

Revelation 13 and the Last Days

by Anthony Buzzard

None of us knows when Jesus will return, and it is futile to set dates. Each of us must be ready to meet the Lord, because we could die at any time, and in our very next second of consciousness (though years may pass while we are “asleep” in the grave — Dan. 12:2) we will arise in resurrection at “the last trumpet” to face Jesus, the returning Messiah. We must always be alert.

Paul explained to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:3) that the coming of the lord Jesus *cannot happen, however, until two important events occur*: 1) the Apostasy, or falling away from true faith, and 2) the revealing of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist. This sequence is clearly outlined in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and should be carefully studied. (Some systems of eschatology disturb the order given by Paul, and say that Jesus will gather the church *before* the arrival of the Man of Sin. This is a contradiction of Paul’s warning.)

Revelation 13 is based on the vision given to Daniel in chapter 7. The four kingdoms seen by Daniel are said to arise at a time *future* to Daniel’s vision (see Dan. 7:17). Since Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon was about to fall when Daniel saw the vision, and Medo-Persia was already in existence, it is hard to see how Daniel 7 could include those kingdoms. What’s more, Jesus, in Revelation 13, sees all four beasts of Daniel 7 as one *composite beast*, with **ten horns and seven heads**.

The characteristic of these seven heads is blasphemy (13:1) The whole beast derives its strength from the dragon, whom Revelation 12:9 defines as the original serpent in Genesis 3, i.e., Satan, the Devil, who, be it noted, is **deceiving the whole world** (Rev. 12:9). This beast has *great* authority (13:2), and when the Bible says “great,” it means great!

One of the heads of this political monstrosity is to suffer a mortal blow but

recover *miraculously* and thus gain the enraptured attention and following of the whole world (13:3). This is Satan’s attempt to parody the resurrection of Jesus. The beast will be somehow *resurrected* and *revealed* (2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 8).

In Revelation 13:4 the world falls for the trick and worships the beast as though he were God (“Who is like the beast?” cp. “Who is like God?”). The beast is a military power.

The beast is also a great blasphemer and persecutor of the saints, and his power is to last 3 1/2 years or 42 months (13:5). This time period is derived from Daniel 9:27, the 70th “week” or 7 years, split into 2 halves. At the midpoint of the 7 years the beast puts an end to sacrifices and sets up the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; 7:25; 11:31; 12:11).

Jesus makes this event the signal for Judean Christians to flee to the mountains (Matt. 24:15) and he promises to return **immediately after** the ensuing period of Great Tribulation. From the sequence given by Jesus — the tribulation and *immediately after* it the second coming (Matt. 24:29), we know he was speaking of events yet future.

In Revelation 13:9 we are cautioned to pay earnest attention to what God says through the Spirit. (13:8 should be translated as the King James has it, showing that Jesus was “crucified before the foundation of the world,” in God’s plan, that is.)

Revelation 13:10 warns the saints to be non-violent. Christians have no place in the wars of this world, and the ones suffering during the tribulation will themselves be killed if they take up arms. So Peter was ordered by Jesus to “put your sword back into its sheath” (Matt. 26:52). It was the *self-defensive* sword which Jesus condemned. Christians are not to indulge in physical violence. They are to be non-violent as James says Jesus was (James 5:6).

In Revelation 13:11 we meet the Beast's "P.R." man who canvasses support for him. (Note how the term "Beast" applies to both the kingdom and its leader.) The false prophet's trump card is the power to work miracles, and the creation of an *image to the beast*. This reminds us of the breath which God breathed into Adam who was made in the *image of God* (Gen. 1:27). Clearly the beast and false prophet are "playing God." It seems that Satan himself has been doing this effectively for ages. He appears to have created a position as God the Son, the second member of a Trinity, a title never claimed by Jesus. Jesus called himself the Messiah, the *Son of God* (Matt. 16:16). Jesus never claimed to *be* God. Paul says that the Antichrist (the beast) will claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).

False miracles are derived from Satan's power, just as they were in the case of Pharaoh's magicians. No magician unaided can turn water into blood on a large scale (Ex. 7:20-22), nor can he make frogs come up on the land (Ex. 8:7). The Man of Sin (Antichrist) will perform miracles, just as Jesus did, but the power will be Satan's (2 Thess. 2:9). How much of this is already happening in America?

Revelation 13:16 tells us that a mark will be given to people of all classes as a badge of allegiance to the beast. No commerce is possible without that mark. The mark seems to be the number of the Beast which is 666. The letters in Hebrew and Greek have numerical value and this will point to the identity of the Beast. Genesis 34:2 gives us a preview of this, when Shechem Ben Hamor, a pagan, raped Dinah, the virgin daughter of Israel (typifying the Church). The name Shechem Ben Hamor = 666 in Hebrew and he typifies the Antichrist. So does Goliath, whose spearhead weighed 600 shekels of iron; Goliath was 6 cubits high and had 6 pieces of armor (1 Sam. 17:4-7). Nebuchadnezzar's image was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits broad. And man was created on the 6th day. Jesus' name, however, adds up to 888 in Greek. And 8 is the number, apparently, of superabundance.

At some time in the future the foreseen events will begin to occur. Developments in the Middle East will lead to a 7-year alliance with an *Assyrian* Antichrist (Isa. 10:5, 24; 10:27-11:4; cp. 2 Thess. 2:8; Isa. 30:27, 31, 33; 31:4, 8; 32:1ff; Micah 5:4-7; Zech. 10:10-11). Daniel 11:5ff may possibly be a prophecy of the future leading to the appearance of Antichrist in 11:21, the whole passage in Daniel 11:5-12:13 being a forecast of the future. Jesus sees Daniel 11:31 as future (Matt. 24:15), as also Daniel 12:1 (Matt. 24:21). Paul views Daniel 11:36 as a picture of the Antichrist (cp. 2 Thess. 2:8). So that final king cannot just be history!

The view that Daniel 11:5ff is prophecy was held by Dr. Samuel Tregelles (*Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*), G.H. Lang (*Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*); also by members of the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith). The same view is noticed as possible by E.W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, on Daniel 11:5. See also the remarks on Daniel 11 in *Ellicott's Commentary*.

Revelation 13 should be studied in conjunction with Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets and Revelation 17. The substance of these visions presents a picture of a monster tyrant arising east/north of modern Israel (in Iraq or Iran or Syria?) whose alliance with a confederacy of 10 nations (Ps. 83) will be crushed by Jesus at his second coming (Ps. 2; Rev. 19-21). "Behold," said Jesus, "I have told you in advance." (Matt. 24:25). The wise Christian will acquaint himself thoroughly with Daniel and Revelation, as Jesus commanded (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 1:3).