

be enforced throughout the earth through economic boycott.

Another element in this final conflict is deception. The Bible says:

“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:13-17).

Fire from heaven symbolizes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:3-4). The fire brought down from heaven by the land beast is obviously not a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit, for it is employed to deceive the world. Here we are warned of a great counterfeit revival that will place a great deal of emphasis on “wonders” and “miracles.” A later verse in Revelation tells us that “they are the spirits of devils, working miracles” (Revelation 16:14). This is also what Jesus foretold in Matthew 24 (see verses 4-5, 11, 24).

It is startling for many to learn from Scripture that demons have the power to perform miracles through their followers. They masquerade as Christians and deceive those who are impressed by their apparent Holy Spirit power. According to Revelation 13 we can expect to witness a major spiritual movement centered in America that will use supernatural manifestations to deceive the world.

Simultaneously, as this false revival progresses, we can expect to see Protestant churches reuniting with Catholicism. Vital Bible truth will be laid aside in order to facilitate ecumenical alliances between Protestant America and Papal Rome. America will influence the world to give the Papacy authority and allegiance.

Revelation 13 warns that eventually America will use its authority to enforce “the mark” of papal supremacy, some kind of vowed loyalty to Rome. By means of economic boycott and even life-threatening persecution, all will be required to receive “the mark of the beast” in the right hand or in the forehead. Those who refuse to sacrifice their religious liberty will not be allowed to buy or sell. If that doesn’t gain their compliance, a death sentence will be employed.

Religious Liberty Threatened

One of the most important principles we find in the teachings of the Bible is the freedom of choice. One of the reasons God has suffered with sin for six thousand years is to uphold that freedom. It is this principle that makes us more than mere puppets or robots. God took a risk in creating beings with the capacity to choose, even to choose the wrong. But He did this because He is love and love involves, at the very center of its action, the principle of choice.

The Word of God says:

“. . . choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . .”
(Joshua 24:15, NKJV).

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17, NKJV).

The final issues spoken about in the symbolic language of the book of Revelation revolve around freedom of conscience, of choice, in relation to worship. That is why the country of America plays such a central role in the prophetic picture of the last days. These are principles upon which the United States was founded.

“Almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His almighty power to do” (Thomas Jefferson, Author of *The Declaration of Independence*, 1785).

God created every heart to embrace this principle of freedom. God honors it and calls us to respect it in every person. Though it is a biblical principle, there have been times when the religion itself has been the worst violator of this freedom. “Religion” has manipulated the power of state and civil government to force worship upon the multitudes. It was to escape such violation by the Church that many flocked to the shores of America. And here was born the truths we hold dear.

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (Amendment 1, United States Constitution).

“Any man conducting himself as a good citizen and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience” (George Washington, 1789).

Summary

It may be hard to believe that America will ever abandon its lamblike principle of religious liberty and speak with the voice of a dragon. But Bible prophecy has proven itself accurate in all it has foretold so far. We can expect all that yet remains of its predictions to transpire as well.

In the end God will always honor our freedom of choice, even if we choose to turn from Him and be lost. And if God honors our freedom of choice, how much more should those who claim to be His followers honor the freedom of choice of others. Amen.

STUDY 10 OF 13

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GOD'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE WORLD 10

The message of the third angel in Revelation 14 introduced the beast of our previous study. We found a warning from heaven forbidding the worship of the beast and his image. This brought us to Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 where the mystery of these beasts was unraveled. A beast, we were told, represents a kingdom, an earthly power (see Daniel 7:17, 23). The leopard-like, bear-like, lion-like beast rising from the water represents the power of Papal Rome, emerging in flowing succession with the great empires of the world (see Revelation 13:1-2). Yet there is another beast introduced in Revelation 13 whose identity will be uncovered as we continue to study the message of the third angel.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘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 ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name’” (Revelation 14:9-11).

Notice that the heavenly warning is against both the beast and his image. The image of the beast is represented by another power or kingdom spoken of in Revelation 13:11.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon” (Revelation 13:11).

At first glance this creature looks very different from the first one we have examined; it is lamblike. But as we continue to watch, it changes into the image of the first beast.

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Revelation 13:12).

We’ve already learned that a beast symbolizes a kingdom. We have identified the first beast as the Papal Roman Church-State, arising from

Image of the Beast— U.S. in Prophecy

Revelation 14 Study Guides

What would lead America, that is, the people of America, to abandon religious liberty and pass laws enforcing worship upon all, regardless of individual belief?

the sea. Seas or waters represent “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues,” that is, populated areas of the world. (Revelation 17:15). The earth is stated as the place from which this second power would arise. The earth, therefore, being the opposite of waters, must represent unpopulated areas of the world, which gives us our first clue into the identity of the second beast. It comes into power in an area without established nations.

Our second clue is that this kingdom comes into existence around the time when the 1260-year period of papal supremacy is ending, which would be around 1798. John said that the “first beast” he saw in vision existed “before” the second beast (Revelation 13:12).

Our third clue is that the second beast first appears like “a lamb,” but eventually speaks like “a dragon” and exercises all the power of the first beast. It rises to power with lamblike attributes. A lamb in prophecy represents Christ (see John 1:29). This power would be a Christian nation, founded upon the principles of liberty for the oppressed and offering food for the hungry multitudes (see Luke 4:18; Matthew 14:20-21).

So what kingdom arose in an unsettled area of the world around 1798 imbued with these lamblike principles? Only one nation fits this symbolic description: The United States of America. From the obscurity of a wilderness area, America was born with aspirations of liberty and justice and food for the hungry. Let’s take a closer look at each of these clues.

Clue Number 1:

It arose at the right time. Notice the context of the prophecy in verse 10 of the chapter:

“He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Revelation 13:10, NKJV).

Here we have the prophetic history of the first beast or kingdom introduced in Revelation 13. The papal power received a deadly wound when, in 1798, the pope was taken captive by General Berthier and the papal government was abolished. This next beast or power is predicted as rising to prominence in the time frame of the captivity of the first power. That would be the late 1700s, which is the very period when the United States, as a nation, was in its infancy.

Clue Number 2:

It arose out of the earth, a sparsely populated area of the world. We find this to be clearly indicated in Revelation 12. In verses 6 and 14, the woman, God’s church, is described as fleeing into the wilderness or a desert place to escape the persecution of the dark ages. The persecution is described in verse 15 as a flood of waters. This represents the “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” of Europe who were trying to wipe away the faith of those who followed the Bible instead of the state religion. The key verse, Revelation 12:16, reads:

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swal-

lowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” (Revelation 12:16).

It was the earth that helped the woman escape the persecution of Europe. History testifies to the fact that America became a sanctuary for the faithful followers of the Word of God. The country of America eventually established freedom of religion for all faiths and swallowed up the persecuted flood of the nations of Europe.

Clue Number 3:

It is depicted as a new nation, “another beast.” The United States broke away from England and all its European roots and eventually became a new nation, a separate power. The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776 and, in two short centuries, the United States has become a superpower of the world.

Clue Number 4:

It is a democracy. Notice that this second kingdom is described as having two horns. Horns are a symbol of a kingdom’s power, but notice that these two horns have no crown upon them. Compare this to the first beast or kingdom described in verse 1 that has “upon his horns ten crowns” (Revelation 13:1).

This new kingdom of America would not be a kingly power as those found in Europe. America would be marked by both religious and political liberty and these principles would be her strength.

Clue Number 5:

And this is the one that takes us to the very time in which we live: This kingdom was to have a worldwide influence. Notice how verse 12 describes this second kingdom:

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” (Revelation 13:12).

We could probably say without hesitation that there has never been a time in its history when America has so completely fulfilled this aspect of Bible prophecy as it does presently. Of all the nations of the world today, there is no other that is in a position to fulfill this aspect of prophetic utterance.

Clue Number 6:

It is a lamblike power. In the Bible and especially in prophecy, a lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ. To describe this second power in Revelation 13 as having two horns like a lamb is to ascribe to it Christian qualities. This new power was to be a Christian power, a nation adhering to the principles of Christianity as outlined in the Bible.

Freedom is one of the chief principles offered by Christ:

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John 4:23).

It was upon these principles that this great nation of America was founded, but prophecy predicts a terrible change.

Clue Number 7:

This power will change in character from a lamb to a dragon.

“He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” (Revelation 13:11).

How does a nation speak? A nation or kingdom speaks through its laws or legislative body. The prediction of Bible prophecy is that the nation of America, once the defender of religious freedom, lamblike, will one day become the persecutor of God’s commandment-keeping people, dragonlike (see Revelation 12:17).

It hardly seems possible that this kind of change would take place in a country that is seen as the symbol of freedom in the world today. This is one of the reasons why the warning of the third angel’s message is so solemn.

It is not necessarily the political structure of America that will change. Democracy will simply overrule the safeguards of the Republic established by the founding fathers. In other words, when the majority presses the minority to conform to religious laws, the courts will not uphold the “wall of separation” between church and state. The stage for this is already set as high up as the Supreme Court.

“The ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless in a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned,” is the stance espoused by former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, William Renquist.

Now we come to a most important question and that is: What would lead America, that is, the people of America, to abandon religious liberty and pass laws enforcing worship upon all, regardless of individual belief? We find the answer to that question in Matthew 24. Here Jesus predicted a period of extreme uncertainty and worldwide upheaval just before His return. His disciples came to Him asking what would mark the sign of His coming and the end of the world. Christ answered them with the whole chapter of signs. Let’s look at a few key verses:

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Matthew 24:6-8).

In the history of the twentieth century these predictions were right on target. It was one of the bloodiest centuries in human history. Famines and disease on a worldwide scale also increased in alarming proportions. As for earthquakes and other natural disasters, it seemed, in the last year, if not the last decade, that hardly a week passed without some report of a new and horrific calamity.

Now notice what Christ predicted would happen in the wake of these worldwide upheavals:

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” (Matthew 24:9).

It is in the wake of wars, famine, pestilence (infectious disease like AIDS), earthquakes and other natural disasters that “all nations” will come together to form a worldwide system of religion. This one-world system will