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Prophecy: Right- or Wrong-Headed? – Part I

B y W i l f r e d H a h n

We hope readers will not think that we are fixated with the “beast” of Revelation 17. For those not familiar with this chapter, it presents and explains the image of the harlot, clothed in scarlet, which sits upon a blasphemous beast with 7 heads and 10 horns. In a number of articles in this space over the past year, this image has been referenced.



Yet once again we feel urged to comment on the “7 heads” (which are 7 kings, Revelation 17:10) and “10 horns” (which are also 10 kings, Revelation 17:12). Why? Not only is this a relevant topic for our time, it also seems to be one that attracts much interest ... not to mention many replies and speculations. It has proven to be a contentious subject, striking both discord and agreement among readers. Yet, what concerned us most was the wild and woolly range of speculations that we encountered (many of these from readers).

For example, America is proposed as being either the beast of Revelation 17; the harlot that sits atop the blasphemous beast;

the 4th beast of Daniel’s visions (Daniel 7); or the Babylon the Great of the end times (Revelation 17-18). In fact, it can be none of these, and we fear that the promotion of such unfounded views, as well as many others, only serves to discredit prophecy and Biblical Christianity.

Admittedly, it is a challenging topic. As such, we must remain humble in our own interpretations. (Please note that in this article series, we will presume that readers are already familiar with the prophetic visions shown in Daniel 2, 7, & 8 and Revelation 12, 13 & 17-18.)

We were specifically challenged to prove our views in regard to the identity of the 7 heads (kings) shown on the beast of Revelation 17 and 13, and the dragon of Revela-



tion 12. Especially so, the first two. We will do so.

The claim was made by one reader that since no names of the seven kings are mentioned in Revelation, that therefore we cannot be sure of their identity. This is an invalid premise, we think. There are many things that are not named in the Bible. Though they may not be identified by name, this does not mean that they do not exist. Some things in the Bible are deductive. For example, the Trinity is never named, yet this does not invalidate the concept. Therefore, for the 7 kings not to be specifically named neither invalidates their existence, nor is meant to prevent their identification.

Seven Heads: So What? Why should the true identity of the seven heads even matter? Aren't the visions of the prophets too imprecise and vague to allow any specific meaning? If we were to argue over their identity, would it not be, as Apostle Paul says, to devote oneself "[...] to myths and endless genealogies"? Is it not true that things like these "[...] promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work [...]" (1 Timothy 1:4)?

Of course, we should not promote controversial speculations. However, we should be advancing God's work by rightly dividing the Word. This we want to do, and there is great profit in doing so. Everything in the Bible has been written for a reason. As Paul says, all of it is useful for teaching and correcting (2 Timothy 3:16), "as examples" or "written down as warnings" to us (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Also, an incorrect Biblical worldview is never without consequence. Most certainly, an incorrect eschatology has lured much of Christendom onto the slippery slopes of Reconstructionism, Social Gospel, Amillennialism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism, and Relativism (to name a few distortions).



That said, some Scripture was never meant to open up effortlessly. This is certainly true for much of Daniel's prophecies (these even being sealed up) and the book of Revelation. The Bible does not give up all of its deeper-hidden pearls without sacrifice, choosing instead to reward those that diligently seek. Thankfully, for the student, the Bible is one cohesive, interconnected document, though a compilation of 66 separate books. Every jot and tittle of it will be fulfilled (Mathew 5:18; Luke 16:17), as has been the case to date. We can study it with confidence that it will unfailingly lead to its validation ... this itself being the Word.

While deep knowledge of the Bible is not necessary for salvation, at the same time, the Bible is a document that is specifically inspired by the Holy Spirit to impart all the written information that is crucial for followers of Jesus Christ to know, in matters of faith, life and prophecy. If we study the entire counsel of the Bible, we will be less inclined to give vent to baseless speculations.

There will be no excuse for not having known in advance the Bible's admonitions, teachings and prophecies (Romans 1:20). Most certainly, the Jews will not be allowed an excuse for not having recognized the Messiah at the time of His first coming (John 15:22); and for not recognizing the signs of the approaching "Last Day," instead giving their worship over to the False Messiah ... the Antichrist.

We offer at least three reasons why it is beneficial to study the meanings behind the

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“beast images” and the various heads and horns found throughout Scripture. This study definitely speaks to endtime geopolitical trends. First, these images give Bible-studying Christians—even more so the Jews—an ability to accurately determine the “season” of the world. For example, were Jews to study Daniel and accept the Revelation also as inspired Scripture, they would not be so susceptible to accepting the False Messiah when he comes. An understanding of this topic better prepares the Christian to identify the prophetic “season.”

Second, a proper understanding of the beasts provides a bulwark against deception. The Last Days are characterized as deceptive and as a trap, and expressly so the last-day ruler and the Dragon (Satan). This time is truly treacherous. Our enemy is the father of lies and deception (John 8:44). “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). We are convinced that those deception times are already upon us today. Is Christendom ready? Are you?

And third, not only are the 10 kings relevant to our time today, but also “all” of the 7 Ruler Kings. The visions of the world’s 7 Ruler Kings apply to today. How so? All of them will be in existence and on the world scene during the Last Days. The prophet Daniel says that it will be “In the time of those kings, [that] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44).

The Identity of the 7 Heads

As we proceed with our examination of the topic of the 7 heads and 10 horns of Bible prophecy, let’s adopt a few naming conventions. There are a confusing array of kings and heads and beasts mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. For the sake of expediency, let’s then agree to name the 7 historical

kings that are shown as 7 heads as the Ruler Kings (RK); and the last-day 10 kings (shown as horns) as the 10K.

We must be candid and admit that our interpretations of the identity of the 7 Ruler Kings have evolved over time, changing modestly as new insights have been gained from Scripture. Our understanding of the 7th Ruler King has been subject to the most change. Our understanding of the first six has been relatively stable. In chronological order, we have always seen them to be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The identity of the first two is assuredly the subject of much debate, but even more so the identity of the final 7th head. Here, the candidate we propose is the Roman 10-king rulership, as we will explain.

As such, we want to carefully lay out the Biblical support and deductions supporting our interpretation. In short, if you validly connect Old Testament and New Testament prophecy—most importantly, the book of Daniel with Revelation—you can definitely deduce the identities of the heads numbering from 3 to 6. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar is specifically named as being the founder of the 3rd kingdom (of the seven heads).

Additional sleuthing will show that the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece are also directly named and can be identified as the 4th and 5th heads. With a little more deduction, it can be proven that the Roman Empire is the 6th; which in turn gives rise to the Roman derivation of the short-lived 7th head, and immediately thereafter the 8th king who is the Antichrist.

Next, in our search for the identity of the 7 kings and their impact upon our generation, it is essential that we agree on a few foundational principles. Of these, there are at least 10.

1. What is a king? There are many kings mentioned in the Bible. When the Bible uses the word “king,” it means a human being in the



flesh ... a male, sovereign leader. They are not demons or spirits, but real human beings. The word ‘king’ is found in the Bible 2811 times (NIV). In 99.5% of these instances, human males are being referenced. There are only a handful of exceptions, and these all for special reasons. When the Bible assigns spiritual, demonic, or satanic titles, it frequently reserves the word “prince” (*nagid* in Hebrew). Examples of this include the Prince of Persia (Daniel 10:13, 20), Prince of Greece (Daniel 10:20), “prince of demons” (Luke 11:15), and others. We conclude, therefore, that all of the kings of the prophecies discussed in this article are real, in-the-flesh human beings, either individually or those representing a lineage of kings.

According to Revelation 17, a total of 18 kings are mentioned—real, literal, in-the-flesh men or lineage of kings—that play a prophetic role according to the Bible. So, who could they be? For at least six of these kings, the Bible provides a conclusive answer, if you read it consistently and follow all of its clues. Have you sought out the literal connections? No speculation is required, just some deduction and humility.

2. Where are the kings today? Are today’s Western leaders the equivalent to an Old Testament king? There are few kings in the world today that possess the same absolute power as did, for example, Nebuchadnezzar. There would be less than 15 absolute kings in power today in the world (most of these Arab sheiks and, interestingly also the Roman Catholic Pope). As such, there would not be enough kings to allow fulfillment of the 7th head of the Revelation 17 “beast vision” any time soon.

But are “absolute” kings actually required to fulfill these prophecies? As with all Scripture, we must consider its historical and intended meanings. In doing so, we conclude that today’s leaders of nations—i.e. chancellors, presidents, premiers ...



etc.—are the equivalent to an Old Testament king. How so?

The prevalent structure of sovereign power that existed in Old Testament times, was a nation or city-state with a king. Democracy or other types of representative governments had yet to develop. Recall what the Israelites said to Samuel: “[...] now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have” (1 Samuel 8:5). Not only did all nations have kings, but we also see that the word “king” was synonymous with the “leader” of a sovereign nation. But, can we prove that an Old Testament “king” is the equivalent to a Western leader today?

Recall what Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: “[...] you are the king of kings. [...] You are that head of gold” (2:37, 38). He had the purest and most complete traits and powers of a king. Following kingdoms were represented by less valuable materials, degrading progressively from silver to clay. This is meant to show the declining potency and power of rulership.

While Nebuchadnezzar had absolute power (therefore, symbolized as the head of gold), the following Persian kings are shown to be unable even to revoke their own edicts. For example, Darius the Mede was not able to cancel the sentence upon Daniel. “The decree stands — in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed” (Daniel 6:12). Nor was Xerxes able to do so (see Esther 8:8).

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Later, Greece ultimately gave rise to democracy. Here, to a degree, the people had power over the king. Romans leaders battled among themselves for rulership. Today, various types of rulership exist among the world's 200 or so nations. Nevertheless, whether absolute kings or not, we can conclude that today's equivalent to an Old Testament king is a sovereign leader, whether a president, chancellor, prime minister, or king.

3. In Bible prophecy, the words "king" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably. In Daniel 2, successive kingdoms are being described. For example, "Next, a third *kingdom*, one of bronze, will rule [...]" (Daniel 2:39; see also 40, 41 & 44). Yet, these successive kingdoms are then all referred to as kings in verse 44. Again, in Daniel 7:17 it is said that "The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth." Yet, in Daniel 7:23, "The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom." Which is it? King or kingdom? Obviously, both.

Similar double-meanings are found in both the Old and New Testaments. In Daniel 8, the shaggy goat is said to be "the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king" (verse 21). Clearly, the expression "king of Greece" is used here to mean the ruling "kingdom of Greece." In Revelation, the 7 RK are said to be seven "hills" on which the woman sits, but also seven kings ("[...] The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings [...]" Revelation 17:9-10).

The word "hill" is used elsewhere in the Bible to mean "kingdom" or "rulership" (for example, see Ezekiel 34:6). As such, we here again see the two concepts meant simultaneously. Therefore, we should understand that real, individual kings are being referenced, as well as the following kings of the kingdoms they may have founded. While Daniel may say to Nebuchadnezzar

that he is indeed the "head of gold," we know that at least two other Babylonian kings followed him. The Babylonian kingdom continued to remain as a Ruler King after him. Therefore, seen in the sweep of prophetic history, the Bible uses the words king and kingdom interchangeably. Crucially, we recognize each of the 7 heads as also representing world ruler kingdoms.

4. Prophetically, Is a king synonymous with a nation? Readers have written, protesting that kings should not be confused for nations in the prophetic visions that are the topic of this article series. The argument is made that when the Bible says that 10 kings come together to give their authority to the Antichrist, it only refers to the leaders and not nations. In other words, it is argued that it is not nations that are aligning into a collective; just 10 persons who also happen to be kings. While we can understand the confusion on this point, this view is nevertheless absurd.

To begin with, there is no such thing as a king without a kingdom. A deposed king could only be an ex-king. Similarly, if there is no nation, there can be no leader. As well, kings and leaders do not act independently of their country in matters of state, sovereignty, or geopolitics. Extending authority to an Antichrist would most likely breach the constitutional powers of most country leaders today. After all, they have no authority independent of their state. Because of this dependency, the Bible treats the words "king" and "kingdom" interchangeably, as we explained in the previous section.

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Just what countries might these be? In Part II of this four part series, we continue our investigation. (MC)