THE STORY

K

ing Nebuchadnezzar gave the signal, and as the music from a thousand instruments began to swell, the curtain fell, exposing a dazzling, 90-foot image of gold glimmering in the sunlight. Then, according to the king’s command, all the officials who had gathered on the plain of Dura fell prostrate to the ground in devout worship. All bowed down except three young Hebrew men, who were servants of a greater King.

Nebuchadnezzar was beaming with pride and satisfaction—until it was reported that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had refused to bow and worship his image. Astonished that anyone would dare to disobey, Nebuchadnezzar assumed these young advisers must have misunderstood his decree. So he offered them one more chance to bow down—but they refused! Now the king’s expression turned to rage. He ordered his soldiers to heat the nearby furnace seven times hotter than normal. As fuel was piled onto the fire, the three men were firmly tied with ropes. The resulting heat was so intense that it killed the soldiers who threw them into the blazing inferno.

As the king peered into the roaring furnace, his mouth suddenly fell open. With a trembling voice he asked, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” Daniel 3:24. His counselors agreed that they had. Then the king said, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.” Daniel 3:25.

God delivered those brave young men in the fiery furnace because they stood up for His truth. In the last days, God’s people will have to face a similar test.

THE STUDY

Fill in the blanks after reading each Bible text.

1. How does our story in Daniel 3 relate to Revelation?

Revelation 13:15 As many as would not bow down to the beast [would] be killed.

NOTE: In the last days, God’s people will be forced once again to worship contrary to conscience or be slain. They will have to choose between obeying the law of God or the laws of man.

2. What are the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14?

Revelation 14:7 Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His [blessing is] near; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

Revelation 14:8 And another angel followed, saying, ________________ is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Revelation 14:9, 10 If anyone __________ the name of the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

NOTE: The Bible tells us in Revelation 14:6-14 that in the last days, this awesome three-point message of hope and warning will go to the entire world to prepare people for Jesus’ return. One of these messages warns against worshiping the beast and receiving its mark. In this lesson, we will identify the beast. In Lesson 20, we will identify the mark. Eternal life itself may be at stake, so pray earnestly for God’s guidance and understanding as you study.

3. What does a beast represent in Bible prophecies?

Daniel 7:17 Those great ________________, which are four, are four ________________.

Daniel 7:23 The fourth beast shall be a fourth ________________ on earth.

Daniel 8:21 And the male goat is the ________________ of Greece.

NOTE: In Bible prophecy, a beast represents a government, kingdom, or political power. God uses beasts to symbolize governments, as we do today—an eagle (the United States of America), a bear (Russia), etc. In the Bible, “beast” is not a disrespectful term. It does not suggest beastly characteristics. The beast that has the mark is pictured in Revelation 13:1-10, 15-18. Please take time to read these verses before proceeding to Question 4.

4. How does the Bible identify the beast?

Revelation 13:1 Then I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his beads a blasphemous name.

NOTE: In Revelation 13:1-10, 15-18, God gives 10 clues to help us identify the beast. He gives us a long list of characteristics so that we can be absolutely certain of the beast’s identity.

5. This beast arises from the sea. What does the sea, or water, symbolize?

Revelation 17:15 The ________________ which you saw are ________________, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

NOTE: In prophecy, water represents great multitudes of people, or heavily populated areas. Prophecy predicted that the beast would arise from amid the established nations of the then-known world. The papacy arose in western Europe, so it fits Point 1. But what about the other nine identifying points?

6. Who gives the beast its power and position?

Revelation 13:2 The ________________ gave him his ________________, his ________________, and great authority.

NOTE: The beast—which has a mark that we must avoid—obtained its power, authority, and capital city from the dragon. According to Revelation 12:3-5, the dragon is the power that sought to destroy the child Jesus at the time of His birth. It was Satan who inspired Herod, a king for the pagan Roman Empire, to slay all the male babies in Bethlehem (Matthews 2:13, 16). To whom did pagan Rome give her authority and capital city? History is clear that pagan Rome turned over its power and capital city to the church of Rome. The following historical quote is typical: “The Roman church ... pushed itself into the place of the Roman World Empire, of which it is the actual continuation. ... The Pope, who calls himself ‘King’ and ‘Pontifex Maximus,’ is Caesar’s successor.”1 So Point 2 fits the papacy, as well.

7. How far-reaching is the influence of the beast?

Revelation 13:3 And ________________ the ________________ marveled and followed the beast.

NOTE: No one would question that during the Middle Ages, the papacy was indeed a worldwide power. In fact, the word “catholic” means “universal.” We can see that Point 3 also fits the papacy.

8. What comes out of the mouth of the beast?

Revelation 13:6 Then he opened his mouth in ________________ against God, to ________________ His name.

NOTE: In prophecy, a beast represents a government, kingdom, or political power. God uses beasts to symbolize governments, as we do today—an eagle (the United States of America), a bear (Russia), etc. In the Bible, “beast” is not a disrespectful term. It does not suggest beastly characteristics. The beast that has the mark is pictured in Revelation 13:1-10, 15-18. Please take time to read these verses before proceeding to Question 4.

Point 1 - Rises up out of the sea (verse 1)
Point 2 - Receives its power, seat, and authority from the dragon (verse 2)
Point 3 - Becomes a worldwide power (verses 3, 7)
Point 4 - Is guilty of blasphemy (verses 1, 5, 6)
Point 5 - Rules for 42 prophetic months (verse 5)
Point 6 - Receives a deadly wound that heals (verse 3)
Point 7 - Is a religious power that receives worship (verses 4, 8)
Point 8 - Possesses God’s saints (verse 7)
Point 9 - Has the mysterious number 666 (verse 18)
Point 10 - Is led by one supreme man (verse 18)

Only one power fits all 10 of these identifying marks—the papacy. But in order to be certain, we will carefully consider them one at a time, beginning with Question 5.

11. Is the beast a religious power?

Revelation 13:15 And cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

NOTE: It is obvious that this entity would be involved in spiritual matters. The words “worship” or “worshiped” are used five times in Revelation 13 in reference to this power. Surely no one doubts that the beast fits Point 7.

12. What does the beast do to the saints?

Revelation 13:7 It was granted to him to make ________ with the saints and to ________ them.

NOTE: It is common knowledge that the papacy did persecute and destroy conscientious Christians, especially during the Middle Ages, the peak period of its control. Many historians say that more than 50 million people died for their faith during this period of great tribulation. Apparently the church felt it was doing God a favor by stamping out “heresy.” The pope has asked that the church be forgiven for its atrocities, but the fact remains that it did persecute and destroy.

The papacy fits Point 8 also.

13. What is the mysterious number that identifies the beast?

Revelation 13:18 His number is ________.

NOTE: In Revelation 13:18, God says to count the number of the beast’s name and that it is the number of a man. When we think of the papacy, the man we naturally think of is the pope. What is his name? One of the pope’s official titles is “Vicar of the Son of God,” which is “Vicarius Filii Dei” in Latin (the official language of the church). Newspaper articles, when referring to the pope as “Vicar of Christ,” will often enclose the words in quotation marks to show that they are a translation of his title, or name. The book of Revelation is saying that the Roman numeral value of the letters of his name will equal 666. Let’s see whether or not Point 9 and 10 fit the papacy.

The papacy fits Points 9 and 10.

V 5 F 0 D 500 TOTALS
I 1 I 1 E 0 112
C 100 L 50 I 0 53
A 0 I 1 501 501
R 0 I 1 666
I 1 53
U 0 5
S 0 112

There should be no doubt remaining. We have shown that all 10 characteristics portrayed in Revelation 13:1-8, 15-18 fit the papacy. And this power has a specific mark that we dare not receive.

Now please note that there are many godly, loving Roman Catholic Christians whom God considers to be His children. There have also been many gracious and courageous popes who loved God. This lesson is not an attack upon our Catholic friends. It is an attack upon the devil, who lures churches away from scriptural truth. However, God Himself has told us that this institution has a mark we dare not receive. Sincere Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and non-Christians will all be eager to discover what this mark is so they can avoid receiving it. Let’s thank God that in His Word He has exposed Satan’s ugly plans to destroy us all.

In our next lesson, we will clearly identify the “mark” of the beast. If you receive the mark of the beast, you will be lost. Many will discover that avoiding the mark will involve a tremendous struggle. But God can give us the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were willing to face death in order to honor God.