

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 13 (PART 1)

AN INTERLUDE IS A PAUSE DESIGNED TO SEPARATE TWO PARTS OF A PLAY AND OFTEN IS ASSOCIATED WITH REST AND RECOVERY. WE'RE IN ONE OF THOSE IN THE NARRATIVE OF OUR APOCALYPTIC EPISTLE. AND SO IT'S A GOOD TIME FOR US TO REMEMBER SOME THINGS AND REFRESH OUR MEMORIES.

- PURPOSE OF THIS INTERLUDE IS TO GIVE SOME INSIGHT INTO OUR ENEMY & SPIRITUAL BATTLE
- THIS ISN'T CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, AS IN "WHAT HAPPENS NEXT" BUT RATHER WE ARE FOLLOWING ALONG WITH WHAT JOHN "SEES NEXT".
- WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT SO MUCH OF REVELATION IS NOT NEW, BUT OLD. THE EARLY CHURCH READING ALONG WOULD HAVE KNOWN MORE ABOUT WHAT IS BEING DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED BECAUSE OF THEIR FAMILIARITY WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT. FOR THE MODERN CHURCH, OFTEN UNFAMILIAR WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT, DOES NOT SEE THE IMAGES AS SOMETHING ALREADY KNOWN/EXPLAINED AND SO WE HAVE THE TENDENCY TO READ INTO THE TEXT CONTEXT FROM OUR WORLD. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE READ OF LOCUSTS AND THE SUN BEING DARKENED (REVELATION 8-9), WE THINK OF HELICOPTERS AND NUCLEAR FALLOUT FROM CNN RATHER THAN THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT FROM EXODUS.
- THE TEXT OF REVELATION CANNOT JUST MEAN SOMETHING FOR THE CHURCH TODAY - OR ELSE IT WOULD NOT HAVE PROVIDED HOPE FOR THE CHURCH OF 90 AD.

JESUS' TOLD JOHN THE FOLLOWING:

REVELATION 1:19 - "THEREFORE WRITE THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN, AND THE THINGS WHICH ARE, AND THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THESE THINGS."

IN OTHER WORDS, REVELATION CONTAINS TRUTHS FROM THE PAST, FROM THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE. AND THE WORDS OF REVELATION ARE NOT JUST TO HAVE A DECODER BOOK FOR THE NIGHTLY NEWS, BUT TO EQUIP THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS OF EACH GENERATION TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO HIM NO MATTER WHAT COMES. THAT'S WHY WE ARE OFTEN REMINDED THAT THOSE OF US WITH EARS OUGHT TO BE USING THEM TO LISTEN.

IN REVELATION 12 WE SAW THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE DESCRIBED AND PORTRAYED. WE READ ABOUT THE COSMIC BATTLE IN THE PAST, IN THE HEAVENS AND WHAT CONTINUES ON TODAY. WE GOT A SENSE OF OUR ENEMY'S MOOD (ENRAGED). WHAT WE WILL READ NEXT DIRECTLY RELATES TO CHAPTER 13. WE WILL READ INTO TWO OF THE PRACTICAL WAYS THAT THE ENEMY MAKES WAR AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE.

REVELATION 13 CONTINUES THE INTERLUDE THAT BEGAN THE LAST CHAPTER (AND BY MY READING WILL CONTINUE THROUGH CHAPTER 15). THE TRUMPETS HAVE ALL BEEN SOUNDED AS WARNINGS TO THE EARTH OF THE COMING OF CHRIST AND WE'RE NOT YET READY TO READ OF THE WRATH OF GOD (DESCRIBED VIA 7 BOWLS). THERE IS A PAUSE WHICH SERVES TO DESCRIBE THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE THAT IS BEING WAGED IN THE WORLD. WE'RE READING ABOUT THE POWER AND SCHEMES OF THE EVIL ONE AND IN CONTRAST THE VICTORY OF THE SAINTS AND THE POWER OF GOD. ITS AS IF WE'RE WATCHING AN INTENSELY CAPTIVATING MOVIE AND AS THE INTENSITY BUILDS, THE MOVIE

CUTS TO COMMERCIAL. IN THIS CASE, RATHER THAN OFFERING YOU CAR INSURANCE OR THE LATEST SHAMPOO SCENTS, THE INTERRUPTION REMINDS YOU OF THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE AND HOW TO OVERCOME - AND WE'RE NOT PAUSING A MOVIE, BUT THE RECORD OF THE UNFOLDING OF HUMAN HISTORY.

ONE FINAL PREFACE: WE ARE GOING TO READ OF TWO BEASTS IN REVELATION 13. THESE TWO BEASTS ARE DOING THE WORK OF THE DRAGON (THE DEVIL) ON THE EARTH. THEY HAVE TWO REPRESENTATIONS. 1ST, THERE IS A GENERAL REPRESENTATION AND SECOND THERE IS A SPECIFIC REPRESENTATION. WHAT I MEAN BY THAT IS THAT THE FIRST BEAST FOR EXAMPLE IS GOING TO REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM OF THE WORLD IN GENERAL AND ALSO REPRESENT A *PARTICULAR* SYSTEM/PERSON THROUGH WHOM THE DRAGON'S WORK IS DONE. THIS WEEK WE WILL LOOK AT REVELATION 13 IN LIGHT OF THE BROAD AND GENERAL MEANING. NEXT WEEK WE WILL WORK TO FIND A MORE FOCUSED AND DISTINCT MEANING. MORE SPECIFICALLY, THIS WEEK WE WILL LOOK AT THE BROAD MEANING OF THESE BEASTS IN LIGHT OF THE SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE DRAGON. NEXT WEEK WE WILL LOOK AT THE BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR A SPECIFIC PERSON THAT IS OFTEN CALLED "THE ANTICHRIST".

TO UNDERSTAND REVELATION 13 WE MUST READ ALL OF DANIEL 7 FOR IT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR REVELATION 13. IT DESCRIBES A DREAM DANIEL HAD WHILE IN BABYLON WHICH CONTAINS MANY OF THE ELEMENTS WHICH REAPPEAR IN REVELATION 13.

DANIEL 7:1-8 - 4 BEASTS (LION, BEAR, LEOPARD, & DREADFUL ONE WITH 10 HORNS)

DANIEL 7:9-14 - ANCIENT OF DAYS APPEARS, 4TH BEAST DESTROYED, OTHER 3 HURT...

DANIEL 7:15-28 - WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

- THE BEASTS REPRESENT KINGS OF THE EARTH.
- THE FOURTH BEAST WILL BE A FINAL KING/KINGDOM WHICH WILL BE FEROCIOUS AND BLASPHEMOUS
- IN THE END THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, THE SON OF MAN AND THE SAINTS OF GOD WILL HAVE VICTORY AND HAVE DOMINION FOREVER.

DANIEL 7 SHOWS US A BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE FORCES OF THIS EVIL AGE - SPECIFICALLY SPEAKING OF GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEMS/KINGDOMS AND THEIR RULES, PERSONIFIED BY BEASTS - AND THE POWER AND KINGDOM OF GOD WHICH HAS COMPLETE VICTORY IN THE END. BUT THE CHAPTER COMMUNICATES THAT THERE IS A TIME WHEN THE BEASTLY KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD HAVE AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE AND IT AFFECTS/AFFLICTS GOD'S PEOPLE IN THOSE DAYS.

REVELATION 13:1-10 - THE FIRST BEAST

REVELATION 13:1A - THE DRAGON (SATAN, THE DEVIL ETC.) STANDS ON THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE ALMOST AS IF TO STEP BACK AND DIRECT THINGS. WE SEE IN CHAPTER 13 TWO BEASTS THAT APPEAR UNDER HIS WATCHFUL DIRECTING.

THE FIRST BEAST (13:1-10) IS REPRESENTATIVE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. CONSIDER SOME OF THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THIS BEAST:

- FROM THE DRAGON THIS MULTI-HEADED BEAST IS GIVEN POWER, THRONE AND AUTHORITY (13:2)
- THE EARTH FOLLOWS AFTER THIS BEAST AND AS A RESULT IS WORSHIPING THE DRAGON (13:4)
- THE WORDS SPOKEN BY THIS BEAST BLASPHEME GOD AND HIS AUTHORITY (13:5-6)
- THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF THIS BEAST THE WAR BEING WAGED BY THE DRAGON IS ENACTED AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE (13:7A)
- AUTHORITY OVER EVERY TRIBE, PEOPLE, TONGUE AND NATION (13:7B)
- THE BEASTS AUTHORITY IS FULFILLING THE AUTHORITY ON THE EARTH (13:10)

THIS AUTHORITY IS A FALSE AUTHORITY AND IS ALSO LIMITED. THIS BEAST HAS SOME QUALITIES THAT ARE SIMILAR TO AND ALSO OPPOSITE OF THE TRUTH AUTHORITY OF THE LORD GOD AND HIS CHRIST. POWER, AUTHORITY, POWERFUL WORDS. EVEN THE APPEARANCE OF BEING SLAIN AND HEALED OF A FATAL WOUND IMPRESSES THE WORLD. BUT THE BEAST IS A FRAUD AND HIS KINGDOM WILL NOT ENDURE. WE KNOW THIS FROM REVELATION 13 AND FROM DANIEL 7.

IN ADDITION, LATER IN REVELATION AND WITH OTHER NEW TESTAMENT SOURCES, WE WILL LEARN THAT THIS IS AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WILL WORK WITHIN THIS EVIL SYSTEM TO DO THE DEVIL'S WORK SPECIFICALLY (NEXT WEEK'S FOCUS).

REVELATION 13:11-18 - THE SECOND BEAST

THE SECOND BEAST (13:11-18) IS REPRESENTATIVE OF FALSE RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY AND WORKS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AND FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE FIRST BEAST. CONSIDER SOME OF THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THIS BEAST:

- HAS AUTHORITY FROM THE FIRST BEAST AND COORDINATES ITS AUTHORITY TO GET PEOPLE TO WORSHIP THE FIRST BEAST (13:12)
- PERFORMS GREAT SIGNS (INCLUDING FIRE FROM HEAVEN AND BRINGING IMAGE TO LIFE) (13:13, 15)
- DECEIVES THE EARTH AND TELLS PEOPLE TO MAKE AN IMAGE TO WORSHIP WHICH IS OF THE FIRST BEAST (13:14-15)
- CAUSES THE WORLD TO BE "MARKED" WHICH WILL DETERMINE THEIR ABILITY TO BUY/SELL (13:16-17)

THE EMPHASIS ON THE SECOND BEAST IS MORE FOCUSED ON WORSHIP THAN IT IS POWER AND AUTHORITY. THE FIRST BEAST IS THE OBJECT OF POWER AND AUTHORITY AND THE SECOND BEAST'S PURPOSE IS TO PROP UP THE FIRST BEAST WITH PSEUDO-SPIRITUAL SUPPORT.

IN ADDITION, LATER IN REVELATION AND WITH OTHER NEW TESTAMENT SOURCES, WE WILL LEARN THAT THIS IS AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WILL WORK WITHIN THIS EVIL SYSTEM TO DO THE DEVIL'S WORK SPECIFICALLY (NEXT WEEK'S FOCUS).

THIS REMINDS ME OF WHEN MOSES AND AARON CONFRONTED PHARAOH IN EGYPT. THEY REPRESENTED YAHWEH AND CALLED FOR THE RELEASE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. PHARAOH REFUSED AND LAUGHED OFF THEIR PALTRY DEMANDS. AS MOSES BEGAN TO CALL FOR PLAGUES UPON THE LAND, PHARAOH WAS BOLSTERED BY HIS OWN MAGICIANS WHO SHOCKINGLY WERE ABLE TO REPLICATE SOME OF THE MIRACLES. THEY TURNED THEIR STAFF INTO SNAKES (EXODUS 7:11-12), TURNED WATER INTO BLOOD (EXODUS 7:22-23) AND CALLED FOR FROGS TO COME OUT OF THE LAND (EXODUS 8:7). THEIR SPIRITUAL POWER SUPPORTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENTAL RULER AND ALLOWED BOTH THE RULER AND THE NATION TO IGNORE THE TRUTH.

IT ALSO BRINGS TO MIND NEBUCHADNEZZAR, THE KING OF BABYLON, WHO SET UP AN IMAGE FOR HIS EMPIRE TO WORSHIP - WITH DISOBEDIENCE PUNISHABLE BY DEATH (**DANIEL 3**, FIERY FURNACE). ALSO, THE DARIUS OF DANIEL 6 PASSED A DECREE THAT THE ENTIRE EMPIRE OUGHT TO PRAY TO HIM ALONE.

"THE DEIFICATION OF THE STATE AND ITS RULER IS NOT A PHENOMENON LIMITED TO THE LAST DAYS AND THE ANITCHRIST; WE HAVE WITNESSED MANIFESTATIONS ESSENTIALLY OF THE SAME PHENOMENON IN MODERN (AND BIBLICAL) TOTALITARIAN STATES."
- GEORGE ELTON LADD ("A COMMENTARY ON THE REVELATION OF JOHN", PAGE 178)

THE UNHOLY UNION OF THE STATE AND THE CHURCH IS CHRONIC THROUGHOUT HISTORY. YET, THIS REALITY OF THE WORSHIP OF THOSE IN POWER DOES NOT STOP IN ANCIENT HISTORY - NOR DOES IT ONLY HAPPEN TODAY IN UNDERDEVELOPED NATIONS RUN BY FANATICAL DICTATORS. FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

WALL STREET JOURNAL COLUMNIST PEGGY NOONAN CALLED (GEORGE W.) BUSH'S POST-9/11 ADDRESS TO CONGRESS "*A GOD-TOUCHED MOMENT AND A GOD-TOUCHED SPEECH*." FRED BARNES WROTE THAT "*THE STAGE WAS SET FOR BUSH TO BE GOD'S AGENT OF WRATH*." NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE RAN ADS FOR THE BUSH "TOP GUN" ACTION FIGURE, AND AN ARTICLE ABOUT HOW WONDERFUL IT WAS TO HAVE A PRESIDENTIAL SUPERHERO TO COMPLEMENT YOUR GI JOE COLLECTION. (VIA [HTTPS://WWW.CATO.ORG/COMMENTARY/BEWARE-CULT-OBAMA](https://www.cato.org/commentary/beware-cult-obama))

(BARACK) OBAMA "*WALKS INTO A ROOM AND YOU WANT TO FOLLOW HIM SOMEWHERE, ANYWHERE*," GEORGE CLOONEY GUSHED TO CHARLIE ROSE. "*I'LL COLLECT PAPER CUPS OFF THE GROUND TO MAKE [OBAMA'S] PATHWAY CLEAR*," HALLE BERRY RECENTLY TOLD THE PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS, "*I'LL DO WHATEVER HE SAYS*." SHE ADDED...LAST SUMMER, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE COLUMNIST MARK MORFORD WROTE THAT "*MANY SPIRITUALLY ADVANCED PEOPLE I KNOW ... IDENTIFY OBAMA AS A LIGHTWORKER, THAT RARE KIND OF ATTUNED BEING WHO ... CAN ACTUALLY HELP USHER IN A NEW WAY OF BEING ON THE PLANET*." (IBID)

ON JANUARY 3, 2016, THEN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DONALD TRUMP REMARKED THE FOLLOWING AT A CAMPAIGN STOP IN SIOUX CITY, IOWA: "*I COULD STAND IN THE MIDDLE OF FIFTH AVENUE AND SHOOT SOMEBODY, AND I WOULDN'T LOSE ANY VOTERS, OK?*" "*IT'S, LIKE, INCREDIBLE*." THE AUDIENCE RESPONDED WITH LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "*WE LOVE YOU!*" (VIA NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/TWOTWAY/2016/01/23/464129029)

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF UNSWERVING DEVOTION AND ALLEGIANCE TO SOMEONE WITH A PASSIONATE FEELING OF ONE'S HOPE BEING IN THE HANDS OF THAT PERSON, JOINED WITH A WILLINGNESS TO DO WHATEVER THAT PERSON MAY ASK OF YOU HAS A MUCH SIMPLER DESCRIPTION: **WORSHIP**.

"(THIS) IS THE KEY TO THE CHARACTER AND PURPOSE OF THE BEAST; ITS IS NOT MERELY THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL POWER - IT HAS THE OBJECTIVE OF CAPTURING THE LOYALTY OF MEN AND DIVERTING THEM FROM THE WORSHIP OF GOD. TO TURN FROM GOD TO SUBMIT TO THE BEAST IS IN REALITY TO WORSHIP SATAN" (LADD, PAGE 179)

THE EARLY CHURCH WAS SWIMMING IN A CULTURAL WATER WHOSE CURRENT WAS EVER FLOWING TOWARDS THE WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR. WE LEARNED OF THE PRESSURE MANY OF THE CHURCHES WERE UNDER WHEN WE READ THEIR LETTERS IN CHAPTERS 2-3. IN THEIR DAY, POLITICS AND RELIGION WERE ON DISPLAY TOGETHER.

IN OUR DAY POLITICS *IS A RELIGION* - IT IS WHAT DOMINATES OUR AIRWAVES, OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS, OUR CONVERSATIONS AND MOST TROUBLING, OUR THOUGHTS AND ATTENTION. IT CLAIMS TO OFFER HOPE, SOLUTIONS, AND POWER AND IT CAUSES WORRY, STRESS, FEAR, ANXIETY AND MORE. BUT SCRIPTURE PULLS BACK THE CURTAIN ON WHAT, AND MORE APPROPRIATELY WHO IS BEHIND IT ALL.

SINCE THE DOWNFALL OF HUMANITY IN GENESIS, FALSE SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO TAKE THE PLACE AND FILL THE VOID OF THE RULE AND REIGN OF GOD. HUMANS HAVE TRIED TO MOVE ON TO HAVING DOMINION OVER THE EARTH WITHOUT THE CREATOR AT THE TOP OF THE HIERARCHY. HUMANS HAVE TRIED TO HAVE AND HOLD ON TO POWER TO STAVE OFF THE REALITY THAT WE "SHALL SURELY DIE..." (GENESIS 2:17). FALSE KINGS, FALSE PROPHETS, FAKE GOVERNMENTS, FAKE RELIGIONS ARE REALLY BEASTS.

REVELATION 13:1 BEGINS WITH THE MENTION OF THE DRAGON STANDING ON THE SEASHORE AS HIS TWO BEASTS ARISE FROM THE SEA AND FROM THE EARTH. WE READ OF THEIR TACTICS AND INFLUENCE. IT'S FRIGHTENING AND TROUBLING TO READ OF THEIR AUTHORITY AND EFFECTIVENESS. POWER AND DECEPTION ARE IN THEIR HANDS. AND THERE IS THE DRAGON STANDING IN THE SAND AS IF TO WATCH IT ALL FROM HIS BEACHFRONT VILLA. MAKE NO MISTAKE, THIS IS ALL HIS DOING. HE HAS BEEN A DECEIVER, MURDERER AND SINNER FROM THE BEGINING (JOHN 8:44; 1 JOHN 3:8). GOVERNMENTS COME AND GO, DECEPTIVE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS COME AND GO AND YET THE DRAGON CONTINUES HIS STRATEGY THROUGH THE NEXT VERSION OF HIS BEASTS.

BUT OUR INTERLUDE ISN'T OVER. REVELATION 13 MAY OPEN LIKE THIS:

REVELATION 13:1A - AND THE DRAGON STOOD ON THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE.

BUT THE NEXT CHAPTER OPENS LIKE THIS:

REVELATION 14:1A - THEN I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD, THE LAMB WAS STANDING ON MOUNT ZION,

THE KINGDOM THAT IS **BUILT ON THE SAND** *WILL NOT LAST*. THE KINGDOM **FOUNDED UPON THE ROCK** *SHALL ENDURE FOREVER*.

AS IN DANIEL, SO IN REVELATION, IN THE END THE ANGELIC SHOUTS WILL PROCLAIM THAT "HIS DOMINION IS AN EVERLASTING DOMINION WHICH WILL NOT PASS AWAY, AND HIS KINGDOM IS ONE WHICH WILL NOT BE DESTROYED (DANIEL 7:14)" AND THAT "THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD HAS BECOME THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND OF HIS CHRIST; AND HE WILL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 11:15)". THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH OF ANY AND EVERY GENERATION MUST NOT GET ENTANGLED IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE NOR PUT THEIR HOPE IN ANY PERSON OR LEADER. WHEN WE DO, THE CHURCH IS DISTRACTED AND TAINTED. ENTERTAINER WILL ROGERS SAID IT WELL: "*MIXING POLITICS AND RELIGION IS LIKE MIXING MANURE AND ICE CREAM. IT DOESN'T DO MUCH TO THE MANURE, BUT IT SURELY DOES RUIN THE ICE CREAM.*"

BUT IF AND WHEN THE CHURCH KEEPS THEIR HOPE IN THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD, REMEMBERING THEY ARE AMBASSADORS FOR THE KING OF THAT KINGDOM (2 CORINTHIANS 5:12), STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH (HEBREWS 11:13), LOOKING FOR AND HASTENING THE COMING DAY OF GOD (2 PETER 3:12) - THEN THE CHURCH IS FOCUSED AND PURE. AND THAT IS THE KEY TO THE PERSEVERANCE AND THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS. WHOEVER HAS AN EAR, LET THEM HEAR.