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4. ECONOMIC SUPERPOWER: THE NEW BEAST

Having looked, in the previous chapter, at the metals in the “*image*” vision of Daniel 2 and their meaning, let us now consider this other substance in the “*feet*” - this peculiar, non-metallic “*clay*” stuff. Because this material is so different, we can assume that it must symbolize a new type of power bloc, one that differs greatly from the political-military regimes of history and has only come to the fore in modern times.

Since the previous empires in the vision of the “*image*” were metallic, we can take this to mean they all had something in common. And yes, they were characterized by strong authoritarian regimes who conquered the world of their day by means of their powerful armies. But now, what about this clay substance - this stuff that is so different to the rest of the metallic image?

Revelation 13 provides a good clue: following the description of the war-mongering sea-Beast, we see a new beast, “*coming up out of the earth*”. This is unusual because all the previous “*beast*” empires were pictured as “*rising up out of the sea*” (Revelation 13:1,11; Daniel 7:3)

These superpower Beasts from the “*sea*” conquered, or will conquer, large

portions of the world, including the nation of Israel. (There have been many beast-like empires through history, but only certain ones are mentioned in the Bible, namely those who had conquered the nation of Israel.)

The symbolism of the “*sea*” can be understood from Revelation 17:15 - “*The waters which you saw. . . are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.*” If the Beasts were pictured as rising out of the sea, then likely, it means their strength comes from their influence among the “people”, their own and those of subjected nations.

It was common in ancient times - in the absence of faith in or knowledge about the true God - for emperors to be worshiped by their peoples as divine beings. In our secular, modern world the same happens - but without the religious trappings - in nations where the Light of Truth has become extinguished by some means, by some popular uprising, such as the reign of Hitler or of some of the communist demagogues of the last century.

In its modern guise, such “worship” might be understood better as “secular adulation”. Much of this admiration and worship that history’s demagogues have acquired has been based, not only on their people’s devotion, but also on fear. . . because of their strength and ability to wage war. As it says of the Antichrist in Revelation 13:3-4, “*All the world marveled and followed after the beast. . . and they worshiped the beast, saying. . . who is able to make war with him?*”

Now, besides these “*beasts*” who rose out of the “sea”, we have this peculiar one who rose “*out of the earth*” (instead of the sea) and who was to rule in the End of the Age era. Curiously, this “*earth*” symbolism seems to resemble the “*clay*” symbolism found in the feet of the Daniel 2 image.

It must be more than coincidence, not only their resemblance to each other, but also, the fact that they both differ from the symbolism of previous empires: “*clay*” different from the various metal empires (of Daniel 2); “*earth*” different from the other empires coming out of the “*sea*” (of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13:1-10).

And that leads us to the following interesting conclusion: The “*clay*” symbolism in the Daniel 2 image can be equated with the “*earth*” symbolism given for the second Beast in Revelation 13.

Since the “*beast from the earth*” is also called the “*false prophet*” elsewhere in

the Revelation Book (16:13, 19:20, 20:10), then from here on, the terms *“clay”*, *“earth-beast”*, and *“false prophet”* will be considered as related terms, standing for the same thing more or less, but viewed from different angles. The same can also be said for the terms *“iron”*, *“sea-beast”*, and *“antichrist”*.

One unusual feature about this *“clay-earth”* power dynamic is the fact that it works closely with the other *“iron-sea”* power dynamic. They are not totally separate empires, but on some level they do cooperate: *“you saw iron mixed with the miry clay.”* (Daniel 2:41,43 - RSV) And it is more than cooperation between two empires, but also between two *“emperors”* - the Antichrist and the False Prophet (as he is called in Revelation 19:20, 20:10). ♦

Although the *“beast coming up out of the earth”* operates in a domain of power that is somehow different to that of the other *“beasts”* from the *“sea”*, he is like them, in that he should have the status of a superpower. He's not just an influential person who happens to be a member of the Antichrist's empire; he has an empire of his own.

From the symbolic point of view, the word *“beast”* is like another word for *“superpower”*. Just as a beast has a complete biological structure of organs, skeletal framework, musculature, limbs, everything needed to form a fully functioning body, so a superpower has all the infrastructure of political-military organization, wealth, industry, manpower, weapons, everything that's needed to form an empire capable of ruling a large part of the world.

♦ Head = Beast? King = Kingdom?

The Scriptures in Daniel and Revelation use the terms *“beast”* and *“kingdom”*, *“head”* and *“king”* in several places. A point worth mentioning about these terms is that they are used INTERCHANGEABLY. That is, it's hard to tell if *“beast”* also means *“head”*, or if *“kingdom”* also means *“king”* - or vice-versa.

For example, Daniel 7:17 states, *“Those great beasts... are four kings;”* but then in verse 23 we read, *“The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom.”* Furthermore, those *“beasts”* of Daniel 7 are later referred to as *“heads”* in the Revelation Book; Revelation 13 speaks of one of the *“heads”* (the Antichrist) being *“mortally wounded”* in verse 3 but in verses 12 and 14 he is referred to as the *“beast whose deadly wound was healed.”*

Also, in Revelation 17 the *“seven heads”* are called *“seven mountains*

[symbolic of empires]" (17:9); in the next verse they are called "*seven kings*". (17:10) Then the next verse turns right around and states that "*the beast that was, and is not... is of the seven ("heads/mountains/kings" just mentioned) - thereby equating the term "head" (or "king") with the term "beast" (or "mountain").* (17:11)

Perhaps using both terms to describe the same thing was the Lord's way of showing that a "*beast*" (which we would normally think of as a system, a government, or empire) must include the "*head*" of that empire, a person. A body without a head isn't going to get very far; an empire needs to have a dynamic and strong leader to unify and give it direction, plus be the head that people can look up to, or even worship. And vice-versa, a head without a body won't get very far; an emperor cannot call himself that unless he has an empire behind him.

For example, Germany in the 1920's was a weak and defeated empire after World War 1, as it struggled along under weak leadership. But then Adolph Hitler came along. In the early stages of his career, without any real power, Hitler was just a loudmouth against the system of his day. But once he managed to gain power over the German government, everything changed, and Germany rose again to empire status.

So again, to get a view of the "*elephant*", it may help to keep this in mind about the False Prophet. In his role as a "*head*", the False Prophet acts as the Antichrist's right hand man who will guide the world into following him; but, to expand this concept a bit, in his role as a "*beast*", there exists behind the False Prophet a huge empire - one that, as will be explained further on, holds dominion over the world's economic affairs.

Throughout history empires established themselves through their military might. Whoever had the strongest, best-organized army became the leading power of the day. This means of conquest - by force of arms - is typical of all the beasts who "*came up from the sea*". (Daniel 7:3) But in modern times, new domains of power have emerged; especially, financial power has become a force equivalent to, even surpassing, the traditional forces of political and military conquest.

This we may gather from the Book of Revelation in a Scripture about the "*great harlot*" (a [whole other study](#) in itself): "*For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.*" This is the first time in the entire Bible where those who wield the power of wealth are actually named as "*the great men of the earth*".

Up to this point, the *“great men”* were always the military-political leaders - the Nebuchadnezzars, the Alexanders, the Caesars, and so on, and for the most part they kept the traders and merchants under their thumb. But here, in this depiction of the modern world, a fundamental change has taken place: the *“merchants”*, the ultra-rich who pull the strings of financial wealth, are also known as the *“great men of the earth”*.

(By the way, when the term *“merchants”* is mentioned here, it is not referring to those businessmen who make an honest living, working hard to provide needed goods and services to their communities. There is a world of difference between them and the ultra-rich *“merchants”* spoken of in the Revelation Book, those who are deceiving and corrupting the world for the sake of their own greed and lust for power.)

Evidently then, judging by this Scripture and by the power dynamics in today's world, the power of wealth has risen to a new level of dominance. And here is where the second Beast in Revelation comes into the picture - not with the kind of corporate capitalism existing in America today, but with what we might call state capitalism, the kind of socialist system we see rising now in China.

Now this Beast from the *“earth”* is also called the False Prophet in Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, which suggests that he must operate and rule in the realm of religion. So we might wonder, does he really exercise that much worldly economic power? His influence should be mostly spiritual, we would think, not pragmatic or worldly.

Well, let's take a closer look at the religion he will be promoting. Revelation 13:12 tells us, *“He. . . causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast (the Antichrist).”* So he is promoting worship of the Antichrist and having thus a spiritual influence.

But then how is that worship manifested? Further on in verses 16-17, we learn that *“It (the earth-Beast or False Prophet) causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.”* (RSV) This passage describes the soon-coming credit system that the world will be obliged to adopt if it wants to continue buying and selling. But this act of getting “marked” is also an act of worship - like receiving a brand to show that a person has given his allegiance to and belongs to the

Antichrist.

How can we recognize this as an act of worship? We can start to find the answer by looking back into the Old Testament: whenever the word *“worship”* is mentioned there, very often it is accompanied by the phrase *“fall down”* or *“bow down”*. This was the standard way of showing one’s worship then. But in the Revelation Book we see instead that the phrase *“worship (the beast and/or his image)”* is accompanied by the phrase *“receive the mark”*.

Most of the prophecies and visions in the Book of Revelation were aimed at outlining events and conditions that would arise in the distant future, in particular the future we call modern times. And these statements about the peculiar practice of receiving the mark reflect the soon-coming historical reality, this peculiar futuristic way of showing *“worship”*, or declaring one’s allegiance to the Beast (the Antichrist) who *“opened his mouth in blasphemy against God”*. (Revelation 13:6).

“He deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.” Receiving the mark and worshiping go hand in hand - just as bowing and worshiping did in former times. (Revelation 19:20. Also, 14:9,11, 16:2, 20:4). (For more information on this subject, see [“A New Initiation Rite”](#) in the *Unraveling the Mystery of the Image* series of posts.)

So, all that to say, the False Prophet, because of his capacity to implement a new buying and selling scheme in the markets of the world, is able to use that system to coerce the masses into worshiping the Antichrist. His power is such that he can also push the Antichrist into a position of great authority in the world, thereby making himself co-ruler. *“And he (the False Prophet). . . causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.”* (Revelation 13:12)

To be capable of wielding such power probably means that most of the world’s sources and production of wealth, including the financial system especially, have fallen into the hands of this Beast from the earth. He conquers in the domain of wealth. . . or control of wealth distribution might be a more accurate way of putting it. And so it would appear that the False Prophet’s religious power is rooted in and dependent on worldly economic power.

The Antichrist is able to coerce the world into worship of himself because of his military might, but the False Prophet is able to coerce the world into worshiping the Antichrist through manipulation of the world’s wealth.

What other clues might we find in Revelation 13 to support this conclusion about the earth-Beast's ability to control the world's economy? For one thing, while describing the earth-Beast's activities, John observes that he has the ability to get everyone in the world to possess an "*image*" of the Antichrist and then is able to "*give life*" to that image (verses 14-15).

This suggests that the earth-Beast, or False Prophet, has considerable control over the world's image-broadcasting industries that the apostle, in his clumsy way, was trying to describe. (See posts in [Unraveling the Mystery of the Image](#) for more information on that subject.) And the False Prophet's control in this domain contributes greatly to his "religious" power.

And it would stand to reason that if he controls the media, then he probably owns it. And if he owns it, then he must have access to a huge amount of wealth.

The same can be said about this Beast's power to cause everyone to receive the "*mark*" for buying and selling (Revelation 13:16-17). If he's capable of doing that, then it implies that he must control and own the computer credit systems of the financial world, pointing again to the fact that he must have access to a huge amount of wealth.

Even the symbolism of the "*earth*" (and the "*clay*") suggests this: Where does wealth come from? From the mines and farms and forests of the "*earth/clay*" come the resources for manufacturing and industry, from which spring the trading, commercial, and financial systems of exchange.

(To understand why this study has chosen the model of militarism-materialism power blocs, instead of dictatorship-democracy or other models, to represent the iron-clay symbolism in the Daniel 2 image, see [Appendix](#) below.)

And what religion does the False Prophet promote? Besides Antichrist-worship, directly linked with that is the False Prophet's own religion of Materialism. We can see then that the "*earth*" symbolism encompasses both the economic and religious aspects of the False Prophet's dominion. And we could say the same for the "*clay*" symbolism in the feet portion of the Daniel 2 vision.

So with the Antichrist wielding power on the military/political front and the False Prophet wielding power on the economic/religious front, that results in fairly

widespread coverage. The symbolism of the Beasts coming from both sea and earth suggests this idea of completeness. Never before in history have the Beasts of both “*sea*” and “*earth*” operated in and ruled over the world simultaneously and in cooperation with each other.

This combination will be unique in history - something that could only be possible in the Modern Age - although there is reason to believe that behind the scenes it has been in the works for quite some time. (See [Appendix 3](#) for more background information.) Soon then, looming on the horizon of history, we can expect to see the actual appearance of this last dual empire, this powerful union of two “*beasts*”, just before Christ’s return.

In the previous post we learned that the Beast from the sea was represented by Russia, but a question mark still hangs over the identity of the other Beast. And that will be the subject of the next post.

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Appendix: *Iron-Clay* as military-economic power blocs

A commonly held explanation for the “*iron and clay*” in the feet of the Daniel 2 image is that they symbolize dictatorships and democracies. This holds true in that the merchant classes have used the loose controls of *laissez-faire* democracy to rise to dominance in the world, while military regimes are characterized by dictatorial forms of government.

In spite of its noble ideals, the advent of democracy has played into the hands of the capitalist owners of wealth; it has enabled them to operate without interference from powerful sovereigns or dictators and thereby catapult themselves into a position of greater dominance in the world - keeping the “*iron*” forces under their thumb to a large extent during the last hundred years or so.

As for the future of democracy, probably it won’t be needed anymore. Since the rise of the Antichrist will happen under the sponsorship of the False Prophet, then the freedom of democracy will hardly be necessary or expedient; the economic bloc can maintain its dominance without it.

As for the commercial empire of the *“great harlot”*, it will collapse, while the Earth-Beast’s economic grip on the world will continue under the Antichrist’s protection; and they will become arbiters of the new world order’s buying and selling system.

Revelation 18 gives a helpful indicator of the new factor in the modern world’s balance-of-power equation: towards the End of the Age, we read that the *“merchants were the great ones of the earth”*. (18:23) Such power and independence of the merchant class did not exist in ancient times when they were kept under control, for the most part, by powerful military-political rulers. But nowadays, to a large extent, the ultra-wealthy power-brokers are calling the shots instead of the military class.

This would explain why it was said, *“The fourth kingdom [Rome] shall be as strong as iron”*, but in the feet *“the [fourth] kingdom shall be divided.”* (Daniel 2:40-41, NKJV) In other words, that military strength that used to predominate in the *“fourth kingdom”* of ancient Rome, now in modern times, has to kow-tow to the equally powerful ruling bloc of wealthy power-brokers. They control how events play out on the world stage nowadays to a much greater degree than they did in ancient times.

Thus, to get a more complete understanding of the *“iron and clay”* symbolism, it will be helpful to see it as representing power blocs - military force and economic control. And from them will emerge the two secular *“religions”* of demagoguery and materialism.

Of course, it is still true that democracy enabled the wealthy industrialists and power-brokers, and the system of capitalism, to gain the upper hand in the halls of government in many countries; through democracy, power was transferred from the military-political realm into the economic realm.

In other nations, however, the opposite happened. In Weimar Germany, for example, a military man, Adolph Hitler, used democratic voting and election principles to catapult himself into becoming Germany’s dictator in the 1930’s and 40’s.

It seems ironic that democracy, which is supposed to bestow greater freedom in the world of mankind, has backfired, allowing oppressive military and capitalist regimes to grab hold of the reins of power in many countries. With freedom comes

responsibility, and mankind is simply not ready for that, it seems. . . at least not while the forces of spiritual Darkness are allowed to roam in the Earth.

So what is the role of democracy? Although it has worked in some countries, it has, in so many nations, facilitated the rise to dominance of either the militarists or the mega-merchants. It seems reasonable then to understand that “*iron and clay*” symbolize, respectively, the power blocs of military-political and economic domains.

And this symbolism of “*iron and clay*” in the feet of the “*image*” vision in the *Book of Daniel*, chapter 2, is echoed later on in the *Book of Revelation* and its description of the world’s peculiar system of worship to come at the End of the Age. The new “religion” will feature the “*mark of the beast*”, which in its peculiar way combines Mammon-worship with Emperor-worship. Without the “*mark*” a person will show that he doesn’t worship the *Beast from the Sea* (Emperor-worship); that will also shut him or her out from buying-and-selling operations (worship of Mammon). So we may say that the *iron-clay* mixture of military and economic power blocs from Daniel, chapter 2, is visualized in the *Revelation Book* as the combination of *Sea* and *Earth Beasts* with their resulting worship system: a combination of Emperor and Mammon worship.

By the way, there are many other interpretations about the meaning of the iron-clay symbolism. This is not the only version and, no doubt, it would be helpful to examine them. But for the time being, the version put forth in this post seems logical enough and is the one that will be used.

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