing of the empire is in AD 69 (verse 3b), then we can't go back to AD 66 in verse 5. Verses 5 and 6 indicate that Titus would go into the temple and speak incredible blasphemies against God inside that temple (and we will look at that next week). But that could only happen in AD 70. But even after being in the temple in AD 70, the text says that Titus will be given authority to continue to make war for an additional forty-two months. This is the

second half of the seven year war. Too many preterist commentaries mix up the two halves, but the war did not finish until AD 74.

So the context of verse 4 is AD 70 and afterwards. When verse 4 says,

And they did obeisance to the dragon who had given the authority to the Beast, and they did obeisance to the Beast saying, "Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?"

That had to have occurred after Titus conquers the city. The survivors either bowed down to Caesar, calling him Lord, or they were executed. And that the word "all" refers to all who would survive is demonstrated by verse 15 when it says that those who would not worship the image of the beast would be killed. So not all Jews were willing to do what verse 4 talks about. It was the whole land of those who survived.

Now, we will talk about this astounding turn of events when we get to verses 11-18 because Rome had two allies in Josephus and Rabbi Yohannan Ben Zakkai, people who had demonic prophecies that Rome valued. But the leadership of Israel valued them as well. Those two helped preserve a compromised Judaism that survived by giving dual loyalties - bowing to Caesar's image and declaring total loyalty to Caesar's flag and bowing before God and worshiping God according to the traditions of men. Those two men knew that without these compromises, the Jewish nation would be wiped out.

Every surviving Jew was forced to have a charagma stamp on their right hand and on their forehead. The right hand was an accommodation to the fact that these Jews wore a phylactery on their left hand, so any stamp on the left hand would not even be able to be seen. But having something on both hands symbolized the fact that they could have dual loyalties; they could acknowledge Caesar as Lord with their right hand (their working hand) and they could acknowledge God as Lord with their left hand. Rome was tolerant of other religions, so long as those religions acknowledged Caesar as Lord and bowed to Caesar as Lord. But notice which hand had the prominence. It was the right hand; the hand devoted to the state. Perhaps the Jews rationalized that it was just symbolic and that resistance was futile. "Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?" There is no point in resisting any further.

And we will look at the subject more in the future. But it does highlight how easy it is for us to rationalize dual loyalties without thinking we are doing so. We need to always be on guard. When I worked for two closed-shop unions in Canada, they required members to swear absolute blind allegiance to the

union. It was rather crudely worded. One of the vows was something to effect of, "Under no circumstances will I fink on my brother or sister in the union no matter what they do." They could engage in criminal activity, and the vow swore to loyalty to union first. I couldn't do that in good conscience, so I always made excuses on why I couldn't make it to the meetings. They took my dues, but they didn't get my worship.

But if we realize that offering a pinch of incense to Caesar is not mere symbolism, but gives demons legal ground to work in our lives and neutralize us, then we will take it more seriously. If we realize that bowing before a Shinto shrine and laying down flowers (as presidents and diplomats have done), is not mere symbolism, but opens those men to demonic affliction, we will not agree when asked by a head of state to do so. We must evaluate our actions by more than social mores, politics, or what is visible. There is an invisible world that lusts for our allegiance as well, and we should put it on notice that we are sold out to Jesus - 100%. May it be true of each of us. Amen.

(to be continued)