

America and Babylon



SABBATH—JUNE 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 13:1–12; Revelation 14:9–11; Revelation 16:2; Revelation 19:20.

MEMORY VERSE: “There will be a time of much trouble. It will be the worst time since nations have been on earth. But your people will be saved. Everyone whose name is written in God’s book will be saved” (Daniel 12:1, ICB).

LAST WEEK, we learned about the false three-in-one God. This god is made up of two powers on Earth who join with the dragon (Satan). Together, they attack God’s people.

The Bible shows a wild animal coming from the sea (Revelation 13:1–10). This animal is the first of the two powers on Earth. This animal is a mix of three other animals (Revelation 13:2). Together, these four animals are word pictures for four kingdoms: Babylon (lion), Media-Persia (bear), Greece (leopard) (Daniel 7:4–6), and Rome (the little-horn power) (Daniel 7:7, 8, 19–21, 23–25). Rome started out as a kingdom. Later, it became a religious power. The little-horn power grew out of the Roman Kingdom. In Daniel 7, we learned about things the little-horn power did. The wild animal that comes from the sea, in Revelation 13:1–10, does many of these same things too. So, many Bible experts believe the Roman Catholic Church is one of the powers that will try to destroy God’s people in the last days.

But the Roman Church is not alone in its attack on God’s people. Revelation warns us that another power will join the Roman Church and the dragon. This week we will study about the things Revelation 13 warns will happen in the last days.



The wild animal that comes from the sea, in Revelation 13:1–10, is a mix of three other animals. Together, these four animals are word pictures for four kingdoms: Babylon (lion), Media-Persia (bear), Greece (leopard), and Rome (the little-horn power).

WHEN THE DEEP CUT IS HEALED (Revelation 13:1–10)

Read Revelation 13:1–10. How do these verses show the work of the Catholic Church in the past and in the future?

God has loyal followers in all churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, the Bible clearly points to the awful things that the Roman Catholic Church did in the past. The Bible also shows us that the ruling power that controls this church will have a big part in the things that happen in the last days.

Read Revelation 13:3. What is happening in this verse? What does the truth in this verse teach us about the Roman Catholic Church's power and fame?

For hundreds of years, the Roman Catholic Church was the most important religion. In many ways, the Roman Catholic Church also was the government leader for all the countries in Western Europe. An example of the Roman Catholic Church's power can be seen in the story about King Henry the Fourth. Henry was the ruler over Germany. Henry made Pope Gregory the Seventh very mad. So, Henry went to the pope's castle to say he was sorry and make peace. The pope made Henry wait outside in the cold winter for three days. Then Henry was allowed to see the pope. Pope Gregory bragged afterward that it was his job to show kings that they must not feel proud.

After many wars and changes in Europe, Rome's power ended in the late 1700s. In 1798, the French army made Pope Pius the Sixth a prisoner. The pope died one year later.

Revelation 13 warns us that the Catholic Church will grow strong again in the future. Revelation uses the word picture of a head with a deep cut. This cut should cause death. But the cut is healed to show that the Catholic Church will get its power back. Today, Rome does not have the same power it did in the days of Pope Gregory the Seventh. But the Catholic Church has grown in power again. One example of the Catholic Church's power can be seen in Pope Francis's talking to the American Congress in 2015. That talk never happened before in history. But that is only the beginning. The messages in the Bible about the future warn us that the Catholic Church's power will continue to grow stronger.

How can we share the truth about the Catholic Church in a loving and kind way with other people?



The pope made Henry wait outside in the cold winter for three days.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE LAST DAYS (Revelation 13:11, 12)

People ask: “How can the Roman Catholic Church have the same power today, or in the future, that Revelation 13 says it will have?” The answer is found in Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:11, 12 describes a power. What things in this description help us to know who this power is?

First, Revelation shows another wild animal power that comes before the wild animal power that comes from the ground. Many Bible thinkers say that this first wild animal is a word picture for the Catholic Church. Revelation says that the Catholic Church would be given power for 42 months (Revelation 13:5). The 42 months is the same time as the “time, times, and half a time (three and a half years)” in Daniel 7:25 (NLV). The 42 months also is the same time as the three and a half years in Revelation 12:14. The 42 months also is the same as the 1,260 days in Revelation 12:6. These 1,260 days mean 1,260 years. During those 1,260 years, the Catholic Church attacked anyone who disagreed with her teachings. The 1,260 years started in A.D. 538 and ended in 1798. That was the year the pope was made a prisoner. At this time, the Roman Church got its death wound. So, the Bible’s message about the Roman Church came true.

At this time in history, another power appears (Revelation 13:11). This wild animal power comes from the ground. The other powers came out of water (read Daniel 7:2, 3). Water is a word picture for many people (Revelation 17:15). For these reasons and other reasons, this new wild animal power from the earth must be the United States. This nation became a strong power in a place on this earth where there were no other kingdoms.

Revelation describes the wild animal power that came from the ground. This animal has two horns that look the same as a lamb’s horns (Revelation 13:11). These two horns are a word picture for something gentle. But the lamb will talk “like [the same as] a dragon” (Revelation 13:11, ERV). This verse tells us about a time when this power will attack God’s people in the same way the Catholic Church attacked God’s people in the past. Revelation 13:11–17 answers the question: How will the Catholic Church again have the power it had in the past? The answer: the Catholic Church will have the power of the United States behind it. That is how.

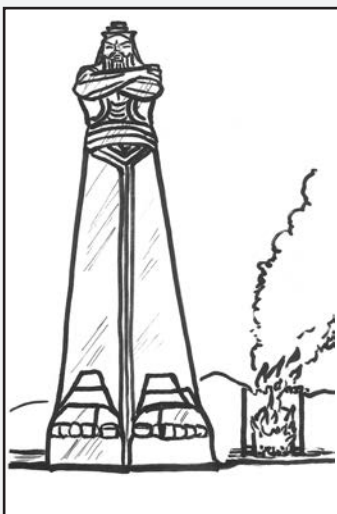


The new wild animal power shown in Revelation 13:11, 12 is a word picture for the United States of America.

A FIGHT OVER WORSHIP (Revelation 14:9–11)

The history in the Bible shows us again and again how the Lord had to work to save His people from bowing down to statues and taking part in false worship (read Matthew 4:8–10). Revelation 13 shows us this same thing will be true in the last days. God’s people will need to make a choice. Who will they worship (read Joshua 24:15)?

In lesson two, we studied about the three Hebrew boys. The king of Babylon commanded these three Hebrew boys to “worship the gold statue” (Daniel 3:5, NIV). We saw that Revelation 13 uses the same words as Daniel 3 to warn God’s people about the attacks against them in the last days. The story in Daniel 3 shows us what will happen to God’s people in the last days. The king commanded everyone to worship the gold statue. Anyone who broke this rule would die in a hot furnace. In the same way, Revelation 13 tells us that anyone who does “not bow down *and* worship the image [something that is a copy] of the beast [the wild animal that comes from the sea] [will] be put to death” (Revelation 13:15, AMP).



In Daniel 3, the king commanded everyone to worship the gold statue. Anyone who broke this rule would die in a hot furnace.

Read Revelation 14:9–11; Revelation 16:2; Revelation 19:20; and Revelation 20:4. What do these verses tell us about how big the quarrel over worship will become?

Babylon always has been the city of false worship. The Tower of Babel showed that its builders wanted the same thing Lucifer wanted. They wanted to “ ‘rise above the tops of the clouds’ ” (Isaiah 14:14, NIV). They also built the tower to save themselves from another worldwide flood. They did not believe God’s promise that He would never bring another worldwide flood on the earth (Genesis 9:8–11).

The new kingdom of Babylon also worshiped the work of human hands. King Nebuchadnezzar bragged: “ ‘Look at Babylon. I built this great [beautiful] city . . . to show how great [powerful] I am’ ” (Daniel 4:30, ICB). Later, King Belshazzar took the gold cups from Solomon’s temple. He and his guests drank wine out of them at a feast and praised their gods made from gold, silver, iron, wood, and stone (Daniel 5:3, 4). The wine made everyone drunk. Then the Persians attacked Babylon. Many people in Babylon died.

How can we be sure we are not part of any false worship now?

THE BIG AND POWERFUL BABYLON (Revelation 17:5, 6)

Read Jeremiah 51:6, 7, 53, 57; Zechariah 2:7; Revelation 17:5, 6; and Revelation 18:2, 3. What do these verses teach us about Babylon?

As we saw yesterday, Babylon has a long history in the Bible as the city of false worship. So, it makes sense that the Bible uses Babylon as a word picture for a religious power who lies about God to people living in the last days.

Read Revelation 12:3; Revelation 13:1–3; and Revelation 17:3. These verses describe the dragon, the wild animal that comes from the sea, and the wild animal that comes from the ground. These animals are word pictures for last-day powers. What is the same about each of these powers? What is different?

All three animals are word pictures for kingdoms or governments that rule on the earth. The wild animal that comes from the sea is a word picture for the Old Roman Kingdom and the Roman Catholic Church. The wild animal that comes from the ground is a word picture that shows us that the dragon, the wild animal that comes from the sea, and the wild animal that comes from the ground will become a team. “These three powers are God’s enemies. They will join and work together as one power.”—Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse [the book of Revelation] Through [from the view of] Hebrew [Jewish] Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002), page 162; adapted.

Revelation 17 also shows us a woman who rides on the back of the “‘red wild animal’” (Revelation 17:7, NLV). The woman on the back of the “‘red wild animal’” also is a word picture. The Bible uses it to show an unlawful “marriage” between government and religion in the last days. This woman on the back of the “‘red wild animal’” is very different from the holy woman, or church, in Revelation 12.

Babylon is the “‘mother of all women who sell the use of their bodies’” (Revelation 17:5, NLV). Another name for women who sell sex for money is prostitutes. As the “MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES” (ERV), Babylon has been busy making children. What does that mean? It means that the false mother church has given birth to many “daughters,” or false churches, on this earth. But God is not responsible for the false ideas taught by churches that break His law.



The Bible uses the word picture of the woman riding on the red wild animal from the sea to show us the unlawful “marriage” between religion and government that will happen in the last days.

COME OUT OF THAT CITY, MY PEOPLE
(Revelation 18:1–4)

Revelation 14:8 warns us that Babylon will fall away from the truth. Her fall into lies and false teachings will, in the end, lead to Satan's final attack on God's law. After Babylon's fall from truth, a law will be made that causes everyone who is not loyal to God to accept the "beast's [wild land animal's] mark [the special proof of its power]" (Revelation 14:9–11; 18:1–4, ERV). The strong warning in Revelation 14:8 will be given again in the future. The people on the earth will be warned again to separate themselves from Babylon and her false teachings. God will invite the people in Babylon who are loyal to Him to leave Babylon and join His true last-day church (Revelation 18:1–4).

Clearly, we can see that things are happening on Earth just as the Bible said they would. But there are many more things that need to happen before we arrive at the end. That is why it is very important to be clear when we talk to people about the "beast's [wild land animal's] mark [the special proof of its power]" (Revelation 18:1–4, ERV). We must be clear to say that no one has the "beast's mark" right now. That is true, even if someone is not obeying the Sabbath law.



We must be clear to say that no one has the "beast's mark" right now or the "number of its name" (Revelation 13:17, ERV).

Read Revelation 18:1–4. What is happening in these verses? What do these verses teach us about our duty to all the people on the earth?

These verses "paint" a very dark and hopeless picture about life on this earth. These verses show us the awful power that false religious teachings have on people's minds and in their lives. At the same time, these verses also give us hope. They tell us about another angel from heaven. This angel brings to the whole earth the light of God's glory. Also, God's people are told to separate themselves from the false religion of Babylon. What does that command tell us about the work we must do? It tells us we must help God's people who are a part of Babylon. We must continue working until the end of time to help free people's minds.

Why does the Lord name some of the people in Babylon " 'my people' " (Revelation 18:4, NLV)? Why is this truth very important for us to remember when we talk to other people about the special truth for this time?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Satan’s attack on God’s law is an attack on God Himself. Satan’s attack on God’s law also is an attack on God’s power and His government. So, it is no surprise that in the last days Satan will attack the people who “obey the Laws of God” (Revelation 12:17, NLV; Revelation 14:12). God’s loyal followers will be the only group of people left on Earth who refuse to honor or worship the false religion made by Satan. When God’s loyal followers refuse to honor this false religion, they show Satan they refuse to worship him. Satan will fight against God’s loyal followers on Earth the same way he fought against God in heaven. God defeated Satan in heaven. God will defeat Satan here on Earth too.

“From the start of the war in heaven, Satan wanted to get rid of God’s law. That is the reason why Satan went to war against God who made him. Satan was thrown out of heaven. But he continued his war against God on this earth. Satan tricks humans and lies to them. Satan’s plan is to get humans to break God’s law. He never stops working to lead humans to sin. Satan will try to make his evil plan succeed any way he can. He will try to get some humans to throw out all of God’s law. He will try to get other people to throw out only part of God’s law. Either way, there is no difference between these two things in the end. Why? Because the Bible says that a person who is guilty of breaking only one part of God’s law is guilty of breaking the whole law. James 2:10.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 582; adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In class, talk about the things that are going on right now on the earth. How do the things that are happening right now show us what is going to happen in the last days? What things have *not* happened that need to happen before the final end comes? How can we learn to watch carefully for the things the Bible says will happen? At the same time, why do we need to avoid setting dates for things to happen? Why must we also avoid announcing things will happen that the Bible and Ellen G. White’s writings do not teach?

② Think more about the idea of worship. What does it mean to worship something?



“Satan wanted to get rid of God’s law. That is the reason why Satan went to war against God and was thrown out of heaven.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 582; adapted.