

Article of the Month
June, 2018

Monsters!

PART 2

In the May Article of the Month, we looked at “Leviathan” and “Behemoth” as Old Testament examples of “monsters” representing Satan’s activity via civil government and religious powers respectively. Reviewing that article may be helpful before reading this article.

We will look now at “Beast” and “Dragon” as New Testament “monsters” — although they both occur also in the Old Testament. It is important at the outset to state that our look at the symbols of Leviathan, Behemoth, Dragon, and Beast are quite superficial. These are merely “big picture” overviews of the meanings and usages of these symbolic terms. A true study of this subject will inevitably be lengthy and complex. But the purpose of our May and June Articles of the Month is to give a simple introduction to the concepts of the use of these symbols in prophetic passages.

DRAGON

It will be easiest to begin by looking at “dragon” as a symbolic creature. We had a brief introduction to the dragon in the previous article since Leviathan was equated with Dragon in Isaiah 27:1. The word “dragon” appears 13 times in the New Testament — all in the book of Revelation. And, of all the Revelation occurrences, 11 of them are in Chapters 12 and 13. As previously stated, we believe “dragon” to represent a purely civil power.

The Lord, in making the details of prophecy, needed to distinguish between civil and religious forces. Both civil and religious forces are used as tools by the Adversary; and the saints need to be aware of and beware of both of these powers which are under Satanic control for the deception and persecution of Jesus’ true disciples and for the deception and manipulation of the human race.

In the history of true and apostate Christianity, civil and ecclesiastical forces unite to some degree — or, at the very least, they cooperate. In the days of the early Church, the incipient Christian religion was persecuted by the civil power of Rome (the Dragon). Eventually, however, Rome found it expedient to incorporate the new Christian religion as an official part of the state. Thus a mixture of church and state developed. To make a

Return to the “Article-of-the-Month” Index

long story short, the civil power of Rome (represented by a dragon) incorporated the apostate religious powers of the new Christianity. Nominal “Christianity” became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Lord needed in prophecy to show this evolution of a civil state (Rome) into a church-state conglomeration — eventually “The Holy Roman Empire.” The Lord chose to represent this conglomeration as a “beast.” This is why the progression of prophecy from Revelation 12 into Revelation 13 shows a dragon evolving into a beast — its two parts (civil and religious) sometimes in agreement with each other, sometimes at odds, but always in a forced cooperation status.

In Revelation 12, the pagan civil Roman government is shown to be the dragon which absorbs (or devours) nominal Christianity (the “man child”) to make it the official religion of the empire. This “man child” eventually dominated the arrangement. This was the beginning of what came to be known as “The Roman Catholic (= universal) Church.” But in order to show how it was all to develop, the Lord had to be able to distinguish in symbol between the civil and religious elements. He used the “dragon” to represent the civil or political part of the combination. From Chapter 12 through Chapter 20, the symbolism never changes. Dragon = civil power. We saw that this same exercise of power was represented by Leviathan in the Book of Job, and Isaiah equated Leviathan with the dragon. The resulting *combination* of church and state is represented as a

BEAST.

Beast is a considerably more complex symbolism. “Beast(s)” is the symbol which dominates Chapter 13 of Revelation. Chapter 13 is there to let us know the effects on Christianity (true and false) once civil and religious powers (church and state) became co-entrenched in power. To explain all the ramifications of this symbol would require quite an extensive article. But we will here attempt to simplify the explanation as much as we can.

First of all, “beast” is sometimes translated from varying Greek words. For instance, the King James Version’s “four beasts” of Revelation 4 has NO CONNECTION to the majority of beasts in the rest of the book. The Revelation four “beasts” would better be translated “living ones.”

Beasts come in varying descriptions and do not always refer to the same entities. For instance, Daniel sees a succession of four beasts. (See Daniel 7.) He describes each one differently. Subsequently, an angel interprets the four as being four separate empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and a fourth empire which would be Rome and “Holy Rome.” Therefore, when dealing with “beasts,” we have to be very specific as to WHICH beast is meant. Usually, most students of prophecy have a fascination with the two “beasts” of Revelation 13 — especially the larger one with seven heads and ten horns which makes a spectacular re-appearance in the Chapter 17 narrative in order to show us how all of its elements will meet their final demise.

Return to the “Article-of-the-Month” Index

There is a “basic” ingredient to all beasts. Solomon says (in Ecclesiastes 3:18), “I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.” Solomon may well have just been telling us that our fallen human natures tend to make us more like the animal beasts than like civilized human beings. But there is a clue in Solomon’s words which helps us understand “beasts” as symbols in prophecy.

All civilizations are quite complex. They have LEADERS; they have SUPPORTERS; and they have those who are the GOVERNED — the people themselves. It is this last group — the governed — which are the largest component of any civilization — the largest part of any “beast.” This brings us back to Solomon’s helpful words. Not taking Solomon on his surface meaning, but taking him as a DEFINER of symbols, we see that the PEOPLE in any civilization are really the beast. They constitute the BODY of the beast — the largest part of the animal.

The Apostle John, the writer of Revelation, uses this fact as he brings his “beasts” to our prophetic attention. John virtually *dissects* his beasts INTO PARTS. While he never specifically mentions the BODY of the beasts he introduces, he does specifically mention other PARTS of the animals. He mentions its HEADS and its HORNS and even a RIDER! — but he leaves it TO US to ask, “Well; what about the BODY of the beasts?” Solomon, and good reasoning, help us to define the BODY of each beast. The BODY of the beast, and, therefore, its most major component, is THE PEOPLE themselves.

Thus, without directly interpreting the specific Revelation prophecies, we find that the “beast” is a corporation of parts. The HEADS (the part of an animal that THINKS) represent the ruling philosophies of a large empire. The HORNS (the part of the animal that represents its ENFORCING STRENGTH) represent the political powers (the smaller political units or nations in the empire) which SUPPORT the empire with their armies, taxes, etc. The BODY of the beast represents the PEOPLE who are ruled. They can from time to time shake themselves free from the rule of their governments. We usually call this a “revolution.”

But, in short, a “beast” is a multifaceted political-social entity of great size and power — an EMPIRE. It has basic ruling policies or philosophies (“heads”). It also has its smaller supporting political units — (states or principalities or countries) in harmony with and in support of the larger empire. These we call “horns.” In every case, the “beast” has a “BODY” of subjects — the PEOPLE over which it has control. This “body” of people can remain quietly (if not contentedly) in submission; or they can rise up against their rulers in revolution or anarchy. Sometimes, as in Revelation 17, the Lord adds to the symbol by showing a RIDER on the beast. In Revelation 17, this is done in order to show a religious power which dominates the whole empire arrangement. The Lord shows this “rider” in order to be able easily to separate the religious element to show how it will be destroyed by the beast that it has ridden (dominated).

A TWO-MONTH SUMMARY

In the articles of May and June we have looked briefly at the TWO primary tools of the Adversary for the domination and deception of the world and of Jesus' true disciples. The two primary tools are civil and religious powers — sometimes COMBINED into a church-state union.

Leviathan and Dragon represent the civil power of the Adversary. Behemoth represents the purely religious deceptive authority. This religious deceiver is shown elsewhere in Scripture as "the little horn" in the book of Daniel, the harlot-rider in Revelation 17, and as the "Anti-Christ" or "Man of Sin" mentioned by the Apostles Paul and John.

The times when civil and religious powers of the Adversary work together to form great empires are shown by "beasts" which have heads and horns enforcing the combined authority. Occasionally, we find the people (the "body" of the beast) shaking off their head and/or horn, resulting in periods of revolutionary changes. Examples of this are found in Revelation 11:7 and 17:13 and 15-17.

Thus we have seen the "monsters" of Scriptural prophecy — fictitious animals designed for the specific purpose of prophetic clarity for those who "dig" deeply. In all cases, God is to be victorious over these evil entities. Then will be fulfilled the words of Isaiah 14:7:

"The whole earth is at rest and is quiet.
They break forth into singing!"
