



2018 Q2 Preparation for the End Time - Lesson 10 America and Babylon

presented by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

Much of this week's lesson is centered on Revelation Chapter 13, so I want to start by reading it from The Remedy paraphrase:

“The dragon stood beside the massive sea of his followers, and while I watched, out of that sea of people arose a beastly power: It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns (symbolizing political powers), and a blasphemous name on each head (symbolizing religious powers). It represented a conglomerate religio-political world power comprised of multiple governments and false religions of the world. 2 This beastly power arose from the vestiges of Greece, Persia and Babylon — symbolized by a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion — ***and it received its power and authority from the dragon***, which means it will use Satan's methods of deceit, coercion and imposition of law to distort God's character with pagan concepts. 3 One of the seven heads received what ***appeared to be a fatal wound***, but then the wound was healed—which symbolized a blow to its power, and then recovery and a resurgence in power. The entire world was in awe and followed the methods, principles and teachings of this beastly power. 4 By accepting the pagan imposed law constructs as representative of God's kingdom, people actually worshiped the dragon, as these distortions about God originated from him; and since the beast used the dragon's lies as the basis for its authority, they also worshiped the beast. They marveled, "Who can compare to the beast? (Some versions say ***Who is like the beast?***) Who can fight against it?" 5 The beast had a mouth that boasted and blasphemed—and it exerted its power for forty-two months—which symbolizes the manner in which this beastly system would misrepresent God's character and methods while claiming to have God's authority to speak for him on earth. 6 It blasphemes God and misrepresents his character, and distorts the reality of God's dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 7 It wars against the saints with lies and distortions about God's methods and principles, teaching that God uses power—like an earthly emperor—to impose law, lord over the people, and inflict punishment for disobedience. It conquers the saints and infects the world—every tribe, nation, language, and people—with its lies about God. 8 All the inhabitants of the earth accept its distortions about God and thus give homage to the beast—all except those whose names have been recorded in the book of life that belongs to Jesus the Lamb who committed himself to be the Remedy to sin before the world was created. 9 Those whose minds are open to truth will understand. 10 Anyone determined to be captive to sin will into bondage go. And anyone whose character develops upon the kill-or-be-killed principle will in the end be killed.



Overcoming the selfish drive to survive requires patient endurance and trust by those who are healed. 11 Next I saw a different beast arising out of the earth. It had two horns like lamb's horns but spoke like a dragon—which symbolized a new power, arising in a different part of the earth, that initially promotes lamblike principles of freedom but eventually practices dragon-like methods of coercion. 12 As the first beast watched, the second beast exercised all the tactics of the first beast and led the world to practice its methods, thus giving honor to the first beast whose fatal wound was healed. 13 The beast required everyone to choose whom they would worship—symbolized by the miracle of calling fire down from heaven. 14 Because of the astonishing act of restricting religious freedoms and the economic coercion that it was given power to wield, it duped the entire world. It commanded them to form a coalition of religious and political power to enforce its way, which was modeled after the first beast's ways. 15 It had the resources and ability to bring this coalition into a living reality—a fitting model honoring the first beast. It even imposed a death penalty for all who refused to practice its methods. 16 It forced everyone—weak or powerful, rich or poor, free or slave—to make a choice. Some chose to *believe* that the methods of the beast were godly, and these were marked in their *minds* (or foreheads...and what's behind your forehead?) to be like the beast. Others chose to go along with the beast for convenience and gain, and they were marked by the work of their *hands*. 17 No one could buy or sell except for those who chose the methods of the beast and thus marked themselves as "loyal" by embracing its character and being numbered as its followers. 18 This calls for wisdom. Anyone with spiritual discernment—let him count the number of the beast: it is a human's number. The number is 666.

As we look at this week's memory text from Daniel 12:1

“ ‘At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book’ ”

I am reminded that I share some of Dr. Wendell's discomfort with this topic of end time events and the time of trouble. I share his experience of having two parents who are now deceased, but who were firmly convinced that these events would happen in their lifetime. I also grew up with basements that contained enough super-preserved canned faux meat products to feed a small army.

I also remember while growing up in this community and in this denomination, being very uncomfortable with some of the language used to describe other Christian faiths...and I was very reluctant to bring a non-Adventist neighbor or friend to church with me...for fear of what they might hear from the pulpit that would disparage their own religious practices, or their family, or their church.



Anyone else? In Sunday's lesson, the quarterly asks, "how can we proclaim present truth in a way that causes as little offense as possible?" I never cared for the at best pitting or comparing or competing of one denomination against another, and at worst the belittling, criticism, and ridicule of other denominations...so please know that is so not my intention in studying this week's lesson. I do not believe anyone is saved or lost based on their denominational membership, and I believe the Holy Spirit's application of the healing remedy can save and transform folks to have Christ-like character in any and in every and in no denomination. but I also believe scripture points to specific institutions in specific time periods, and describes the specific roles they will play in last-day events...and the proper identification of these powers can help us properly position and prepare for the prophetic period we are living in.

SUNDAY

Deadly Wound Healed

This lesson refers to the passage we just read in Revelation 13 and specifically verse 3, where one of the seven heads on the Sea Beast received a "deadly wound" ...what was that wound?

The Roman church had been both the central religion AND the political center of the Western world - for centuries. But, toward the end of the 18th century, with the reformation, the enlightenment, and the French Revolution - specifically Napoleon's blow against the church when he captured and imprisoned the pope in 1798. But then wound is said to have healed, referring to the recovery and resurgence of the church in terms of political power and influence, which is continuing even today.

What are they typical results of uniting political and religious powers?

MONDAY

The United States in Prophecy

Now around the same time as the deadly wound or near the end of the 42 months, another creature appears...commonly referred to as the land beast.

There seems to be quite a bit of consensus from Biblical scholars on who this land beast in Revelation refers to:

- Time in history - late 1700's
- Arising out of the earth (sparsely populated) versus the sea (densely populated)
- Lamb-like horns representing two governing principles of civil and religious liberty
- No crown - also labeled a representative republic or republicanism (little "r"), which means a government without a king
- Protestantism - a church without a pope



One of the founders of our church wrote:

“And he had two horns like a lamb.” The lamb-like horns indicate youth, innocence, and gentleness, fitly representing the character of the United States when presented to the prophet as “coming up” in 1798. Among the Christian exiles who first fled to America and sought an asylum from royal oppression and priestly intolerance were many who determined to establish a government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty.

Their views found place in the Declaration of Independence, which sets forth the great truth that “all men are created equal” and endowed with the inalienable right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws.

Freedom of religious faith was also granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity. The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth. – {GC 441.1}

I want to present you with a comparison...show you some parallels and some evidence that this first beast in Rev 13, the Sea Beast, is actually a parody or perversion of Jesus Christ. I got some of this information from a presentation by Dr. Jon Pauline, a professor at Loma Linda University - the reference is in the notes, but I found these parallels fascinating and persuasive.

First, we probably need to review the false or counterfeit trinity represented by the three beasts in Rev 13. This was covered in Thursday of last week’s lesson, but as often happens in this class...I don’t think we ever made it to Thursday. But the information is available in last week’s notes, and the common interpretation is that the Dragon counterfeits God the Father, the Sea Beast counterfeits God the Son, and the Land Beast counterfeits God the Holy Spirit. I want you to keep those details and relationships in mind as we go over these parallels between the Sea Beast and Jesus.

1. The Sea Beast looks just like the Dragon (which is described in Rev 12) - both had 7 heads, 10 horns, and crowns...Jesus looks just like the Father - in John 14:9 He says, “if you have seen me, you’ve seen the Father...the Father and I are one.”



2. The Sea Beast does not have its own authority, it gets its authority from the Dragon...Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28:18) By whom? The Father!
3. This beast has a ministry of 42 months - how long is 42 months? 3.5 years, which correlates with the period of Christ’s earthly ministry.
4. In Rev 13:4, it is said of him, “Who is like the beast?” in a boastful way. This is also a parody of Jesus’ name Michael. Did you know that the name Michael is a hebrew term that means “who is like El?” Remember the Israelites proclaiming who is like our God?
5. The Sea Beast also has a death and a resurrection. Remember the deadly wound? If you go to the original language, it’s a “wound unto death”, and its deadly wound was healed. Now if someone dies and then gets healed, what would we call it? A resurrection! In verse 8 (which references “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”), you have the same word for death as is used in verse 3. There are 4-5 different Greek words for death and killing, but John uses the same word in both verses...and in both cases the word is translated “slaughtered”. His head was as it were slaughtered to death (v3), and the lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world (v8). The cross of Christ and the death of this beast are equated. He is a counterfeit of Jesus.

So a worldwide alliance will act like and dominate the world like the medieval church did - and the contrast in methods will be Deception and Coercion versus Truth and Freedom. The enemies of God’s people at the end of time are the very same entities once thought of as God’s allies - one of those being our country, the United States. In case you thought I forgot where I was, but I didn’t...we’re back to the US in Prophecy!

How will this country transition from lamb-like to “speaking like a dragon”, and what does that mean anyway? See Rev. 13:11 - “Next I saw a different beast arising out of the earth. It had two horns like lamb’s horns but spoke like a dragon—which symbolized a new power, arising in a different part of the earth, that initially promotes lamblike principles of freedom but eventually practices dragon-like methods of coercion.”

Ellen White says,

“Such action would be directly contrary to the principles of this government, to the genius of its free institutions, to the direct and solemn avowals of the Declaration of Independence, and to the Constitution. The founders of the nation wisely sought to guard against the employment of secular power on the part of the church, with its inevitable result—intolerance and persecution. The Constitution provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” and that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”



Only in flagrant violation of these safeguards to the nation's liberty, can any religious observance be enforced by civil authority. But the inconsistency of such action is no greater than is represented in the symbol. It is the beast with lamblike horns—in profession pure, gentle, and harmless—that speaks as a dragon.” – {GC 442.2}

Is there a drift in this country toward a more gentle foreign policy or a more aggressive one? We have been called the “Reluctant Empire” by some...to which you say, we are not an empire, we don't control other countries, but...we don't really have to, do we? Every action of the United States affects pretty much every other country on earth...most all of them want or need to know, what is the US going to do. Is there a trend in this country toward greater freedoms and liberties or fewer? From what I see there has been an ongoing and increasing tension between liberty versus security, and it really ramped up after 9/11. If you are old enough to really remember the tragic events of September 11th and the aftermath, then you know what I'm talking about, and you can no longer doubt how eminently feasible this seemingly unfeasible armageddon scenario can be - on a worldwide scale. The Battle of Armageddon envisions a worldwide unity against a small group of people hiding in the rocks and the mountains and caves. September 11 showed us just how quickly this revelation scenario could happen. Overnight, the entire political realm...the entire religious realm, were united against a group of people that we hadn't even heard about the week before. That's how fast it happened...basically we watched a big chunk of the Revelation scenario play out in just a matter of days. We're going to talk more about Armageddon here in Tuesday's lesson.

Then what happens? Does this mean that the whole world converts to catholicism?

TUESDAY

An Issue of Worship

The first paragraph states,

“All through sacred history, the Lord constantly had to deal with those who fell into idolatry and other forms of false worship. In the final crisis, as depicted in Revelation 13, the issue of worship will again arise. Here, too, God's people will have to make a choice about whom they will worship and serve.”

But, hasn't it always been about worship? Why is that? Because it's a law - the law of worship! We become like that which we admire - we become like the kind of God we worship. so, how will this issue of worship manifest itself in the final crisis - or the battle of Armageddon?

Do you know what Armageddon means? It means mountain of Megiddo from the Old Testament. Now there is no mountain with that name, but if you go to the city of Megiddo, the ancient ruins, there



is a mountain right next to it. You know what it is called? Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel is the place where there was a showdown between two gods - two types of gods - the true God and the false god Baal. What was to be the compelling sign of which one was the true God...how would the people know which god won? Fire would come down from heaven and consume the offering on the altar.

What was the problem with worshipping Baal? What made Baal a false god? Was it simply a matter of using the wrong word "Baal" when worshipping God? Was it because they were not saying "Yhwh" (Yahweh)? Or was it something else?

"The Hebrew noun ba'al means 'master', 'possessor' or 'husband'. Used with suffixes, e.g. Baal-peor or Baal-berith, the word may have retained something of its original sense; but in general Baal is a proper name in the OT, and refers to a specific deity, Hadad, the W Semitic storm-god, the most important deity in the Canaanite pantheon. "Yahweh was 'master' and 'husband' to Israel, and therefore they called him 'Baal', in all innocence; but naturally this practice led to confusion of the worship of Yahweh with the Baal rituals, and it became essential to call him by some different title; Hosea (2:16) proposed 'iš, another word meaning 'husband.'" Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (108).

The problem was not the syllables used, as ba'al was one name used for the true God. Therefore, the problem must have been something else. There must have been some distortion presented in the character of Baal that is not in the character of God. So, what was Baal like? Baal was the son of El (i.e. El-ohim or El-Shaddai). He was the god of weather. Often called, 'Almighty' and "Lord of the Earth." Baal was the god who brought rain, thunder, lightning, who fertilized the earth, controlled the sun and brought the harvest. Baal fought the great serpent leviathan, as well as battled against Mot, the god of death. And most amazing of all, it was taught that Baal died in his battle with Mot and was resurrected from the dead to bring life to earth. So what was the problem with worshipping a god who was the "husband and protector of Israel," the son of El, who controlled the weather, who brought rain, sunshine, and fertility, who blessed with full harvest, who warred against the great serpent and death, who died and was resurrected to bring life to the earth?

What was wrong with this god? What was Elijah opposing? What made Baal worship false?

"Determined to keep the people in deception, the priests of Baal continue to offer sacrifices to their gods and to call upon them night and day to refresh the earth. With costly offerings *the priests attempt to appease the anger of their gods;*" White, E.G., *Prophets and Kings*, p. 124.2.

And the Bible confirms this: "So the prophets prayed louder and cut themselves with knives and daggers, *according to their custom*, until blood flowed." (1 Kings 18:28)



Could it be that Baal represented the characteristics of Satan's version of God, the idea that he (as god) must have bloody sacrifices in order to be appeased, have his wrath assuaged, or have his anger propitiated? And is God waiting for His church on earth to complete the reformation by eliminating this pagan god concept and restoring the true picture of God as revealed in Jesus? So again, notice the issue is about worship, who do you trust, how do you understand God?

- So, we know that there will be a great end-time deception. In Revelation 13, who brings fire down from heaven in the final crisis? The land beast! In the final crisis of earth's history, there will be a Mount Carmel showdown, and the fire will fall on the wrong altar - testing the faith of everyone who is not grounded in scripture and in God's character and methods.
- So, in the light of a severe deception like that, what's our takeaway from this lesson? Number one, we should be studying God's word and assimilating truth like we've never studied it before; number two, we need to pray like we've never prayed before; and number three, we need to exercise some serious self-distrust...because the more confident we are that we've got it all figured out, the less open we are to God's leading when the time comes.
- What if the scenario doesn't play out exactly as portrayed in the Great Controversy? Biblical prophecies are often open-ended, leaving God the freedom to shift with circumstances and with how people respond...we see a God who is deeply engaged with history and He responds to human choices. In that context, prophecy becomes more open-ended. We should not over-specify the end-time details before they happen. Jesus said, "I tell you these things ahead of time so that **when it happens**, you will know that I spoke the truth." Prophecy is best understood when it is fulfilled. Final principle: prophecy was not given to satisfy our curiosity about the future...it was given to teach us how to live today.

The last paragraph in Tuesday's lesson says, "An outward appearance of truth can deceive us by disguising the deadly "wine of Babylon." What is the wine of Babylon? That God's law is imposed, that sin must be punished, and thus we view Satan's behavior as God's behavior.

When it comes to prophecy, we try not to manage the details too early. Do you remember one time in history when that happened? There was a group of people who had massive charts regarding the end-time, and particularly the role of the Messiah...they're called Pharisees, and when the Messiah came they rejected him and murdered him because He didn't fit the details they expected. Just want to throw out a scenario: One of the deep and strong convictions of most Seventh-day Adventists is that before Jesus comes there's going to be an international Sunday law. Just a couple of facts...there were seven versions of great controversy (did you know that?), but only three of them have a Sunday law - the last



three, and the first one introduces it after there was a bill in the US Senate for a national Sunday law...and that's when Ellen White starts talking about it, so evidently Sunday law is not absolutely essential to the end time because she has four versions where it's not there. In the 1880s, the colonial powers dominated the world, so the idea of an international Sunday law is easy to imagine - it made sense.

Today, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world is ruled by non-christians. According to Dr. Jon Paulien, the vast majority of legislators in California no longer believe that faith-based institutions have a place in the state, and they fight almost daily to keep them from passing laws that would essentially put us (Loma Linda) out of business. So, the Sunday law scenario in Ellen White was definitely a piece of the environment in which she lived...and if the end had come during her lifetime, it likely would have included a Sunday law. Is it absolutely certain then that there will always be a Sunday law from now on? Perhaps so...just raising the point, what if Adventists are stuck on the Sunday law and it doesn't happen? What if there is some other opposition to the Sabbath?

Reference: Pauline, Jon. (2017). USA in Prophecy 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYaFngohgw0>