

END TIMES & THE RETURN OF CHRIST (PART 4)

Sunday, March 31, 2019

Allegorical Character Studies: Israel, Satan, Christ

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.² She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.³ Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads.⁴ Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.⁶ The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. (Rev. 12:1-6)

¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Matt 24:15)

Allegorical Character Studies: The Beast

Daniel's Vision of the Beast

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

² Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. ³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

⁴ “The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it. ⁵ “And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’ ⁶ “After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

⁷ “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims

and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

⁸“While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

⁹“As I looked,

“thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was seated,
and the books were opened.

¹¹“Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. ¹²(The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

¹³“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Dan. 7:1-14).

The Vision Interpreted

1. The four beasts are four kings (i.e., kingdoms) (Dan. 7:17).

A lion with the wings of an eagle...

Babylon

A bear...

Medo-Persian

A leopard with four wings and four heads...

Greece

A beast with iron teeth (Dan. 7:23ff.)

Rome, different than the other kingdoms, will devour the whole earth.

2. The ten horns are ten kings which will arise from the fourth kingdom (Dan. 7:24).

²⁴The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.

3. After the ten kings, another will arise which will be different than the others, and in his bid for power he will subdue three kings (Dan. 7:24).

²⁴ After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for **a time, times and half a time**.

²⁶““But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.” (Dan. 7:25-27).

John's Vision of the Beast

¹The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ²The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. ³One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. ⁴People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

⁵The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for **forty-two months**. ⁶It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. (Rev. 13:1-8).

The Vision Interpreted

1. The ten horns are ten kings (or kingdoms) which do not have authority at the time of John's vision, but will share authority with the beast in a future time (Rev. 13:1; 17:12).

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast **who once was, and now is not**, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. ¹² “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” (Rev. 17:9-14)

2. The seven heads are seven successive kingdoms; five of these had already ended at the time of the vision (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece), one was still in existence (Rome), and one was yet to come (the Antichrist’s kingdom, Rev. 13:1; 17:10).
3. The beast is a kingdom that exists, then does not, then does again (17:8). This beast is identified not only as a kingdom, but as an eighth ruler (17:11), who appears to arise after one of the rulers receives a fatal wound (13:3).
4. The beast and the ten kingdoms will destroy the harlot halfway into seventieth week (17:16), at the same point the beast is worshipped (13:4) and has achieved worldwide power (13:7).

Antichrist

The term *Antichrist* appears only in John's epistles (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2 John 7). A more accurate name for the future world ruler is the Beast (Rev. 13:1; 19:20). There is debate as to whether Antichrist is an individual, a world system, or a world system headed by an individual.

The primary Scriptures discussing the Beast are Ezekiel 28:1-10; Daniel 7:7-8, 2026; 8:23-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13:1-10; 17:8-14.

The following briefly summarizes his person and his work.

1. The Beast will not appear until the Day of the Lord—the coming Tribulation—has begun (2 Thess. 2:2).
2. He is a Gentile, since he arises from the sea (Rev. 13:1), and the sea represents the Gentile nations (Rev. 17:15).
3. He arises from the Roman empire as its head, since he is ruler over those who destroyed Jerusalem (Dan. 9:26). His rise comes through his program of peace (Dan. 8:25), and he makes a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27) which initiates the final seven years before Christ's return.
4. Half way through the Tribulation—three and a half years later—he breaks the covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27), and becomes utterly controlled and empowered by Satan (Ezek. 28:9-12; Rev. 13:4).
5. He is the world ruler at this point (Rev. 13:8), having eliminated three other rulers in his rise to power (Dan. 7:8, 24) and made alliances with other nations (Dan. 8:24; Rev. 17:12).

6. There will come an alliance against him which will contest his authority (Ezek. 28:7; Dan. 11:40, 42). After this conflict he will gain control over Palestine (Dan. 11:42) and will make his headquarters in Jerusalem.
7. He introduces an idolatrous worship (Dan. 9:27) in which he sets himself up as god (Dan. 11:36-37; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5).
8. With the help of the false prophet, he forces everyone to take a mark which controls their ability to buy and sell (Rev. 13:16-18). Those who receive the mark are doomed (14:9-10).
9. During the Tribulation he is the adversary of Christ and His followers who are still on the earth (Dan. 8:24-25; Rev. 13:7).
10. His rule is finally terminated by the decree of God (Ezek. 28:6; Dan. 7:22, 26; 8:25; 9:27; 11:45; Rev. 19:19-20) as part of a military campaign in Palestine (Ezek. 28:8-9; Rev. 19:19) and he will be cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Rev. 19:20).

The False Prophet

1. A second “beast” will emerge by the mid-point in Daniel’s 70th week who bears some resemblance to a Messiah but speaks the words of Satan (Rev. 13:11). This beast has Antichrist’s authority on his behalf and causes the world to worship him (Rev. 13:12).

¹¹ Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

2. This individual is able to perform miracles, including causing fire to come down from the sky (Rev. 13:13). John later refers to this person as the *False Prophet* (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

¹³ And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.

3. The False Prophet sets up an image (a visual representation) of the Antichrist that has the semblance of life and intelligence. It can communicate and make decisions. Those who do not worship this image are identified and put to death (Rev. 13:15).

¹⁴ Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

4. The False Prophet develops a mark (a permanent brand) that is placed on the right hand or forehead that is necessary to buy and sell (i.e., it permits a worldwide commerce system under

the control of the Antichrist; Rev. 13:16-17). It is a sign of devotion and allegiance to the Antichrist and his kingdom. Anyone who receives this mark will be eternally separated from God (Rev. 14:9-10).

¹⁶ It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. (Rev. 13:11-18)



Babylon the Great

1. Babylon is pictured as a harlot that rides on the beast of Rev. 13. She is identified as “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18). She is described as being immensely wealthy (Rev. 17:4; 18:9-13), drunk with the blood of God’s holy people (Rev. 17:6; 18:24), and sitting on seven hills (Rev. 17:9). She leads the nations astray by her “magic spell” (Rev. 18:23).

¹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ²With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

³Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

⁶I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

⁹“This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

¹²“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

¹⁵Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. ¹⁸The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.” (Rev. 17:1-18)

2. The depiction of Babylon as a prostitute lines up with various biblical images of the unfaithfulness of God’s people (e.g., Ezek. 16:15-32; James 4:4) vs. references to the faithful as a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2). God’s people are told to come out of her and not share in her sins (Rev. 18:4-5). The description of the fall of the whore of Babylon in Rev. 17-18 is followed by the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:1-10) where the church is referred to as the bride of Christ, wearing fine linen, bright and clean (Rev. 19:7-8).
3. Babylon is destroyed by the beast on which she rides (Rev. 17:16). Her fall occurs mid-way through Daniel’s 70th seven (Rev. 14:8), at the point when Antichrist rises to worldwide power.