

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 151

THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA (continued)

The apostle John had been exiled to the isle of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. As he walked the rugged shores of Patmos, he found himself caught up in spirit to behold in vision the mighty inworkings of God in His called and chosen people, and the outworkings of His great plan and purpose in the earth and in all mankind. In the vision now under consideration John beholds how out of the sea emerges a beast, indeed a *wild beast*, of ferocious and ravenous nature. The beast rises up out of the sea and receives his throne, authority, and power *from the dragon*. Individually, the beast represents the character of the sea from whence he ascends, that is, the body-realm, the carnal nature of the flesh man, the natural man, the wicked man, man at the lowest level of his being, the outward works and manifestation of the man of sin who is motivated, dominated, and controlled by the satanic spirit. On a higher level, however, this beast is something more sophisticated than that! The scene here is not one merely of our individual state of being and our personal actions, but bespeaks *manifestation, expression, action, organization, proclamation, and power* on the collective, communal, and societal plane.

John's description indicates a *corporate expression* rather than an individual one. The beast walks, speaks, acts, controls, persecutes, and accomplishes. He blasphemes God and makes war against the saints. Worldwide power is given unto him, over all kindreds, tongues, and nations. It is my conviction that this beast signifies the outward expression of THE WORLD SYSTEM OF MAN. This is the beast lurking beneath the surface of the deep, which rises up from our sea (fleshly nature) having many heads (manifestations of authority), many horns (organized powers), and spewing blasphemies from its mouth. This bestial system is always, generation after generation, rising up out of the sea of humanity. It is a vast and ferocious system originating right out of human nature! And this system, in one way or another, relentlessly makes war against the spiritual life of God's people!

The world system of man began with Cain and his descendants at the very dawn of human history. After the great flood in Noah's day, the bestial system immediately ascended again from the sea of humanity at Babel. Notice how the *human nature* gave form to this system: "*And it came to pass, as **they** journeyed from the east, that **they** found a plain in the land of Shinar; and **they** dwelt there. And **they** said **one to another**, Go to, let **us** make brick, and burn them thoroughly...let **us** build **us** a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let **us** make **us** a name, lest **we** be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*" (Gen. 11:2-4). When we compare these words with the call of God to Abraham, the vast difference between the SYSTEM OF MAN and the KINGDOM OF GOD becomes very, very clear. Consider these words to Abraham in the very next chapter of Genesis: "*Now the **LORD** said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that **I** will show thee: and **I** will make of thee a great nation, and **I** will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and **I** will bless them that bless thee...and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 12:1-3).

The primary contrast has to do with the fact that Babylon was a democracy in which the citizens made their own decisions, acting as a sovereign city-state in line with what it assumed to be its self-interest,

without regard to the leadership, purpose, or will of God. The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is governed by the revealed will of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, in line with His great plan and purpose for mankind. Can we not see by this that all the “secular” governments of today are a self-proclaimed autonomy from the rule of the Spirit — indeed, *Babylon!* They are, one and all, in our day, *the beast rising up out of the sea!*

THE HEAD THAT WAS WOUNDED AND HEALED

“And I saw *one of his heads* as it were *wounded to death*; and his deadly wound was *healed*: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Rev. 13:3).

The seven heads signify the completeness of the authority of the bestial system in opposition to the spirit and people of God. The word “wounded” is the same word in the Greek that is translated “slain” in reference to the Lamb: “*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne...stood a Lamb as it had been slain*” (Rev. 5:6). The Greek word is *sphazo* meaning “slaughtered.” The head of the beast had not been merely wounded or smitten, it had been as it were “slaughtered unto death.” And it was not merely his “deadly wound,” but it was the “stroke of his death” that had been healed. It was as a death and resurrection from death — the contrast and travesty of that death and resurrection which had befallen the Lamb of God slaughtered and raised again! Truly, these are *spiritual things* we are dealing with! Of the bestial world system Jesus said, “*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD!*” (Jn. 16:33). And of the dragon who gives power unto the bestial system Jesus declared, “*The prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on me — he has nothing in common with me, there is nothing in me that belongs to him, he has no power over me*” (Jn. 14:30, Amplified).

Jesus did not come to modify the world system; He came to destroy it. Daniel makes this very clear. “*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and...it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*” (Dan. 2:44). The Redeemer of the world came, not to wound or weaken the prince of this world only, but to “bring him to naught” (Heb. 2:14). He came to subdue him, to overcome him, destroying his dominion and crushing his power. This is the work which the Lord Jesus came to perform — to destroy the kingdom of Satan in the world, and to set up another kingdom in its place, subduing all things unto Himself!

Our text doesn’t identify which of the seven heads was wounded as unto death. *None of the heads are identified.* Many commentators have endeavored to identify these heads as specific historical kings or kingdoms, either of the Pagan Roman Empire, the Christian Roman Empire, or some other. There are as many interpretations as there are writers! Some have speculated that the overturning of one government by another would be likened to giving a death-stroke to one of the beast’s heads; but there would finally have to be seven such slaughterings of a head to death in order to slay the beast. It is my conviction that all such speculation misses the point. The reality remains that the *Holy Spirit does not give even a clue as to what such a fulfillment would be!* Seven is the perfect number, indicating the complete and absolute *authority* of the beast. This point is so very important! George Hawtin once wrote of the world system of man: “The world has seen six thousand years of such unrighteous government, so much unscrupulous underhandedness and double talk, so many broken promises, so much disregard for truth, so much cunning conniving, so much corrupt upholding of wickedness by a law, so much money spent to protect the imagined rights of criminals in the name of justice, until people have lost faith in governments and the largess so freely offered at election time. The righteous man droops and fades in the earth. A member of the American CIA was recently quoted as saying that, if people knew what was going on behind the scenes, many of them would commit suicide. We mention these ever increasing evils, not because we enjoy the putrid odors of earth’s sewer of corruption, but rather that we might see the contrast of the kingdom that is soon to be when righteousness will be the royal scepter and righteousness and truth the girdle of His loins.”

The wounding of one head signifies the *diminishing* of the beast’s authority, a partial interruption of the totality of that authority. And the “deadly wound healed” indicates that the partial disruption of the total authority of the bestial system of the world is short-lived — the beast always regains his authority! The wound is inflicted by a sword, even the sword of the Spirit which is the living word of God! Is it not true

that the power of God's word in and through His people has, throughout the church age, *diminished* the beastly nature, authority, and power of human government — yet the beast has never been killed, its nature has never been changed, its authority has never been abolished. In fact, after having been influenced by the word of Christ through His people to reform in certain aspects, is it not true that the deadly wound always seems to heal and the beast returns to its former corrupt, godless, and ruthless state of being.

It will be helpful to our understanding of the mystery to consider that this scene has been enacted *again and again* in the earth throughout the church age. Consider the early church. As another has pointed out, Jesus came into the world in the time of the Roman Empire. He was crucified on a Roman cross, pierced with a Roman spear, and sealed in His sepulcher under a Roman seal. But praise God! He burst the bands of death, shattered the seal of mighty Rome, and arose the Conquering Christ. And not only that — He ascended Victor over all the powers of darkness, having brought to naught the prince of this world within Himself, having brought in eternal redemption for a lost world and redeemed all things back unto God. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on High and poured out upon the first few citizens of His kingdom the gift of the Holy Ghost. The kingdom of God was birthed, and soon gathered from Jew and Gentile alike a vast multitude into its bosom. What a flood of light and glory and power fell upon the world in the ministry of the humble followers of the Lamb!

And what glorious days those were! How God blessed His people! Mighty signs and wonders were performed as God confirmed His word with signs following. The word of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, swept the world like a prairie fire. It encircled the mountains and crossed the oceans. It made kings to tremble and tyrants to fear. It was said of those early Christians that they had turned the world upside down! — so powerful was their message and spirit. In spite of persecution, in spite of untold thousands of saints impaled upon crosses, burnt at the stake, and fed to hungry lions to the thunderous applause of wild spectators, it grew and multiplied, for God dwelt mightily in the midst of His people. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea. Paganism fell. The mighty Roman Empire shut up its idol temples, sheathed its persecuting sword, and sat down as a disciple at the feet of Christ and His apostles. Of course many other areas of the world, China, India, and Africa, to name a few, were not as impacted as the core of the Roman Empire, but one of the heads of the world system of man was wounded unto death! The sword by which this deadly wound came was the sword of the *word of God* in the mouths and lives of His people. The wound to that system was so deadly that for a time it appeared it would never rise again.

But John saw the deadly wound healed, and all the world wondered after the beast! Revived, the beast became stronger than ever so that “they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (Rev. 13:4). My understanding of great spiritual matters is often woefully small. Nevertheless, it is my deep conviction that as human government under the succession of Roman Pontiffs degenerated into a carnal, spiritually bankrupt, superstitious, idolatrous, pompous, persecuting, and tyrannical rule, the kings of the earth spurned the sword of the Spirit which has wounded the head of the beast, and grasping the spirit of the dragon, the deadly wound was healed. It was no longer a diminished kingdom of man — it was the full seven-headed beast out of the sea! The popes ruled over the kings of Europe, setting up what kings they would and putting down whom they would, casting into prison and putting to death all who opposed them, and exalting whom they would, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait barefooted at his gate, they became the successors to the Caesars — the healed head of the wild, ravenous beast out of the sea!

Throughout the past two millenniums there have been mighty movings of God that have brought the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ascendancy in various cities, areas, and nations of the world, and in that area it appeared that the bestial system of man was dealt a death blow. In the days of the Reformation whole nations were brought under the sway of truth and righteousness, and in subsequent years great and powerful revivals swept through England, Wales, and Scotland, and in these places one of the heads of the beast was “as it were wounded to death.” But in every case the deadly wound was healed — love of God grew cold, apostasy set in, sin abounded, ungodly rulers again came to power, and the wound inflicted was overcome. That is the principle. On far-away Patmos the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostle John just how it would be throughout the church age. And who can deny that his vision is an accurate portrait of this reality?

In the 1500's a man by the name of John Knox went into a garden in Scotland and knelt for hours in agonizing prayer. Someone who overheard him saw that at the end of that prayer, in great agony of spirit, he finally lifted up his hands to God and cried aloud, "Great God, give me Scotland or I die!" And that prayer was very literally answered before he died. Mary Queen of Scots said that she feared the face of John Knox more than ten thousand ships. He would come into her castle at a time when she was trying and condemning as heretics people all over Scotland and burning them at the stake. He would come right in and reprove her to her face. She was a woman of keen wit and often endeavored to argue with him. But to argue with John Knox was a task not to be lightly undertaken even by the Queen of Scotland with all of her courtiers surrounding her. They often whispered, "He is not afraid!" The Queen was not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke. In Knox's day all of Europe was sunk in the mire of darkness, ignorance, and corruption. Historians tell us that Scotland was the most backward nation in Europe at that time; its morals were the most degenerate; its church was the most corrupt; the political arena was one of gloomy despair. It was into this situation that John Knox was born. Carlyle tells us that no man ever succeeded in more *totally transforming the life of an entire nation* than John Knox. The head was wounded as it were unto death. Yet today, who can deny that the deadly wound has healed!

Jesse Penn-Lewis has recorded the history of the great revival that swept through the country of Wales in 1902-1905. In an hour of great apostasy and degeneracy many hundreds of people began to fervently pray for God to move in that land. After many months the windows of heaven were opened and the Holy Spirit swept as an overflowing stream over a huge gathering of five thousand men and women. The presence of the Spirit was like the "wind" moving upon the people. Young people flocked to the services. Soon the churches were crowded, the valleys and the mountains ringing with the high praises of God. Lives were changed and many were the evidences of God's power working in repentance, restitution, and transformation. Long-standing debts were paid. Stolen goods were returned. Sinners and degenerate people in all stratas of life came to Christ, and quickly the world knew the results. Magistrates were presented with white gloves in many places because there were "no cases," so many people had been saved that the crime rate had dropped to zero! Rowdiness was changed to soberness. Cursing and swearing ceased to be heard. Dens of iniquity had to close their doors for lack of patrons. Stores were emptied of their stocks of Bibles. Far and wide the influence spread, affecting all classes. Political meetings had to be postponed, and members of Parliament were out taking part in revival meetings! The mighty tidal wave swept hither and thither — men knew not how or why. The Spirit of God found His own channels; and many districts had extraordinary manifestations of God's power. For a while it appeared that the head of the beast was so sovereignly and powerfully wounded unto death, that it would never live again. Yet within only a few years the deadly wound began to be healed. And now, in our day, more than a century later, you can barely even see the scar where the sword struck the head!

There is no scriptural truth stated in simpler or more convincing language than that God, omnipotent and omniscient, has, from the beginning, both formed and marked out the path of destiny for every nation of men upon the face of the whole earth. Unceasingly and untiringly God has been working out His purpose, shaping all things through successive generations and ages. In the age after the Flood, beginning with Abraham, men were divided into two special groups — men in general, plus a Chosen Family. Later we recognize these two groups as Israelites and Gentiles. The Chosen Family or Israelites were selected to bear witness to a wicked and idolatrous world of the truth of the One, True and Living God. They always remembered that they were chosen, but quickly forgot what they were chosen for. Instead of bearing witness to the heathen, they only hated them! And, worse yet, copied them and became corrupted by their wicked practices and idolatrous religions.

Beginning with Pentecost another group has appeared, a group called the church, the body of Christ. Its very name denotes that it is a "called out" group, composed of both Israelites and Gentiles, chosen especially to proclaim, not only the power and wisdom and righteousness of God, but particularly His GRACE. They are to proclaim among the nations God's solution of the problems of sin, sorrow, and death, the solution God wrought out in Christ.

The apostle James made a statement to the council at Jerusalem in which He clearly defines the outline of God's purpose for the church in this present age, and in the age and the ages which are to follow.

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down...and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the nations upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-18). Dispensationally, this is one of the most important passages in the Bible! It gives God’s great purpose for *this age* and the *next age*. James says that God’s purpose during this present age has been to visit the nations *to take out of them* a people for His name. I cannot emphasize too strongly that it is to the selection and training of that *called and chosen group* that the activities of God are now devoted. God is not dealing with the nations themselves at this time, except as it relates to the calling of a people out of the nations unto Himself and His purpose. During this present age God is dealing with this called out company.

It may come as a shock to some, but it is absolutely true that God’s plan for this present age has *never been* the conversion of the world! It has *never been* to “sweep nations into the kingdom of God” as some of the missionary enthusiasts love to say. World-wide salvation was never in God’s mind or purpose for this dispensation, and God has not been “trying” to save the world, as some ignorant souls would have us believe. If He would have been trying to do so He *would have done so*, for He is GOD! Wherever the gospel has gone it has always saved *some*, but never *all*. God’s purpose, then, during this church age, is to “call out” a people for His name. Out from among the billions of earth God is choosing an ELECT COMPANY to bear His name, to be formed into His nature, to reveal His glory. God has been forming His church, the body of Christ, the *called out ones*. That is precisely the *meaning* of the word *church* — “the called out.” Precisely this has been in progress since Pentecost! That should be plain for anyone to see.

It is here, in the true church, that Jesus Christ *first establishes His government* to rule and reign on the throne of men’s lives. God’s purpose in His church is not merely to save men from sin and hell and carry them away to some far-off heaven somewhere. God’s plan is to first establish His dominion in the hearts of His Elect, imbuing them with the glorious *mind of Christ* until they *become* His nature and will in the earth. Sadly, most Christians never come to this! They are too busy playing church, waiting for their mansions over the hilltop, or blundering around in the carnal programs, foolishness, and shame of a wretched, fleshly, Babylonian religious system. But just as the dispensation of the law, at its consummation, brought forth the final harvest of that which it typified and pointed to — Jesus Christ, the Son of God — so this present church age must, in the latter days, at its consummation, bring forth the final harvest of that unto which it pointed — the many-membered BODY OF THE CHRIST, the CORPORATE SON, many sons brought to glory, matured, overcoming, conformed unto the exact likeness of its glorious Head, the firstborn Son of God, filled with all the fullness of Himself!

God never intended that either Christ or His body should rule over all nations during the church age. His reign is confined entirely to that little company of footstep followers who have heard His voice, received His call, and who *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*. These are the blessed sons of God who through dealings, trials, testings, and transformation become the very embodiment of His divine government! This may seem to be an extremely slow method and a very small and insignificant kingdom for such a great and eternal King, but I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this lowly beginning for a government whose authority is destined to “subdue ALL THINGS.” God grant us vision to see that not only is He establishing His divine government in the hearts and lives of an Elect company of believers, but through His faithful dealings with them He is actually FORMING HIS GOVERNMENT — a ruling body of sons!

Ah, yes, God is calling out a people to *bear His name!* But WHY? WHEN? WHERE? To bear His name merely to a small handful of people through their short life-time in the flesh during this age? NO WAY! Hear what the apostle James says! “AFTER THIS (after the Lord has completed His work of calling out and forming His special governmental people) I will return and build again the tabernacle of David...THAT THE RESIDUE OF MEN MIGHT SEEK AFTER THE LORD, AND A-L-L THE NATIONS...saith the Lord!” The “residue” of men specifies “all the rest” of men, all who were not included in the “called out” or firstfruit company. Our wise and gracious heavenly Father is even now forming His government of faithful and obedient sons whom He shall raise up as Kings and Priests in due time to bring His kingdom to pass in all realms. God, through 2,000 long years, has slowly, surely, and wisely been choosing this company, preparing them through the fiery furnaces of trials and afflictions, purgings and processings, to reign with Him in righteousness and power. “If we *suffer*, we shall also *reign*”

with Him” (II Tim. 2:12). “...Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and nation; and hast made us unto our God *kings and priests: AND WE SHALL REIGN OVER THE EARTH!*” (Rev. 5:9-10). “To him that overcometh...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” (Rev. 2:26-27).

Throughout the church age salvation has been unto “as many as are ordained unto eternal life” (Acts 13:48). But in the ages to come there shall be a displaying of God’s matchless grace through His beloved sons so that “the *residue* of men shall seek after the Lord, and all the nations over whom my name is called.” If this is not true then “reigning with Christ” is absolutely meaningless, purposeless, and ridiculous. But, blessed be God! the word is sure: “...the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and *consume* (take into itself) **ALL THESE KINGDOMS,** and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). Who can deny that this great truth explains precisely why the sword of the Spirit, which is the living word of God through His people, has during the church age wounded merely *one head* of the bestial system of man, and even that head has been healed again and again! God has not been in the business of *slaying* the beast, merely *wounding him!*

Have we not seen this same principle fulfilled in our own experience? In its individual, personal application the one head wounded reveals the fact that when we get victory in one area of our life, the beastly nature appears in another realm and doesn’t even appear to be wounded! Sometimes it seems to those in the process of overcoming that some lust or work of the flesh has been put to death and some head of the carnal authority in our life been brought down, but when in a moment of blessing it seems dead, like a cancer in remission, it returns with increased fury and intensified viciousness. Time and again we get a partial victory over the flesh or the world, but then once more we falter and fail, seems our victory is gone and the seven heads of the beast’s authority is still ruling over us. The beast *seems impossible* to overcome! One of the heads wounded as unto death signifies a measure of loss of the beast’s control over us because of the work of the Spirit in us. Yet, a little later the flesh nature and the pull of the world is just as alive and powerful as ever! Like Woody Woodpecker in the cartoon, flattened in the road, then he shakes himself, gets up, bounces back, and is as alive and well as ever!

Thank God! that is not the end of the matter. There always comes a time when God will deal with this beast. It is HIS work! John later beheld the final end of the bestial system and the bestial nature within us. “*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet...these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*” (Rev. 19:20). All the inclinations, desires, and works of the flesh and the carnal mind continue to be renewed until the **WHOLE BEAST IS CAST ALIVE INTO THE PURIFYING FIRE OF GOD!** It is there that the whole nature is cleansed, purified, and purged — completely and forever! Using the sword isn’t sufficient — claiming the word, standing on the promises, pleading the blood — none of this will avail beyond a partial victory. Who can deny it! “And the beast was *taken...cast into...*” War must be made on the beast with a sword sharper than any two-edged sword. God Himself is the one who comes on the scene and “takes” the beast and casts him into fire, divine fire, that will burn up every inherent altar of Baal, and lick up the very dust around. Make no mistake! **OUR GOD** is a consuming fire! The fire of God will burn until it has consumed all of Adam’s nature and self has died in the unquenchable flame! Fear not the burnings, my beloved, but yield unto them; for only the fire can purify God’s man!

THOSE WHO WORSHIP THE BEAST

“And they *worshipped the dragon* which gave power unto the beast: and they *worshipped the beast,* saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And all that dwell upon the earth shall *worship him*” (Rev. 13:4,8).

The question of worship is one which runs very deeply through the book of Revelation. Heaven and earth stand opposed to each other. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders worship God and the Lamb. Those who dwell on the earth worship the dragon and the beast. John worships an angel, and is reprov'd. He does it twice. The true worship is first set before us, then the false worship in its various forms. Heaven and earth are set in sharp contrast. Those who dwell in the heavenlies worship God and the Lamb. Those who dwell in the earthlies worship the dragon and the wild beast. Those in the heavenlies *joy* over the Lamb taking the book and opening the seals. Those who dwell in the earthlies *wonder* and *fear* and

therefore *pay homage* to the beast, giving honor unto the beast *by saying*, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” These words are similar to the Old Testament words of Israel and the prophets who said, “Who is like the Lord?” (Ex. 15:11; Mic. 7:18). Their exclamation indicates their belief that the beast is *invincible*. Can we not see by this that these not only worship the beast, they make him their *god!*

Ray Prinzing wrote, “The very subtleness of this bestial system is that it deceives men into thinking they will have life only if they yield to its spirit and do things its way. If you want to get ahead in this world, you must play the game, you must conform. And so they ***worship the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him.***’ Put in present day language, ‘who can fight city hall?’ Day by day allegiance is paid ‘to the system.’ Yet if we are motivated by this SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, we will surely bring forth after its kind.”

THE BLASPHEMIES OF THE BEAST

“And there was given unto him *a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies...and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*” (Rev. 13:5-6).

The beast that ascends out of the sea has seven heads, hence seven mouths, and yet it is said, ***“a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies was given it.”*** This indicates that the ability to mouth great things and blasphemies would be allowed to it and that all seven heads would combine to speak these things, doing so as with one mouth. Whether the mouth of science, or the mouth of government, or the mouth of religion, or any other, one and all speak the same kinds of great, boastful things and blasphemies. He actually opens his mouth to blaspheme the name of God, and of his tabernacle, namely, those who dwell in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. To blaspheme the name of God is to act contrary to His nature, to deny His sovereignty, His power, and all His virtues. Ah, yes, this world system of man does have a mouth! And it does speak great things! “A mouth speaking great things” means eloquence and authority. What is this voice of the beast? A simple example would be the media. Note also the great swelling words that continually pour forth from the institutions of education, science, politics, government, the courts, medicine, and religion. Each of these has an agenda, a sphere of influence, and they demand to be *heard, embraced, and obeyed!* All the way down to some of the smaller church systems, the voice proclaims that you must be “under their authority,” “under their covering,” and you must march to the beat of their drums. But it is the dragon that gives this wild animal his great voice and his authority!

The blasphemies are toward God, His name (nature, character), and His tabernacle (His body, His temple, the people in whom He dwells). It is evident that the agenda of this beast is in opposition to the nature of God, the will of God, the ways of God, the word of God, the government of God, and the people of God. It is the spirit of the world, the spirit of the times which speaks out of the mouth of the beast. His mouth becomes the organ through which the spirit of the times, the standards and agenda of the world reveals itself, makes itself be heard. And behold, he speaks great things and blasphemes the holy things of the Lord!

Indeed, this widely opened, loud speaking, blasphemous mouth of the beast can be seen and heard everywhere! As we look into our daily newspapers, watch the television programs, listen to the radio, read the worldly writings and books on art, science, industry, legislation, news, morality, sex education, and religion, we have in them that organ, that mouth out of which the spirit of the world, the spirit of the times speaks to us, speaking great things. What powerful speeches, proclamations, and teachings are heard, what mighty, dignified human bragging and boasting goes on, telling what science has determined to be true, what government will do, what laws will control the conduct of the citizens, what aberrant behavior must be tolerated and condoned, what *norms* of society reflect the moral values which should be acceptable, how to *get ahead* in this world, how to invest to gain wealth, swaggering, as though the material, the temporal were the greatest thing of importance, but at the same time the most horrible blasphemy, scorn, and ridicule toward the word of God, the ways of God, and the people of God! Wherever the government speaks, God must be silent. Whatever the state, social services, planned parenthood, the school board, or the courts allow is right and is no longer considered as unrighteousness. When science has spoken and given its decision,

God's truth no longer counts; scholarship and science has disproved it! Wherever the spirit of commerce manifests itself, there everything is grand, there everything must bow and be subservient, there everything is sacrificed. Think of the exactness with which the courts of justice, the federal banks, and the executive branch of government negotiate in questions pertaining to matters of business, finance, and the economy, as though these were the most important and sacred things, while on the other hand, they banish God and His word from government, the courts, and the classroom, and sanction all kinds of moral abomination. Yes, they blaspheme with mighty phrases! And opposite this mouth of blasphemy the holy apostles and prophets and the humble followers of the Lamb are considered worthless. In our day even the preachers and religious leaders have generally fallen victim to the beast and the spirit of the times!

THE TIME OF HIS REIGN

“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and *power was given unto him to continue forty and two months*” (Rev. 13:5).

Forty-two months. What does this cryptic term mean? It means simply that his allotted time is *limited* and his time is *short*. This is the language of symbols and has nothing to do with literal months and nothing to do with the number forty-two. Forty-two months is three and a half years — one half of *seven*. Seven is the number of fullness and completion. Forty-two months speaks of that which will not and never can come to the fullness of itself, it can continue for a season but not forever, it cannot ultimately triumph, for it is cut off — absolute *imperfection*. And contrary to much so-called fundamentalist and dispensational teaching it has no relationship whatever with either the first half or the second half of Daniel's seventieth week. I dare not digress from our present subject to present the evidence for what I now say, but both scripture and history confirm the truth that Daniel's seventieth week ended three and a half years after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus — long before John received his visions on Patmos. There can be no doubt about that!

The problem is that so few of the Lord's people truly know the scriptures. Consequently, the thing we base our eschatological views on, our “end-time thinking,” is a seven year tribulation period which we *suppose* to be somewhere out in the future. So people ask us, “Are you post-trib, mid-trib, or pre-trib?” What they mean is, “Is Jesus coming back before the tribulation, during the tribulation, or after the tribulation?” And all of this they ask with great earnestness and with a straight face — as if any of those issues are even presented in the book of Revelation! Lynn Hiles once said, “What we need to do is take the tribulation away from you, then you won't have a ‘post’ to hang on!” We have all these ideas, notions, concepts, suppositions, and theories borrowed right out of the old-order religious systems, which we take for granted still should have some validity. And when we come to the Revelation usually the big fight is over the “seven year tribulation” and how everything else fits with it!

E. Weeks wrote an editorial some years ago that astutely identifies one of the great errors made by many Bible students. The article was entitled EISEGESIS OR EXEGESIS and he said, in part, “The above two Greek words, in the title of this article, describe the profound effect they have had on others in both a proper and improper understanding of scripture. One has a bad connotation and the other a good one. *Eisegesis* is the process of *reading into God's word something that is not there. It is inserting a thought that the writer never intended to convey.* Most times this happens when the context surrounding the passage of scripture is ignored or when one approaches a passage of the Bible with their own bias and tries to change the meaning of God's words to fit their preconceived ideas.

“*Exegesis*, on the other hand, means drawing from the passage of scripture what the words were intended to convey. It considers the context and seeks to understand the true meaning without bias, personal agenda, or preconceived ideas. Thus, it allows God's word to speak for itself as the Holy Spirit supplies enlightenment as to a proper understanding of what is written. *Eisegesis* is easy to fall into, especially when one has not approached God's word with an open mind. It is quite fearful for some to think about reconsidering what they have believed to be truth for so long with the thought that it might be wrong. Instead, they find comfort in their long-held beliefs and defend them to the end. To venture into the Bible without any bias and consider other possible views of God's word is something they are not willing to do.

They prefer to rest in their comfortable creedal bed, finding it easier to accept another person's teachings without carefully checking out the Biblical context and the intent of the author" — end quote.

Let us prayerfully consider *all* the references in the book of Revelation where the period of forty-two months is mentioned. What many people do is select certain of these and then arbitrarily attribute them to either the first half or the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, making the assertion that that is what is under consideration. Yet there is no reference at all in the Revelation to Daniel's seventieth week! The book is not even written about the fleshly Israel — it is sent to the *church* to reveal God's outworking through His *spiritual people!* Surely, to attribute the book to events surrounding and involving the natural Israel is a classic example of *Eisegesis!* It defies the context of the book as sent to, and written about, the *saints*, those who bear the *testimony of Jesus Christ*. This "time period" is referred to in three different ways. In some passages it is called "forty-two months." In other passages it is termed "a thousand two hundred and threescore (1260) days." In yet others it is spoken of as "a time, and times, and half a time." In Greek, however, all of these refer to the same duration of time — a period of three and a half years.

*"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot **forty and two months**"* (Rev. 11:2).

*"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty and two months**"* (Rev. 13:5).

*And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time**, from the face of the serpent"* (Rev. 12:14).

*"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred and threescore days**, clothed in sackcloth"* (Rev. 11:3).

*"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand three hundred and threescore days**"* (Rev. 12:6).

There you have every reference in the whole book of revelation to the period of three and a half years! If these passages denote a literal time period of three and a half years, how are we to understand them? How could we ever conclude that they have anything at all to do with a "seven year tribulation"? No matter how you add them up you can't tell whether these five run consecutively, giving you five different periods of three and a half years, whether everything mentioned in each setting takes place concurrently, at the same time, giving you only one period of three and a half years, or whether you must add two groupings together to make a period of seven years; and if so, which events belong to the first half of the seven years and which events pertain to the second half of the seven years! You see, my beloved, all such teachings are *pure speculation* with no foundation at all in reality! How much more blessed is the understanding that three and a half is simply *one half of seven* — signifying the *broken seven* — absolute *imperfection* and *limitation*. Nothing of the broken seven can ever endure beyond its allotted time. It is destined to pass. It can never be the perfect, eternal order. The bestial system of man and the beastly nature of man are *doomed!* They shall be destroyed, they shall pass away. That is the message. And that is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Many Bible students have tried to determine the "time" of the various events in the book of Revelation, especially when it relates to the two beasts in chapter thirteen. I doubt that the truth about this could be better stated than it has been by C. E. Colton when he wrote: "Let us try to forget the time element. We creatures of this earth are plagued with the tendency to try to fit everything into an exacting time schedule. Especially is this true when we approach the study of the book of Revelation. We insist that everything in it must be timed. We live in a time-conscious age. We live by the second hand on the watch, and the question which looms large in the discussion of any subject is 'When?' This proclivity, however, is not exactly new to our generation. Men have always been interested to some degree in the time element. When Jesus talked about His coming kingdom His disciples asked, 'When shall these things be?' (Mat. 24:3). And when the resurrected Christ stood before His disciples to charge them with the responsibility of

witnessing and to assure them of the infilling of His Holy Spirit, they responded by asking, ‘Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6). Thus has it been through the centuries. We are often far more concerned about when an event is to take place than we are with the true significance of that event!

“Actually we cannot completely ignore the time element, for we live in a time age; however, we do stand in danger of missing the primary significance of principles and events by giving too much attention to the time element. This is the mistake that many have made in their interpretation of the Apocalypse. The complete and glorious program of redemption is unfolded before our eyes in this book. It is unfolded in seven dramatic scenes or episodes. It is the drama of redemption. Each episode magnifies a certain aspect of redemption. These are not events which follow one another in chronological order; they are manifestations of certain features or factors in the redemptive program of our Lord. They are given to us in logical order, but not necessarily in chronological order. From the standpoint of time there is much overlapping.

“While we cannot completely ignore the time element, it should at least be kept in the background. We know that the pictures of consummation and eternal destiny are still future from the standpoint of time; yet we must remember that the Lord is not giving to us in this Apocalypse a program which can be conformed to any kind of rigid time schedule. After all, God does not count time as we count time! More and more as I study this Apocalypse, I am convinced that God is seeking to reveal to us His triumphant redemptive program from the standpoint of the great factors involved in it — facts which make possible and lead to its ultimate and glorious consummation. Let us not miss the main issue by becoming involved in a maze of time-tables or time speculations. Let us push the time element into the background and open our hearts to these great underlying principles of our redemption in Christ” — end quote.

If you want to understand the book of Revelation you must understand its symbols and numerology by comparison. It is a *revelation*, an *unveiling!* You find the old and the new — things that pass away, and new things that appear; from the old man to the new man, from the old mind to the new mind, from an old mark to a new mark, from the old name to the new name, from the old nature to the new nature, from the old song to the new song, from the old heavens to the new heavens, from the old earth to the new earth, and from the old Jerusalem to the new Jerusalem. All the negative events of the book, tribulations, judgments, etc., reveal the great judgmental processes and dealings by which the Lord destroys and brings an end to all the *old* within us and in our world; all the positive events, songs, celebrations, glory, etc., reveal the ushering in the *new!* It is indeed wonderful!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY