Revelation — Lesson 17

Revelation 13:1-2, Continued...

> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

Chapter 17, beginning in verse 7, contains a short commentary in which an angel explains to John the meaning of some of things that he has seen. The angel, in effect, steps outside of the vision in order to comment upon an explain what John is seeing.

Chapter 17 will begin by showing us a woman sitting on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns — the same symbol we saw in Chapter 12 and the same symbol we see here in Chapter 13. Whatever this symbol means, it s repeated appearance indicates it must be important. As another indication of its importance, an angel in 17:9-10 tells us what it means:

> This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while.

Those two verses are crucial in understanding this book. That is why we have jumped ahead a few chapters to discuss them now. In addition, to telling us what the seven heads represent, these verses also tell us *when* the book of Revelation was written.

So what are the seven heads? The angel in Chapter 17 tells us they are two things — they are seven mountains, and they are seven kings.

The identification of the seven mountains would have been immediately clear to a first century reader. Swete: "No reasonable doubt can be entertained as to the meaning of these words."

Gentry: "Perhaps no point is more obvious in Revelation that this one: *Rome* is the one city in history that has been distinguished for and universally recognizable by its seven hills. ... Suetonius and Plutarch record for us that in the time of Domitian the festival of *Septimontium* ("the feast of the seven hilled city") was held annually in December to celebrate the seven hills enclosing Rome. ... This point is well nigh indisputably certain. Indeed, 'there is scarce a poet that speaks of Rome but observes it.'"

Mounce: "There is litte doubt that a first-century reader would understand this reference in any way other than as a reference to Rome, the city built upon seven hills."

Coins minted at the time this book was written depicted the goddess Roma sitting upon the seven hills that surrounded the city of Rome. When this book shows us a bloodthirsty harlot sitting upon seven mountains it is flashing a giant neon sign that reads "Rome! Rome! Rome!" If anyone ever tells you it means something else, they need to explain to you how a first century reader with that coin in his pocket would have understood this image to mean anything other than Rome.

But we are told something else about the seven heads — they also represent seven kings: five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while. It is this verse that tells us when this book was written — it was written during the reign of the king who "is."

Who are the seven kings? Before we answer that question we should pause and ask whether we should take this "7" literally or figuratively. Our general rule in interpreting apocalyptic language is to take numbers (and other symbols) figuratively unless we are forced for some reason to do otherwise, such as for instance when an angel makes an appearance to tell us that 7 means 7. Rome was surrounded by 7 *literal* mountains, and the angel in Revelation 17 told us that the 7 heads

represented 7 mountains. The same angel also told us that the 7 heads mean 7 kings, which the parallelism might suggest are 7 *literal* kings — but I think we will also see that even there 7 has a symbolic aspect and that, for *symbolic* reason, 3 of the kings will be ignored in the counting so that 10 literal kings become 7 literal kings *and* 7 symbolic kings. Thus, just because we see a few literal 7's does not mean that 7 has no symbolic significance in those cases — in fact, one could argue that the symbolic significance is increased when the symbolic 7 lines up with a literal 7.

So, who are these seven kings? Once again, before we answer that question, we need to travel back in time from the king who "is" about 600 years and read what Daniel had to same about him and his fellow kings. Daniel 7 is inextricably linked to Revelation 13 and Revelation 17.

First, consider Daniel 7:7-8 —

> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

And then consider Daniel 7:19-25 —

> Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up and before which

> three of them fell, the horn which had eyes
> and a mouth that spoke great things, and
> which seemed greater than its fellows. 21 As I
> looked, this horn made war with the saints,
> and prevailed over them, 22 until the An-
> cient of Days came, and judgment was given
> for the saints of the Most High, and the time
> came when the saints received the kingdom.
> 23 "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast,
> there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth,
> which shall be different from all the king-
> doms, and it shall devour the whole earth,
> and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
> 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom
> ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise
> after them; he shall be different from the for-
> mer ones, and shall put down three kings. 25
> He shall speak words against the Most High,
> and shall wear out the saints of the Most
> High, and shall think to change the times and
> the law; and they shall be given into his hand
> for a time, two times, and half a time.

The link between Daniel and Revelation is unmistakable and indisputable, although what the linked symbols mean is another story.

As we have previously discussed, the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7 is Rome. This fourth kingdom in Daniel is shown as a beast with ten horns, and verse 24 tells us that the ten horns are 10 kings.

So where are we? Daniel depicts Rome as a beast, as does Revelation. Daniel focuses on the kings of Rome, as does Revelation. Daniel depicts the kings as 10 horns, while Revelation depicts them as 7 heads.

Why do we go from 10 horns in Daniel to 7 heads in Revelation? The move from horns to heads is easy — we are told in each book that they depict kings. Why doesn't Revelation also use horns? Well, it does. In fact, it even uses 10 horns, just like Daniel. We will discuss those 10 horns in a moment. For now, though, we are looking at the seven

heads, and the horns in Daniel and the heads in Revelation both depict kings.

But now that we have gone from horns to heads, the real question is how we go from 10 to 7. Daniel had 10 horns denoting 10 kings, while Revelation has 7 heads denoting 7 kings. We are missing 3 kings! What happened to them? Daniel 7 answers that question in verse 8:

> It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, **before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots.**

What happens to the 10 horns when you pluck up 3 of them? You are left with 7 horns, which represent 7 kings. And, in my opinion, those 7 horns that represent 7 kings in Daniel 7 correspond with the 7 heads that represent 7 kings in Revelation 17. (That's a lot of numbers, and especially a lot of 7's — but does that really surprise us?)

Daniel starts with 10 horns and plucks up three, leaving 7 horns. But these 7 horns are followed by another horn which Daniel 7:8 and 7:21 tell us is a little horn who makes war on the people of God. This little horn would be the 11th horn. But after we subtract the 3 plucked up horns, the little horn would be the 8th horn.

Revelation 17 speaks of 7 heads that are 7 kings in verse 10. Is there an 8th head in Revelation? Yes, in the very next verse. Revelation 17:11 tells us about an 8th that belongs to the seven —

> As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.

So how do we fit the horns in Daniel with the heads in Rome? Easy. The seven kings in Revelation are the seven kings in Daniel that remain after three are uprooted. The king represented by the little horn in Daniel is the 8th king in Revelation 17. The three uprooted kings in Daniel are ignored in Revelation.

So who are all of these kings? That is the million dollar question. There are numerous possibilities, but in my opinion there is only one possibility that fits perfectly with all of the evidence.

First, let's list out all of the candidates:

- **Julius Caesar** (49-44 BC)
- **Augustus** (31 BC - AD 14) — Luke 2:1
- **Tiberius** (14 - 37) — Luke 3:1
- **Caligula** (37 - 41)
- **Claudius** (51-54) — Acts 11:28
- **Nero** (54 - 68) — Acts 25:11
- **Galba** (68 - 69)
- **Otho** (69)
- **Vitellius** (69)
- **Vespasian** (69 - 79)
- **Titus** (79 - 81)
- **Domitian** (81 - 96)

Rome was still a Republic under Julius Caesar, and so he is not generally listed among the Roman emperors (although some disagree). Augustus is generally considered the first Roman emperor (although, again, some disagree). The emperors from Augustus to Nero make up the Julio-Claudian Dynasty, while Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian make up the Flavian Dynasty. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius reigned and died during A.D. 69, the year of the four emperors (with Vespasian being the fourth).

Before we start looking for the dirty 7, let's get one objection out of the way quickly. The text talks about *kings*, whereas Rome had *emperors*. Are we correct to be looking for these 7 kings among the Roman emperors, or should we be looking for people who were called kings? The Roman emperors were called kings. What did the chief priests shout in John 19:15? "We have no **king** but Caesar."

So now what are we looking for? We must find 5 kings who have fallen, one king who is, one who is yet to come but who will remain only a little while, and an eighth king who goes to perdition.

We have two big decisions to make in locating our kings: (1) Where do we start? With Julius Caesar or Augustus? (2) What do we do with the three Civil War kings? Ignore them or include them?

For the mathematicians among us, that strategy gives us four possibilities. We start with either Julius Caesar or Augustus, and then we count out 8 kings, either including or ignoring the 3 Civil War kings. Here are the four lists we get by that procedure:

	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
1	Julius Caesar	Julius Caesar	Augustus	Augustus
2	Augustus	Augustus	Tiberius	Tiberius
3	Tiberius	Tiberius	Caligula	Caligula
4	Caligula	Caligula	Nero	Claudius
5	Claudius	Claudius	Galba	Nero
6 (One Who Is)	Nero	Nero	Otho	Vespasian
7 (Little While)	Galba	Vespasian	Vitellius	Titus
8 (Little Horn)	Otho	Titus	Vespasian	Domitian

And so, our four options are:

- OPTION 1: We start with Julius Caesar and include the three Civil War kings.
- OPTION 2: We start with Julius Caesar and omit the three Civil War kings.
- OPTION 3: We start with Augustus and include the three Civil War kings.
- OPTION 4: We start with Augustus and omit the three Civil War kings.

Some argue for the additional options that arise if we separate the eighth king from the others in time to permit intervening kings between the 7th and the 8th. But why then would we be told that the

reign of the 7th would last only a short time? That detail suggests to me that the 8th king follows immediately after the 7th king.

Right from the start I think we can rule out Option 2. Why? Because Option 2 places Vespasian in the role of the 7th king who was to reign only a short time, and Vespasian reigned for 11 years.

What about the other three options? Galba reigned 7 months, Vitellius reigned 8 months, and Titus reigned 26 months. So we cannot rule out any of the other options on that basis.

Options 1 and 3 have at least two problems. First, those options push the date of the book back to the reign of Nero or shortly thereafter, which in my opinion is much too early. Second, those options provide poor candidates for the eighth king, with Option 1 choosing Otho and Option 3 choosing Vespasian. Neither of these emperors fits the descriptions of the eighth king, and Otho hardly had time to do much of anything.

Another problem with Option 1 is that it starts with Julius Caesar as the first emperor. Was Julius Caesar the first emperor of Rome? Modern historians say no. If you consult a list of Roman emperors today you will see Augustus listed first. Why? Because Rome was a republic under Julius Caesar, not yet an empire. But how could a republic be ruled by a dictator? Simple — just write a law.

The Roman republic originally entrusted the government to two consuls so that the citizens of Rome would be protected against the tyrannical rule of a single man. But it was soon felt that circumstances might arise in which it was important for the safety of the state that the government should be vested in the hands of a single person, who should possess absolute power for a short time, and from whose decisions there could be no appeal to any other body. That person was called a dictator, and Julius Caesar held that office for five terms, eventually being declared "Dictator in Perpetuity." Now, there may be a fine line between a Roman emperor and a dictator in perpetuity, but there is a line.

And if we include Julius Caesar on the list of Roman emperors, then why not include Crassus and Pompey? They ruled with Julius Caesar in the First Triumvirate. And why not include Lepidus and Marc Antony, who ruled with Augustus in the Second Triumvirate? And why not include Sulla, whose own dictatorship in 82 BC set the precedent for Julius Caesar's dictatorship, and the eventual end of the Republic under Augustus? In short, if we open the door for Julius Caesar, others will likely try to push through with him. And yes, it is true that some ancient historians include him on lists along with Augustus and his followers, but that points more to the fame of Caesar than to his office. Yes, it is true that Suetonius included Julius Caesar on his list of 12 Caesars, but no one is arguing that Julius Caesar was not a Caesar! What we are saying is that the first Caesar was not an emperor.

But is that the only reason to start with Augustus? No. I think a better reason to use him as the starting point is that the New Testament treats him as such. He was the emperor who was around to welcome the King of kings into this world, and whether or not he saw that star in the sky, after that date his empire would never be the same. In addition to being the historical starting point, Augustus is the natural starting point.

So where does that leave us? By the process of elimination we are left with Option 4. Does Option 4 fit the evidence? Yes, it fits it very well. In fact, it fits so well that could likely rule out Options 1 and 3 on that basis alone.

Who are the five kings who have fallen? They are the first five Rome emperors: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. These are the same five that span the time from the birth of Christ to the death of Paul. Who is the one king who is? After skipping over the three plucked up Civil War kings, the king who is would be Vespasian, who reigned from AD 69 to 79, during which time this book must have been written. Who is the one who is yet to come but who will remain only a little while? That would be Titus, Vespasian's eldest son who reigned for 26 months. And who was the eighth king who goes to perdition? None other than Domitian, Vespasian's younger son, who

I believe is also the little horn of Daniel 7 and the man of perdition from 2nd Thessalonians 2.

It seems to fit like a glove, but we need to be careful with regard to Domitian. Those who reject Option 4 argue that Domitian was not actually a great persecutor of the church, but was later turned into one by those who wanted to make him fit the description of the 8th king. Is that a fair criticism? Yes, and no.

Yes, in the sense that some commentators have overstated the case for Domitian to perhaps make him a better fit for their theories. One such statement describes Domitian as "the emperor who bathed the empire in the blood of Christians." We have such evidence for Nero, but not for Domitian. Is it possible he did that? Yes. Do we know that he did that? No.

But saying that we do not know whether he bathed the empire in the blood of the saints does not mean that we cannot know whether he was a persecutor. I think we can, and I think he was. And I would point to three sources of evidence: circumstantial, Biblical, and extra-Biblical (*not* listed in order of importance).

We have already examined some circumstantial evidence for a Domitian persecution of Christians. The coins we discussed last week showed Domitian's son as a divine child reaching for 7 stars and described Domitian himself as a son of a god. How could such a person not come in conflict with Christianity?

As for the Biblical evidence, we have looked at much of it today. There is a reason Christians have been seeing Domitian in the pages of Revelation for millennia. If our interpretation is correct, then (as we will see as we continue into Chapter 13) there was to be a revived persecution by an "8th king" who would arise after the death of Nero. Who else could this be but Domitian? The Bible, in my opinion, is our best evidence on this subject, and it, in my opinion, does just about everything in pointing to Domitian but mention him by name. (But Nero is never mentioned by name in the Bible, either.)

As for the extra-Biblical evidence, there is quite a bit (but admittedly not nearly as much as we have for Nero):

- When Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan in AD 111 for advice on how to conduct trials for Christians, he said that some Christians had defected "as much as 25 years ago." That would have been during the reign of Domitian. And when Pliny says he had never been present for any such trials, the only time in Pliny's life when such trials would have likely occurred is during the reign of Domitian.
- When Melito, a bishop of the church in Sardis, wrote an apology to the emperor Marcus Aurelius in AD 175, Eusebius tells us he wrote, "Nero, and Domitian, alone, stimulated by certain malicious persons, showed a dispositon to slander our faith."
- Tertullian was an attorney in Carthage, and in his apology to Septimius Severus in AD 197, he wrote: "Consult your histories. There you will find that Nero was the first to rage with the imperial sword against this school in the very first hour of its rise in Rome," and "Domitian too, who was a good deal of a Nero in cruelty, attempted it ... soon stopped ... restored those he had banished. Such are ever our persecutors." Eusebius quotes Tertullian to the effect that John returned from exile on Patmos during the reign of Domitian and lived in Ephesus until the reign of Trajan.
- Hegesippus, who lived between AD 117 and 189, writes of Christians who were called before Domitian and examined by him. Upon hearing them, "Domitian despising then, made no reply; but treating them with contempt, as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed, and by a decree ordered the persecution to cease."
- Eusebius, who published his church history in AD 325, describes Domitiann as "the second that raised a persecution against us."

Thus, the extra-Biblical evidence clearly points to a Domitian persecution. Perhaps it was not as bad as Nero's and perhaps it was inter-

mittent at times, but it could still be very, very bad and not be as bad as what Nero did. Domitian persecuted God's people. To those who argue otherwise, I would respond as did Tertullian: "Consult your histories!"

But how can we date the book during the reign of Vespasian when much of that same extra-Biblical evidence dates it during the reign of Domitian? We dealt with this issue at length during our introductory lessons, where you will recall we suggested that John may have been exiled by Domitian before he became emperor. Also, the book may have been written during the reign of Vespasian, but not circulated until John was released, perhaps during the reign of Domitian.

Also, dating the writing of this book during the reign of Vespasian fits with Revelation 17:8, which seems to suggest that Revelation was written during a lull in the persecution —

> The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was **and is not** and is to come.

Revelation 17:11 tells us that the "beast which was, and is not" comes back as the eighth king (Domitian). The beast who was would be Rome under Nero, and the beast who is to come would be Rome under Domitian. The time when the beast "is not" would be the time between Nero and Domitian when the persecution against the church temporarily subsided.

Does this all fit with history? Yes. Tertullian speaks of Nero as "the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood, when our religion was but just arising at Rome," and he called Domitian "a limb of the bloody Nero." Eusebius writes that Domitian "finally showed himself the successor of Nero's campaign of hostility to God. He was the second to promote persecution against us." Rumors even circulated that Domitian was Nero himself who had either returned to life or had not actually died.

Our next question is why are the three short lived kings ignored? They are ignored so that the kings of Rome will fit the structure of this book, which as we know is built around the number 7. The three plucked up kings are ignored so that Domitian will be the 8th king rather than the 11th.

Why did God want to associate Domitian with the number eight? The number 8 in the Bible depicts a resurrection or new beginning. The eighth day denotes the start of a new week. Male children were circumcised on the eighth day to depict their new relationship with God. The year following seven sabbatical years was the year of Jubilee when all things were renewed (Leviticus 25). Domitian was thought to be a resurrected Nero because he began anew the persecution of the church.

So who are the 10 horns in verse 1? Again, Chapter 17 gives us some hints —

- **Revelation 17:12** And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.
- **Revelation 17:16-17** And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

So what then do we know about the 10 horns? We know the horns are kings. We know that they do not presently have royal power. We know that they will receive authority at a time of critical importance or activity. We know that they will play a role in the harlot's destruction. (The beast will also play a role. But how can the beast as Rome be partly responsible for the destruction of the harlot, which is also Rome? Recall that inner strife was one of the reasons that Rome fell. We see parallels today. Who is doing more today to harm the U.S.?

Iran or North Korea or the U.S. itself? Aren't we our own worst enemy? Rome certainly was.)

So in light of those clues, who are the 10 horns? They may represent the client kingdoms and federates of Rome. Michael Grant in his book *History of Rome* (page 196) gives us the following description of the Roman client king system —

> The client kings were tied to the service of Rome in order to defend its frontiers and serve as listening posts to the outside world. In return, they were supported by the Romans against internal subversive movements and allowed a free hand inside their own countries. Thus Rome was spared the trouble and expense of administering these territories; and the formula worked well.

He describes the rise of the federates in his book *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (pages 8 and 125) —

> In 382 Theodosius I took the revolutionary step of allowing whole German tribes to reside in Imperial territory as separate, autonomous, allied or federate units, committed to serving in the Roman army, though under the command of their own chieftains. Thereafter the practice continued and increased, until such federates became a regular and widespread feature of the life of the Empire.

The Visigoths were the first such group to receive "federate" status and were allowed to live under their own laws and ruled on the condition that they provide soldiers and agricultural workers for the Romans.

Did these groups contribute to the fall of Rome? The city of Rome itself was sacked in A.D. 410 by Alaric, a Visigoth. It was the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.

But why are there 10 horns? The number 10 is the number of completeness. It implies that nothing is wanting and that the whole cycle

is complete. Thus, the 10 horns may simply represent *all* of the client kingdoms and federates. It use may also refer to the fact that they, in a sense, drove the final nail into Rome's coffin—they *completed* the judgment that began in the first century.

That view of the 10 horns suggests that the ending point for Rome was the fifth century fall of the western empire rather than the first century fall of Domitian. Is there an explanation of the 10 horns that would fit with a first century terminus? Yes, and this possible explanation of the 10 horns would also answer another puzzling question.

As you recall, Daniel 7 also referred to 10 horns, but we have identified those 10 horns (after 3 are plucked up) with the 7 heads in Revelation 13. Why would Revelation take a symbol straight from Daniel 7 and apply it to something else?

The answer may be that the symbol is not applied to something else. It may be that the 10 horns and the 7 heads in Revelation 13 each depict the Roman emperors, but do so from different perspectives. (We are about to see two beasts that each represent Rome from a different perspective.) Under this view, the 7 heads and the 10 horns each represent the same kings, with the latter symbol including the 3 plucked up kings from Daniel 7.

But how does the description of the 10 horns in Revelation 17 fit with the Roman emperors? Recall the clues: The horns are kings. They have not yet received a kingdom or royal power. They will receive authority at a time of critical importance or activity. They will play a role in the harlot's destruction.

Revelation 17:11 tells us that the 8th king (Domitian) "belongs to the seven." That is, he came from the earlier kings and he embodied the earlier kings. Revelation sets Domitian up as the personification of the emperors who preceded him. Daniel 7:8 describes the little horn in similar terms: "behold, there **came up among them** [the 10 horns] another horn, a little one."

But what about the description that they have "not yet" received royal power? If "not yet" means they never had it prior to when they re-

ceived, then this view collapses. But "not yet" does not always mean "and never had" — and these 10 are said to be "kings" who had "not yet" received royal power, suggesting they may be kings who had it previously and would receive it again at some point.

As embodied in Domitian, the earlier kings (although dead) received a kingdom and royal power when he did. That was the time of critical importance, and indeed is a point of focus in this book and a point of focus in Daniel. Finally, they played a role in the destruction of the harlot because from this perspective they are viewed as part of Domitian, who was chiefly responsible for the destruction of the harlot. The emperors were why Rome was being judged!

So which is it — the client kings or the previous emperors? It could be either, and the description perhaps fits the client kings better than the earlier emperors. The time frame of the book, however, might steer us away from the client kings, who did not do their work against Rome until the fifth century.

It could also be neither. We know that the number 10 denotes completeness and so the 10 horns, which are 10 kings, may depict all of Rome's allied kings and conquered kingdoms gathered together at a critical point. Later in 16:14 we will see "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" gathered for a great battle.

Looking again at 13:1, notice that the seven heads are said to have blasphemous names written upon them. This part of their description refers to the deification of the Roman emperors. Recall how Paul described the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 —

> Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

That sounds just like what history tells us about Domitian. As we discussed in our introductory classes, Domitian ordered that he be

addressed as "Our Lord God Domitian." Recall the blasphemous descriptions of Domitian on the Romans coins we looked at.

And Domitian was not alone. Every emperor called himself *divus* or *sebastos,* which means divine. On his coins, Nero referred to himself as The Savior of the World. The emperors took as their title the Latin word *dominus,* or its Greek equivalent *kurios,* which mean Lord, and which is used in the Bible as a title for Jesus.

Verse 2 tells us that the beast "was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth." These descriptions point us unmistakably back to Daniel 7. The fourth kingdom in Daniel 7 is Rome, with the first three kingdoms being Babylon (shown as a *lion* in Daniel 7:4), Medo–Persia (shown as a *bear* in Daniel 7:5), and Greece (shown as a *leopard* in Daniel 7:6). Daniel 7:12 tells us that these beasts lost their dominion but didn't die.

We learn about the first two kingdoms from the book of Daniel. Babylon, the first of the four kingdoms, was the invading power that carried Daniel and his three friends off to exile in Babylon. The Medo-Persians, the second kingdom, was the one that came to power after Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall in Daniel 5. It was this second kingdom that through Daniel into the lion's den. The third kingdom was Greece, which conquered Persia under Alexander but then fell into four parts after his death. Rome was the fourth kingdom.

The beast in Revelation 13 is pictured as being part leopard, part bear, and part lion. Rome had the tearing power of the lion (Babylon). Rome had the crushing force of the bear (Medo-Persia). And Rome was swift and ferocious like a leopard (Greece). Rome, the fourth beast in Daniel 7, embodied all of the wickedness of the first three beasts and much more. Thus, it is described as being composed of pieces of the previous three kingdoms.

Hailey: "This beast symbolized all the anti-God opposition by force that could ever be brought against the people of God."

As a final point, we should note that as bad as Rome was, there is nowhere in this book any hint that the Christians were to violently re-

sist Rome or seek to overthrow Rome. Although the situation had worsened, the commands in Romans 13:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-14 had not be repealed — "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God," and "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good." Yes, Rome had veered far away from the ideal government described by Paul and ordained by God — but nowhere are we told to take matters into our own hands. When Peter commanded his readers to "honor the emperor" in 1 Peter 2:17 he was most likely referring to none other than Nero himself!