

12. Precursors (2Q 2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols)

Biblical material: Dan. 2:31–45; Dan. 3:1–12, 17, 18; Rev. 13:11–17; Rom. 1:18–25; Acts 12:1–17; Matt. 12:9–14; 2 Timothy 1:7.

Quotes

- The beast rising out of the sea is a duplicate of the dragon, sharing his nature. His origin and shape declare him to be a further manifestation of the principle of evil which has been active against God and man through the ages. *G.R. Beasley-Murray*
- The symbolism of emperor worship in Asia Minor forms only the background for the vision of the second beast, whose power and influence will go far beyond anything known in the ancient world. The experience of emperor worship provided only echoes of the terrible reality which will be fulfilled in the last days. *George E. Ladd*
- Some commentators point out that the wounded and resurrected beast may be presented as a parody of Christ's death and resurrection. Previously, John had seen the Lamb "looking as if it had been slain," a reference to Jesus' crucifixion (5:6). Now, the beast appears to be slain as well, but miraculously recovers. *Paul Kroll*
- Too many temples where we could worship the beast. *Jethro Tull*
- Wild, dark times are rumbling toward us, and the prophet who wishes to write a new apocalypse will have to invent entirely new beasts, and beasts so terrible that the ancient animal symbols of St. John will seem like cooing doves and cupids in comparison. *Heinrich Heine*

Questions

Why is who or what you worship so important? What is the link between what this study calls "precursors" and what happens later? How does this illustrate issues in the great controversy? How does Paul's description in Romans 1 relate to our time? What should be our reaction? Is the "seal of God" just about keeping the seventh-day Sabbath?

Bible summary

In Daniel 2:31–45 Daniel gives the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel 3:1–12, 17, 18 describe Nebuchadnezzar setting up a huge golden statue that had to be worshiped, and the refusal of the three Hebrew young men to do so. Revelation 13:11–17 describes the beasts from the sea, and how the people of the world worshiped the dragon, and the beasts, and the image of the beast. Romans 1:18–25 speaks of those who refused to worship God and instead worshiped creatures. Acts 12:1–17 is the story of Peter's miraculous release from prison. In Matthew 12:9–14 Jesus asks if it's right to do good on the Sabbath and then heals the man with the crippled hand. In response the Pharisees go out and plot to kill Jesus. "God didn't give us a spirit that makes us fearful, but a spirit of power and love and good sense." 2 Timothy 1:7.

Comment

The prophetic picture-language of Daniel and Revelation is a way of understanding our situation and God's plans for the future, but all-too-often can be a breeding ground for all manner of oddities.

The essential perspective to bear in mind is that, like the rest of Scripture, it is all about God and his relationship to us and the universe. It is not about codes or numbers or hidden knowledge. It is a record of God's dealings with humanity and how he intends to restore the harmony lost by rebellion and how he will heal the damage done. Sometimes these ideas are lost in the eagerness to identify each prophetic beast and aspect, so we do well not to be over-concerned about every detail.

The beasts of Revelation 13 speak about worship and admiration. "The whole world was filled with wonder at the beast, and they worshiped the dragon because he had given his authority to the

beast; and they worshiped the beast, asking “Who is like the beast? Who could defeat him?” Revelation 13:3, 4. The beast is the one who curses God! How incredible that people should be so amazed by power and might that they would even worship a beast who curses God! Yet this is what happens when we believe in a God portrayed by Satan. The true God is maligned and misrepresented, and a false “god” set up in his place.

Worship of the true God in heaven is presented in Rev. 14:3, 6–12; 19:1–5. Because of his right actions, we can always have total confidence in God. That’s where worship and praise come from—not because God demands it, or we feel we ought to worship. True worship comes from the heart of those who truly love and admire.

The issue at the End as described in Revelation is the same issue it has been all along—who do you worship? What kind of God do you believe in? Who is your God?

Note particularly Revelation 13 and 14. We see two totally different kinds of worship here. Those who worship the beast and the dragon are very impressed with power and might. But we must see that it is not power that we worship, but the way God uses it in love, always looking for the benefit of others. Revelation 14:6-12 is a message of warning and preparation. However, how do we prepare people for such a strident part of scripture without them shaking their heads in horror?

While we wish to identify with the perspective, how can we make sure that people do not misunderstand what we are saying? How is the third angel’s message the message of righteousness by faith—“in verity”? We need to do much explaining!

With all the wine of the wrath of God, the torment with fire and brimstone, the smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever, we must be very careful not to leave the wrong impression in people’s minds. It’s very easy to convey a wrong picture of a torturing, terrifying *evil* kind of God! All Scripture must be allowed to speak to make up the complete picture of what God is like. The best and clearest illustration was a demonstration by Jesus who came to show us the Father: (See John 12:44, 45; John 14:6-10). “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father,” says Jesus. The clearest demonstration of what God is like is Jesus life, and his death and resurrection.

Ellen White Comments

The Lord was working in the Babylonian kingdom, communicating light to the four Hebrew captives, that He might represent His work before the people. He would reveal that He had power over the kingdoms of the world, to set up kings and to throw down kings. The King over all kings was communicating great truth to the king of Babylon, awakening in his mind a sense of his responsibility to God. He saw the contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the most learned men in his kingdom. {FE 411}

As Daniel clung to God with unwavering trust, the spirit of prophetic power came upon him. While receiving instruction from man in the duties of court life, he was being taught by God to read the mysteries of the future and to record for coming generations, through figures and symbols, events covering the history of this world till the close of time. {CSA 55}

[Revelation 14:9, 10]. A correct interpretation of the symbols employed is necessary to an understanding of this message. What is represented by the beast, the image, the mark? {GC 438}

The understanding of the people of God has been blinded; for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed with the attributes of Satan, and men and women who have been seeking for truth, have so long regarded God in a false light that it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures His glory from their view. {RH July 23 1889}

The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion. is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes millions, of skeptics and infidels. {GC536}