

Revelation — Lesson 16

The Handout

The handout this week shows two coins depicting the Roman emperor Domitian. No one doubts that Nero persecuted Christians, but there are some who doubt that Domitian ever did. We will consider that issue at length later, and I believe we will determine that the evidence more strongly supports the view that Domitian was a great persecutor of the church — although admittedly the extra-Biblical evidence is not as strong for Domitian as it is for Nero.



The handout shows some *circumstantial* evidence for Domitian's persecution of the church. On one coin, Domitian is referred to as *Divi Filius* — son of the divine, or son of god. On the other, his own infant son (who died very young) is referred to as “The Divine Caesar, Son of the Emperor Domitian.” The child sits on the globe and stretches his hands out toward seven stars. A divine child who holds seven stars in his hand — where have we seen that before? Speaking of Christ, Revelation 1:16 says, “and he had in his right hand seven stars.” These similarities are unmistakable. Domitian must have seen in Christianity a threat to his own claims of divinity for himself and for his own son. Remember what Paul say about him in 2 Thessalonians 2:4—“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Read that and look at those coins!

In Chapter 12 a giant dragon waits to swallow up the son of God. We know very little about Domitian's son except that he died in infancy. It makes you wonder who swallowed up whom! Perhaps Domitian experienced the last of those Egyptian plagues *literally*. We will have much more to say about Domitian as our study continues.

Revelation 12:3-4 Continued...

In verse 4 we are told that the great red dragon stood before the woman, waiting to devour her child when it was born. To an outside observer it must look like this child has no chance. How could anyone, much less a newborn baby, prevail against this great dragon? The great dragon likely had the same view — how could it be defeated by a mere baby? It will just swallow it up, and that will be the end of the matter. Right? Wrong! Things are not what they seem!

Satan had once attempted to swallow up this child literally through Herod the Great, which was really through Rome even then since it was by Rome's authority that Herod ruled. Now Satan was once again trying to do the same thing to the body of Christ, his church, and once again through Rome. Satan knew that he would never have a better opportunity than this — attack the church in its infancy with the mighty Roman empire, the greatest weapon he ever had. Satan had been waiting to devour this child since Genesis 3.

This devouring of God's people reminds us yet again of Old Testament imagery. In Jeremiah 51:34 Babylon swallows God's people "like a monster." Egypt, which also tried to devour a servant of God as a child (Moses) and which also persecuted God's people, is called a great dragon in Ezekiel 29:3. At the time of this book, the weapon has changed from Babylon and Egypt to Rome, but the one wielding that weapon is the same serpent we met in Genesis 3.

Revelation is often viewed as a book that looks forward — but it might better be described as a book that looks backward as it repeatedly describes Rome in the light of past events.

**5 she brought forth a male child, one who
is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,**

but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

We find in these verses more evidence that this child is Jesus. Verse 5 says that the child was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Recall Psalm 2:9 — “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Also, recall Revelation 2:26–27 — “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”

Later in 19:15, we will read, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Before the dragon can devour him, the child is caught up to God and to his throne. Here we see the ascension of Christ back to his father’s throne in Heaven. On this earth, he was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. On this earth, he was tempted by Satan, yet without sin. On this earth, he was put to death by lawless hands. But he rose from the dead, he defeated Satan, and he ascended back to Heaven, forever out of Satan’s grasp.

The birth in verse 5 likely involves much more than just the events that occurred in Bethlehem. The child that is born in verse 5 is the same child that is caught up to God in verse 5. Thus, this “birth” appears to cover the entire earthly ministry of Christ, from his physical birth in Bethlehem to his ascension in Acts 1.

Satan failed to defeat Jesus when he was most vulnerable, while he was made in the likeness of men, and while he was found in fashion

as a man. (Philippians 2:7-8) Satan certainly won't fair any better after Jesus has ascended to rule from Heaven!

Before we read any further, we know what the message is going to be! Just as these Christians had followed the example of Christ in their suffering, they would follow his example in ascending to Heaven. They, too, would escape the clutches of this great dragon.

What happens next? Verse 6 tells us that the woman flees into the wilderness. We are reminded of Moses fleeing from Pharaoh into the wilderness. We are reminded of the Israelites fleeing from Egypt into the wilderness. We are reminded of Elijah fleeing from Ahab and Jezebel into the wilderness. We are reminded of Mary and Joseph fleeing from Herod into the wilderness.

How long does this last? Verse 6 tells us that the woman is separated from the child for 1260 days, which is 42 months, which is 3½ years. This book is so beautiful when we understand the symbols! Those who take these numbers literally are missing so much!

The church is separated from Christ for 3½ years! That is, the separation is neither permanent nor complete. Just as the persecution is temporary, so is the separation between the Lord and his church.

Although the woman flees to the wilderness, God nourishes and sustains her there. God is assuring his people that although they are being persecuted by Rome and although Jesus is no longer with them in person, that situation will not last forever. But while it does last, God will sustain them and protect them and nourish them.

We are reminded once again of Ezekiel 29:3, which refers to Egypt as a great dragon — "Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." God's people in the Old Testament were also nourished in the wilderness while running from a great dragon.

For those keeping count, this is the third time and the third different way that this message has been delivered to the readers of this book! First, the city of God will be trampled under foot for 3½ years, but the

inner sanctuary will be protected. Second, two witnesses will prophesy for 3½ years, but then be killed by the beast. Their apparent defeat, however, is only temporary. After 3½ days they come back to life and ascend to Heaven. Third, a woman will be forced to flee into the wilderness for 3½ years, yet will find there a place of nourishment and protection.

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Is this a literal war in Heaven? Two questions — *How* could it be, and *why* should it be? Satan was defeated at the cross! Recall John 12:31— “**Now** shall the ruler of this world be cast out.” Jesus did not need Michael to do something he had already accomplished himself. This battle (like the woman, the child, and the dragon) is symbolic!

Why show us this symbolic battle? This battle and its outcome emphasize the point that if Satan could not defeat Jesus while he was on the earth, then Satan certainly cannot defeat Jesus now that Jesus is reigning in Heaven!

Is this scene a flashback? Are we seeing here a description of Satan’s actual fall some time prior to the events in Genesis 3? No. The timing here places the battle at the time of the ascension of Christ. This defeat is the defeat of Satan that Christ accomplished on the cross and at the resurrection and ascension. Was a great war like this really being fought on the cross? Absolutely! And Jesus won!

The Bible describes the victory of Christ as the outcome of a great conflict. Recall Isaiah 53:12 —

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

And remember how Jesus described the conflict in Luke 11:20-22 —

But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

And also recall Jesus' statement in John 14:30 — “for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The outcome of that battle was never in doubt.

We also have our great battles with Satan, and they often would not look like much of a battle to an outside observer. But — and here is the theme of this book — things are not always what they seem!

The angel Michael serves here as Christ's representative. He is named three times in the book of Daniel. He is “one of the chief princes” in Daniel 10:13. He is the “prince of Israel” in Daniel 10:21. And, in Daniel 12:1, Michael is called “the great prince” who stood for God's people against their great enemies. He is called an archangel in Jude 9. Some surmise that he is the angel pictured in Revelation 10.

No place is found in Heaven for the dragon and his angels. His assault on Heaven is a complete failure. His defeat is decisive. When Jesus ascended he had completely defeated Satan. Recall —

- **1 John 3:8** The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
- **John 16:11** The ruler of this world is judged.

- **John 16:33** I have overcome the world.
- **John 12:31** Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.
- **Colossians 2:15** And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
- **Hebrews 2:14** That through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Verse 9 refers to the dragon as that ancient serpent. This reference is a clear identification of the dragon with the serpent in Genesis 3. It was through this serpent's deceptions that sin entered the world, and he has been an active enemy of God and man ever since. He is the devil or *diabolos*, which means accuser or slanderer. And he is Satan or *satanas*, which means adversary or opponent.

Verse 9 also describes Satan as the deceiver of the whole world. Paul told us in 1 Timothy 2:14 that it was by deception that the world was plunged into sin. In John 8:44, Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." In fact, the first recorded words of Satan in the Bible contained a lie —

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die.**

God gave Eve a command, and Satan convinced her to do the very opposite. God told Eve a fact, and Satan convinced Eve that the opposite was true. Satan's method of operation has not changed one bit! Why should he change, when what he does works so well? God tells us that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. And what does Sa-

tan say? He says that those who believe and are saved shall be baptized. A small twist — but a deadly one! Satan is still twisting God's word and telling people, "Ye shall not surely die!"

Satan is a deceiver! He delights in twisting the word of God. He quoted the Bible and twisted the scriptures even to Jesus in Matthew 4 — he does the same thing today. How else could a rational person read the word of God and conclude that it approves of homosexuality? How else could a rational person read the word of God and conclude that baptism is not essential to salvation? Someone sent me an email recently arguing that baptism is not even part of the gospel! How can we explain such blindness? They have been blinded and deceived by Satan just as surely as Satan deceived Eve in the garden. Satan's methods of operations have not changed, and nor are they likely to change while they continue to work so well. We must not be ignorant of his devices! (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Here is the message of these verses in a nutshell: The power behind Rome has already been defeated. The defeat of Rome will soon follow.

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

"Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come." We have seen language like this before. In 11:5, for example, we were told, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

As before, the statement in verse 10 does not mark the beginning of God's kingdom or of Christ's authority. Instead it depicts a public

vindication and reaffirmation of those things. (Although, we should note that the Lord's eternal kingdom was *literally* established shortly after the ascension of Christ.)

In verse 10, we are told *why* "the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come." It is because "the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." The defeat of Satan is the cause for this public vindication and reaffirmation of God's sovereignty.

Verse 10 tells us something very interesting about Satan — he accuses us day and night before God! This description of Satan reminds us at once of the opening chapters of Job, although there you will recall it was God who first brought up Job as an example to Satan — "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Perhaps Satan had been accusing others before God used Job as an example of righteousness.

Remember when as a child you had a brother or sister who would always rush off to your parents to accuse you? That is Satan's full time job! Whenever you sin, you should picture Satan rushing off to God to tell him what you just did! And Satan is the father of lies, and so there is no telling what lies he is telling God about us. But we should not be worried — our God is an all-knowing, righteous judge. And we have another before him who is pleading our case.

And the next time we are tempted to start accusing each other, we should remember this description of Satan as the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them day and night before our God. That is not good company to keep!

Verse 11 tells us *how* Satan was conquered. "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." Verse 11 is one of the key verses in this entire book.

Satan was *figuratively* defeated by a great battle in Heaven. Satan was *literally* defeated by the blood of Christ, by the word of Christ, and by

the faithful proclamation of that word by those who loved not their lives even unto death.

We are reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's famous reminder that "when Jesus calls a man, he bids him to come and die." And we are reminded of Matthew 16:24 — "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And of John 12:25 — "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Verse 11 is a reminder that this book of comfort and assurance is not promising a *physical* deliverance from the clutches of Rome. God is promising a *spiritual* deliverance from the power behind Rome.

Satan was defeated by the death of those he was trying to kill? That doesn't sound like much of a defeat! Yes, but things are not always what they seem! (How many times will we see that theme in this book?!) Satan was defeated by the death of Christ on that cross, and he is defeated when Christ's servants follow the example of their Master. The death of Jesus was a defeat—but not for Jesus. The death of Jesus was a judgment—but not against Jesus.

Satan was defeated by the blood of the Lamb. It was that blood that provided the forgiveness of sins that took the faithful forever out of his clutches. It was that blood that made Satan's accusations of no effect.

12 Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

Those who dwell in Heaven are told to rejoice. Remember that God's people, even those still physically on earth, are pictured in Revelation as dwelling in Heaven. The phrase "those who dwell upon the earth" always refers to the enemies of God in this book.

Why are they told to rejoice? Because their victory is assured. The Lamb has conquered Satan through his death and the power of his word. Satan could not defeat Jesus while he was on earth, and Satan

certainly won't be able to do any better now that Jesus has ascended back to Heaven. The power behind Rome was utterly and completely defeated at the cross. Rome will be the next to go.

We have seen the wrath of the Lamb. In verse 12, we see the wrath of the dragon. The difference, of course, is that the dragon's wrath is not a righteous wrath. In fact, Satan's wrath is directed here not toward those dwelling in Heaven but to his own followers who dwell on the earth. Satan has no concern for their welfare, but will use them as he sees fit in his attempts to thwart God's plans. But Satan's schemes are not working, and it certainly can't be his fault! He blames his minions, which partly explains his wrath.

But the text gives us another reason for his wrath — he knows that his time is short. We see here Satan's frustration at being unable to destroy the church with such a deadly weapon, and he knows that his opportunity to use Rome as a weapon is coming to an end. That is, Satan knows that his opportunity to attack the church through Rome will not last forever.

Just as Satan grasped his opportunity and attempted to kill Jesus in his infancy, Satan also saw an opportunity and attempted to crush the church in its infancy. In each case, Satan failed and was utterly defeated.

13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured

from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

The dragon sees that he has been thrown down to earth, and so he pursues the mother of the child. That is, Satan realizes that his plans to defeat Jesus have backfired, and so he begins to attack Jesus's followers. If he can't reach the Lord's body in Heaven, he will attack the Lord's body on earth. (Although this woman represents the faithful people of God, be they faithful Jewish people under the Old Covenant before Christ came or faithful Christians under the New Covenant after Christ came, at this time the focus is on the latter because here we see the woman *after* the ascension. Thus, at this point on the timeline, we can refer to the woman as the church.)

Remember, persecution does not mean that God is no longer in control. God was in control at the cross, and God was in control while Rome persecuted the church. God is in control no matter what! (Of course this does not mean that everything that happens is the will of God. Sin is clearly not the will of God. See our lesson on *Time and Chance* at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com.)

The woman is given wings with which to escape the pursuing dragon. That is, the woman is protected and preserved by God. Wings are often used to symbolize God's protection:

- **Exodus 19:4** You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.
- **Deuteronomy 32:11** Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone did lead them.
- **Psalms 36:7** How precious is thy steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings.

- **Isaiah 40:31** But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

What happens next? The dragon attempts to kill the woman with a flood, but the earth swallows the water. As with so many of the images in this book, this one takes us back to the Exodus. As the people of God escaped the great dragon of Egypt, God held back the water to allow his people to escape when Moses led the Israelites across the Red Sea on dry ground. (See Exodus 14:21–31 and Psalm 106:9.)

Elsewhere, the Bible also portrays floods that are threatening to engulf God's people, sometimes as a judgment by God. Recall —

- **Isaiah 8:7-8** Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.
- **Isaiah 43:2** When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
- **Psalm 144:7** Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters.
- **Psalm 32:6** For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

What sort of flood had Satan unleashed on them? It was a flood of delusion and deception. It was a flood of false religion. It was a flood of idolatry. It was a flood of false charges. It was a flood of false philosophies. It was a flood of immorality. It was a flood of compromise. It was a flood of perversion.

Satan may not have had much luck with that flood, but that did not keep him from trying it again. We are being threatened by a flood today that in some ways is worse than the one they faced. While we are not facing the same threat of physical persecution, we are living in a world that is awash in deception, false religions, and immorality. The waters from that flood threaten to swallow us up, and that flood was released by Satan.

What does it mean that the earth swallowed up the flood waters? Isn't the earth in the enemy's camp? First, we should note that the concept of water being absorbed by the sands of an arid wilderness would have been familiar to John's initial readers. The rivers flowing eastward from the Lebanon mountains disappear in the sands of the eastern desert. We recall that Job accused his friends in Job 6:15-20 of being like a deceitful brook that vanishes away — "when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place."

But is that all that is involved here, or is there a symbolic meaning behind this flood being swallowed up by the *earth*? Is there some sense in which the earth came to the rescue of the woman? Hailey says yes:

In the same way the earth, that is, the unregenerated earthlings, helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing up the lies of the dragon. In doing this the earth established a clear distinction between the world, satiated with its false religions and philosophical teachings, on the one hand, and the church, clothed with truth and righteousness, on the other. From the viewpoint of Satan and the world, the earth's help was incidental and unintentional: but from the viewpoint of the church, it was providential. As long as the world absorbs the river of Satan's lies, and the church drinks from the fountain of divine truth, the separation between the two will remain clear and distinct. But when the woman begins to compromise with Satan and his lies, becoming submerged in his river of falsehood, tragedy follows.

One reason that Rome fell was that Rome turned on itself. We will see that very thing later in this book, and Daniel told us about it 600 years before Revelation was written.

Remember the sequence of events here. We started off with the dragon on earth trying to devour the child. We then moved to Heaven, where Satan was defeated and cast out. We now see Satan back on earth again and being defeated again. What is the message here? God can defeat Satan anywhere he happens to be. He can defeat Satan in Heaven, and he can defeat Satan on earth, which Satan claims as his own turf.

What happens next? The dragon wages war against the offspring of the woman. The woman herself and her child are now beyond the reach of the dragon. That is, Jesus and the faithful people of God (as a whole and pictured as already dwelling in Heaven) are unstoppable and cannot be defeated by Satan.

However, Satan still wages war against individual Christians; that is, against the other offspring of the woman. In my opinion, these *other* offspring are those Christians who are still physically present on earth. This, in my opinion, is the same division between the inner sanctuary and the outer court that we see in 11:1-2.

The promise given in Revelation that Satan will not be able to defeat the church is not new or unique to this book. Recall Jesus's statement in Matthew 16:18 — "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." And recall Hebrews 2:14 — "That through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil."

Chapter 12 ends by saying that "the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus." Chapter 13 will provide the details of that attack.

Chapter 13 will introduce us to two of the weapons that Satan would use next in his battle against the church — a beast from the sea and a beast from the earth. As we will see, these beasts represent Rome, but

they do so from different perspectives. Just as we see the church from many different perspectives in this book, so do we see Rome from many perspectives. Chapter 13 will prove to be the key to understanding the remainder of the book, and so we will spend some extra time in this chapter.

Chapter Thirteen

12:17b And he stood on the sand of the sea. 13:1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

Who stood on the sand of the sea? That's a good question. Some say it is the dragon, but verse 17 just told us the dragon went off to make war. Some say it is John, but verse 1 refers to John in the first person, unlike the third person reference in verse 17. I think it most likely refers to the dragon.

In verse 1, John sees a beast rise out of the sea. We have seen the sea used before to depict separation, and we have seen the sea used to depict the restless, unsettled nations of the world. That latter symbol seems to be the one God is using here. Recall the similar imagery in Isaiah 17:12-13 —

Ah, the thunder of many peoples, they thunder like the thundering of the sea! Ah, the roar of nations, they roar like the roaring of mighty waters! The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff

on the mountains before the wind and
whirling dust before the storm.

And that symbol fits perfectly. This beast represents Rome, and Rome rose from the restless, unsettled nations of the world.

But there may be additional reasons behind the use of the sea here. In Isaiah 60:5, the prophet compares “the abundance of the sea” with “the wealth of the nations.” In Jeremiah 51:13, the prophet says the following about Babylon: “O you who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come.” And later in verse 42 of that same chapter, he writes, “The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with its tumultuous waves.” And in Ezekiel 26:3, God says the following about Tyre, “Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves.” Thus, not only does the sea denote wicked and restless nations, it also denotes judgment.

This beast has seven heads with ten horns and ten diadems. This is the same description we were given of the dragon in 12:3. When we last saw the dragon we were told that it had gone off to make war against those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. What we see here is one of the weapons that Satan was going to use in that conflict.

This beast is both a weapon of Satan and a manifestation of Satan. Satan was the driving power behind the attack by Rome against the church. That the beast is now wearing Satan’s royal headdress tells us that the dragon has given power and authority to the beast to act on his behalf.

What is represented by the seven heads? When we first saw them in 12:3, I mentioned that we would see them again here in Chapter 13, and that their meaning would be explained to us by an angel in Chapter 17. Rather than wait until we get to Chapter 17, I think it is helpful to jump over there now and discover what these symbols mean.