

(continuing summary notes on chapters 12-13)

7. The power and career of the first beast (13:1) is a striking study. He apparently suffers a mortal blow and recovers in a resurrection experience (13:3). Apparently it is this that persuades much of the world to fall before him. The beast is cruel and vulgar but his personal triumph in this area has silenced his enemies and allowed himself to take the position of God to those about him. He is triumphant over all not written in the Lamb's book. We are given the word in 13:9 and following that he will meet the same sort of fate he gives others. The erection of an image of him is the last straw in the blasphemous arrangement and his control of men is completed by the giving of his sign...which all must receive to buy or sell, etc. It is notable that although he has success against all those on earth who oppose him, the Lord is the real victor as we learn in the two praise sections of 12:10-12 and 13:9-10.
8. A key factor is the way in which people worship power...it is true that there is power in the Gospel and power marks the works and control of God. But men often desire power simply to rule over others. This is what the dragon and the beast seem to promise and persons are willing to compromise everything available to have it. We need to be careful of the allurements of power in particular. There are other forces that are not in our best interest also...but power and authority as given by God are good but as sought by men...they become corrupting influences.

NOTES ON IMAGERY, SPEECH FIGURES, SYMBOLS, ETC. IN REVELATION 12-13

*These chapters have plenty of figurative language--some of the symbols we have seen before...some are new. The identifications of some are difficult and you will remember that the exact identification of a figure is not always possible.*

- 12:1...a woman, probably Israel. The woman image is used to symbolize religious entities, sometimes nations, and occasionally a city. The sun may suggest God's choosing of Israel as the moon under her feet shows her superior place among the nations. The twelve stars are likely the twelve sons of Jacob.
- 12:2...she being with child, pained to be delivered. Some have seen this as a reference to the virgin Mary expecting the Messiah but the individual reference hardly fits the rest of the context. I think the symbolism is that of Israel expecting the Messiah. The general terms however are also used of Israel expecting the remnant (Isaiah 26) and this is sometimes suggested. The obvious symbolism (to me) is the nation awaiting the coming of the Messiah and the deliverance He would bring.
- 12:3...a red dragon...no one knows for sure what a dragon was (or is!) but it is some powerful creature perhaps personalized in the leviathan of the book of Job. It is never a "friendly" critter and verse 9 makes us understand that it symbolizes the Devil. The seven heads indicate the completion of his authority and the ten horns the force of his power. (Head is often a symbol for kingship-authority, horn is that for power or force).

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