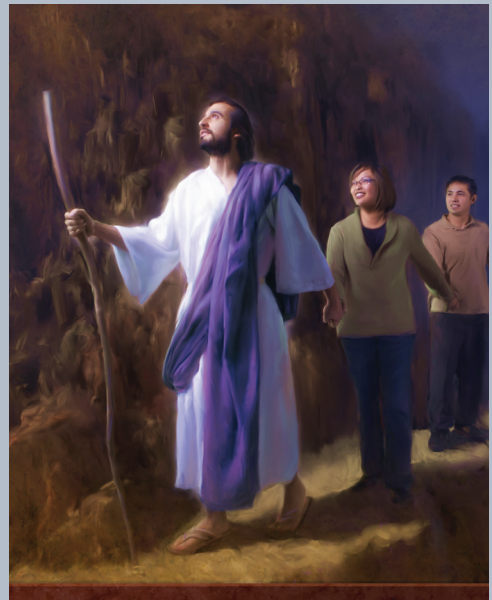


WHEN THE LAMB SPEAKS AS A DRAGON

Our study tonight is about a beast power that, once gentle as a lamb, starts acting like a dragon. This beast plays a major role in last-day events.

In our last study we saw that in the last days there was going to be a conflict around the mark of the beast, and this conflict had to do with the issue of worship. Talking about this beast power, the papacy, Revelation then says, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8).

This issue of worship is going to center around the commandments of God, particularly the fourth commandment, and the 7th day Sabbath, which points to God as our Creator. You will remember that this beast power has thought to change that day to Sunday, as a mark of its own power and authority.



God's people have chosen to follow Him regardless of what man might try to do to them.

KEY POINTS

The question is how could the papacy force the whole world to follow its religious precepts? The papacy has power and influence, but not that much. The papacy doesn't have any kind of military might, so how can it force the mark of the beast upon the world? It can't; at least not alone.

After describing the history of the papacy, Revelation 13 then tells about another beast power that arises: “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. 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 13:11,12).

Whoever this power is, it certainly has a major role in last day events, especially regarding worship and the mark of the beast. When we understand who this power is, we can better understand the answer to the question about how the mark of the beast could be enforced by the papacy.

Who, then, is this lamb-like power? There are seven characteristics of this beast found in the text above that will help us identify this power.

1. It arises after papal Rome, the first beast: As we learned in our previous lesson, the deadly wound inflicted on the first beast took place in 1798, at the end of the 42 months, or 1260 year prophecy. This means that this new beast would arrive on the scene sometime around the 18th century. (Rev. 13:5)
2. Power comes up out of the earth: We have learned that seas in prophetic language depict peoples, multitudes. (Rev. 17:15) In contrast, a beast coming up out the earth would mean that it arises in a part of the world with very little population.
3. Horns without crowns: Horns represent power. This beast, unlike the other beast, does not have crowns on its horns (Rev. 13:1 and 13:11). It is a different kind of power. We could say, at the least, that it doesn't have a king. It is different kind of government.
4. Depicted as a lamb: The first beast was depicted as a lion, bear, leopard and terrible beast. This second beast is depicted as a lamb. One would gather that this beast would be known for its gentleness and kindness. But, who in the Bible is depicted as a lamb? Jesus is called the “Lamb of God.” (John 1:29). We could say this is a positive power, possibly a Christian power.

5. Changeable: This power starts out like a lamb, but then turns into a dragon-like beast – one whose characteristics now emulate that of the dragon, Satan. (Rev. 12:9)

6. World-wide power: The lamb-like beast will exercise the power of the first beast – the papacy. In its heyday the papacy was the most powerful force in the known world. Kings bowed down and trembled before it. Whoever this lamb-like beast is, it has world-wide power, enough to cause the whole world to worship the first beast. The Bible says that this new beast power “cause the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Rev 13:12).

Here’s the answer to the question we asked earlier: How could the papacy force the world to obey it, at least in the area of worship and the mark of the beast? It’s the second beast power that forces the world to do it. Who is this power? It should be obvious at this point that this lamb-like beast is the United States of America. It alone fulfills each of the above characteristics.

7. Makes the World Worship the Beast: How could this be? The United States, whatever its faults, has always been known for religious liberty. However, in times of national crisis, our liberties can disappear. It has happened before - during the Civil War and the First and Second World Wars. After 9/11, the United States, fearful and angry, passed the Patriot Act, giving the government powers that under normal circumstances it would never allow. In times of crisis, things change. Imagine if there were to be another terrorist attack, a nuclear one. Everything could change, and the nation known as the bastion of religious freedom could easily start to “speak like a dragon.”



The lamb like beast makes the whole world worship the first beast.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

At the end of time, amid all this turmoil and persecution in a world gone crazy, God will have a faithful people who are described as having “...the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12). It’s not just that they keep the commandments of God, it’s not just that they heed the call to worship the Creator, as opposed to worshiping the beast, but they also have the “faith of Jesus.” These are people who love God, who know that their salvation is secure in Jesus. These are people who have freely chosen to follow the Lord, to obey His commands, people who are going to show their loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord, regardless of what man can do to them.

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

The psalmist writes: “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do unto me?” (Ps 118:6). That’s faith, the faith of Jesus. Yes, momentous things are to come. Great changes are to take place in our world. A crisis of world-wide proportions will soon break out on all of us. We need today, and every day, to take our stand with the Lord; to claim His promises of forgiveness, of acceptance, of salvation, of victory. Claim them, and proclaim them. And then we will be ready for the lamb that speaks as a dragon, for whatever it says, it’s not enough to turn you and me away from the One who has already spoken, saying to us, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20).