

CHAPTER 13

We have, in this chapter, a further discovery and description of the church's enemies: not other enemies than are mentioned before, but described after another manner, that the methods of their enmity may more fully appear. They are represented as two beasts; the first you have an account of (v. 1-10) the second (v. 11, etc.). By the first some understand Rome pagan, and by the second Rome papal; but others understand Rome papal to be represented by both these beasts, by the first in its secular power, by the second in its ecclesiastical.

REVELATION 13:1-10

THE FIRST BEAST

We have here an account of the rise, figure, and progress of the first beast; and observe,

- 1.** From what situation the apostle saw this monster. He seemed to himself to stand upon *the sea-shore*, though it is probable he was still in a rapture; but he took himself to be in *the island Patmos*, but whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell.
- 2.** Whence this beast came — *out of the sea*; and yet, by the description of it, it would seem more likely to be a land-monster; but the more monstrous every thing about it was the more proper an emblem it would be to set forth the mystery of iniquity and tyranny.
- 3.** What was the form and shape of this beast. It was for the most part *like a leopard*, but its *feet were like the feet of a bear and its mouth as the mouth of a lion*; it had *seven heads, and ten horns, and upon its heads the name of blasphemy*: the most horrid and hideous monster! In some part of this description here seems to be an allusion to Daniel's vision of the four beasts, which represented the four monarchies, ²⁰⁰⁰Daniel 7:1-3, etc. One of these beasts was like a lion, another like a bear, and another like a leopard; this beast was a sort of composition of those three, with the fierceness, strength, and swiftness, of them all; the seven heads and the ten

horns seem to design its several powers; the ten crowns, its tributary princes; the word blasphemy on its forehead proclaims its direct enmity and opposition to the glory of God, by promoting idolatry.

4. The source and spring of his authority — *the dragon; he gave him his power, and seat, and great authority.* He was set up by the devil, and supported by him to do his work and promote his interest; and the devil lent him all the assistance he could.

5. A dangerous wound given him, and yet unexpectedly healed, v. 3. Some think that by this wounded head we are to understand the abolishing of pagan idolatry; and by the healing of the wound the introducing of the popish idolatry, the same in substance with the former, only in a new dress, and which as effectually answers the devil's design as that did.

6. The honour and worship paid to this infernal monster: *All the world wondered after the beast; they all admired his power, and policy, and success, and they worshipped the dragon that gave power to the beast, and they worshipped the beast;* they paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments, and thought there was no power able to withstand them: so great were the darkness, degeneracy, and madness of the world!

7. How he exercised his infernal power and policy: He had *a mouth, speaking great things, and blasphemies; he blasphemed God, the name of God, the tabernacle of God, and all those that dwell in heaven; and he made war with the saints, and overcame them,* and gained a sort of universal empire in the world. His malice was principally levelled at the God of heaven, and his heavenly attendants — at God, in making images of him that is invisible, and in worshipping them; — at the tabernacle of God, that is, say some, at the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which God dwells as in a tabernacle; this is dishonoured by their doctrine of transubstantiation, which will not suffer his body to be a true body, and will put it into the power of every priest to prepare a body for Christ; — and *against those that dwell in heaven,* the glorified saints, by putting them into the place of the pagan demons, and praying to them, which they are so far from being pleased with that they truly judge themselves wronged and dishonoured by it. Thus the malice of the devil shows itself against heaven and the blessed inhabitants of heaven. These are above the reach of his power. All he can do is to blaspheme them; but the saints on earth are more exposed to his cruelty, and he sometimes is permitted to triumph over them and trample upon them.

8. The limitation of the devil's power and success, and that both as to time and persons. He is limited in point of time; his reign is *to continue forty-and-two months* (v. 5), suitable to the other prophetic characters of the reign of antichrist. He is also limited as to the persons and people that he shall entirely subject his will and power; it will be only those *whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life*. Christ had a chosen remnant, *redeemed by his blood, recorded in his book, sealed by his Spirit*; and though the devil and antichrist might overcome their bodily strength, and take away their natural life, they could never conquer their souls, nor prevail with them to forsake their Saviour and revolt to his enemies.

9. Here is a demand of attention to what is here discovered of the great sufferings and troubles of the church, and an assurance given that when God has accomplished his work on mount Zion, his refining work, then he will turn his hand against the enemies of his people, and those who have killed with the sword shall themselves fall by the sword (v. 10), and those who led the people of God into captivity shall themselves be made captives. Here now is that which will be proper exercise for *the patience and faith of the saints* — patience under the prospect of such great sufferings, and faith in the prospect of so glorious a deliverance.

REVELATION 13:11-18

THE SECOND BEAST

Those who think the first beast signifies Rome pagan by this second beast would understand Rome papal, which promotes idolatry and tyranny, but in a more soft and lamb-like manner: those that understand the first beast of the secular power of the papacy take the second to intend its spiritual and ecclesiastical powers, which act under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men. Here observe,

I. The form and shape of this second beast: *He had two horns like a lamb*, but a mouth that *spoke like the dragon*. All agree that this must be some great impostor, who, under a pretence of religion, shall deceive the souls of men. The papists would have it to be Apollonius Tyranaeus; but Dr. More has rejected that opinion, and fixes it upon the ecclesiastical powers of the papacy. The pope shows the horns of a lamb, pretends to be the vicar of Christ upon earth, and so to be vested with his power and

authority; but his speech betrays him, for he gives forth those false doctrines and cruel decrees which show him to belong to the dragon, and not to the Lamb.

II. The power which he exercises: *All the power of the former beast* (v. 12); he promotes the same interest, pursues the same design in substance, which is, to draw men off from worshipping the true God to worshipping those who by nature are no gods, and subject the souls and consciences of men to the will and authority of men, in opposition to the will of God. This design is promoted by the popery as well as by paganism, and by the crafty arts of popery as well as by the secular arm, both serving the interests of the devil, though in a different manner.

III. The methods by which this second beast carried on his interests and designs; they are of three sorts: —

- 1.** Lying wonders, pretended miracles, by which they should be deceived, and prevailed with to worship the former beast in this new image or shape that was now made for him; they would pretend to bring down fire from heaven, as Elias did, and God sometimes permits his enemies, as he did the magicians of Egypt, to do things that seem very wonderful, and by which unwary persons may be deluded. It is well known that the papal kingdom has been long supported by pretended miracles.
- 2.** Excommunications, anathemas, severe censures, by which they pretend to cut men off from Christ, and cast them into the power of the devil, but do indeed deliver them over to the secular power, that they may be put to death; and thus, notwithstanding their vile hypocrisy, they are justly charged with killing those whom they cannot corrupt.
- 3.** By disfranchisement, allowing none to enjoy natural, civil, or municipal rights, who will not worship that papal beast, that is, the image of the pagan beast. It is made a qualification for buying and selling the rights of nature, as well as for places of profit and trust, that they have *the mark of the beast in their forehead and in their right hand*, and that they have *the name of the beast and the number of his name*. It is probable that *the mark, the name, and the number of the beast*, may all signify the same thing — that they make an open profession of their subjection and obedience to the papacy, which is receiving the mark in their forehead, and that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavour, to promote the papal authority, which is receiving the mark in their right hands. We are

told that pope Martin V. in his bull, added to the council of Constance, prohibits Roman catholics from suffering any heretics to dwell in their countries, or to make any bargains, use any trades, or bear any civil offices, which is a very clear interpretation of this prophecy.

IV. We have here *the number of the beast*, given in such a manner as shows the infinite wisdom of God, and will sufficiently exercise all the wisdom and accuracy of men: *The number is the number of a man*, computed after the usual manner among men, and it is 666. Whether this be the number of the errors and heresies that are contained in popery, or rather, as others, the number of the years from its rise to its fall, is not certain, much less what that period is which is described by these prophetic numbers. The most admired dissertation on this intricate subject is that of Dr. Potter, where the curious may find sufficient entertainment. It seems to me to be one of those seasons which God has reserved in his own power; only this we know, God has written *Mene Tekel* upon all his enemies; he has numbered their days, and they shall be finished, but his own kingdom shall endure for ever.