



# DISCOVERING REVELATION

## Babylon Rising

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?