In 1886, the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched a periodical called the *American Sentinel* (replaced by *Liberty* magazine in 1906) to counter the growing influence of the National Reform Association, which had been lobbying for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would establish Christianity as the national religion. The proposed amendment read, “We the people of the United States, humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Governor among the nations, and His revealed will as of supreme authority, in order to constitute a Christian government,... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

The editors of the *American Sentinel* were relentless in their efforts to oppose and defeat the National Reform Association’s goal to nationalize Christianity. Despite those efforts, however, an article from Ellen White published in 1889 reveals that the church showed a concerning lack of interest in the issue: “There have been surprising indifference and inactivity in this time of peril. Truth, present truth, is what the people need; and if the startling significance of the movements now in progress in regard to the religious amendments had been realized by our brethren in every church... they would not now be in such stupor and deathlike slumber” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 [1889], 718). This chapter will explore the prophetic symbols that emphasize how important it is for us today to continue advocating for the separation of church and state.
Write out Revelation 13 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 11–15. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the passage.
EARTH’S FINAL SUPERPOWER

The visions Jesus gave to John in the book of Revelation reveal an end-time coalition of religion, politics, and economics that will unite to threaten God’s people. In a coming time of crisis, various institutions will band together to force God’s people to compromise. The prophecies promise that regardless of the extreme pressure and coercion, God will still have a group that remains loyal to Him through it all.

The beasts of Daniel and Revelation symbolize the nations of this world (Dan. 7:17, 23). The beast that rises from the earth in Revelation 13:11 represents this world’s final cultural and military superpower—the only nation that has the influence and power to spread and enforce a religious agenda on a global scale in the last days (vv. 12–17). This beast belongs to a lineup of creatures from Daniel and Revelation, each of which symbolizes a different nation (Dan. 7:17, 23). The nation represented by the beast from the land leads the whole world to join together in a certain religious agenda, which will spark the final conflict between good and evil immediately preceding Jesus’ return (Rev. 14:9–14).

Most of the beasts in Daniel and Revelation come from the sea (Dan. 7:2; Rev. 13:1), signifying that these nations develop in overpopulated and highly contested areas of the world (Rev. 17:15). In contrast, the beast of Revelation 13:11 arises from out of the earth. If the prophetic symbol of water represents a flood of peoples, nations, and languages, we can infer that the prophetic symbol of earth signifies the opposite—the wilderness. The Bible associates the wilderness with solitude (Prov. 21:19; Jer. 2:6). The New World, as North America was called, was quiet and peaceful, a literal wilderness compared to the fiercely contested land of the Old World (Europe). In fact, the average population density in what eventually became the United States was less than 10 percent of most countries in Europe, Asia, or Africa.

The beast from the earth appeared around the time the sea beast received its deadly wound (Rev. 13:3, 10), which occurred in 1798 when Napoleon’s general arrested and exiled Pope Pius VI. The United States was in its infancy that year, rising to power in an unmapped part of the world. No other current world power satisfies the biblical criteria of the earth beast given in verse 11.

It’s common for modern preachers to offer all kinds of explanations for the economic control, government overreach, and totalitarian state described in the mark of the beast prophecy (Rev. 13:15–17). These explanations usually include stark warnings about a secular state taking control and imposing secular ideologies on its citizens. However, most of these theorists take this passage out of context by disregarding the preceding verses. We cannot fully understand the mark of the beast crisis unless we also consider the events that ultimately lead the world to accept the mark. The previous verses describe (cont. on p. 93)
A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

The beast from the earth exercises the same authoritarian control as the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:11), which derives its authority from the dragon (v. 2). The two beasts and the dragon belong to the same family and all share the same spirit of the dragon, but there’s an increased appearance of Christianity with each successive power. The dragon is satanic in both character and appearance (Rev. 12:9), making it relatively simple to identify it as separate from God. The sea beast has the same character but disguises it with a God-like appearance, inserting itself in God’s place and redirecting worship to itself (Rev. 13:4–6). Finally, the earth beast is described as having the Christlike attributes of a lamb (v. 11), but still speaking as a dragon. The Christian appearance in this final beast will result in a deception that’s trickier to identify than anything else in this world’s history.

The beast from the earth that is like a lamb and yet speaks as a dragon leads the whole world to form an image of the sea beast (Rev. 13:13, 14). The prophetic symbols used here show that this is represents a very religious movement. Verse 13 tells of fire called from heaven, referencing the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:38) with one crucial and shocking difference: it’s the wrong side that sees fire descend in answer to their prayers! It’s hard to overstate just how difficult it will be to tell who works for God and who doesn’t during this time. Pentecost is another helpful story of fire from heaven coming in answer to prayer (Acts 2:3). At Pentecost, the flames were a visible representation of the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples. However, Revelation’s fire represents a false outpouring of the Holy Spirit where healers and revivalists who do not work in God’s name draw huge crowds. The whole world will be mesmerized by miracles and extraordinary supernatural events that will create a religious fervor reminiscent of the mob at Jesus’ trial.

When false miracles are worked and the false outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs, the way has been prepared for the beast’s image to be formed. Unfortunately, professed Christians will be the primary contributors to this image, and the image’s progress will be best indicated by the changing tone of the messages coming from the leading pulpits in America. “When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result” (Ellen White, The Great Controversy [1911], 445). Whenever church and state blend, there’s always competition on whether the state controls the church or the church controls the state. It’s possible that church and state will jostle for dominance in events leading up to the mark of the beast, but the leading churches will ultimately gain the upper hand. The final tyranny will be religious in nature, not secular.
Jesus and Liberty

Week Eleven

Review your memorized verse from Revelation 13.

(Cont. from inGest, p. 91):

a deeply religious movement and a false revival that sets the stage for the final tyranny. The mark of the beast is a religious dispute over the issue of worship. It’s more imperative than ever that believers study these prophecies prayerfully, with a humble attitude, using Scripture to interpret itself, lest we also become speculative and blind in our interpretations.

This was an incredible discovery for the founders of the Adventist movement. They realized that Miller and the others had missed this crucial detail. Rather than the earth being the sanctuary that needed to be cleansed, the Bible was instead pointing to the sanctuary in heaven. Leviticus 16 suddenly became an extremely important chapter for Adventists. By studying this chapter, students of biblical prophecy could get a glimpse into Jesus’ work in the heavenly sanctuary—work that began in 1844.

What relationship do the following verses have with Revelation 13?

Revelation 16:13, 14
Revelation 19:20
1 John 4:1
Matthew 24:24
Daniel 3
1 Kings 18
Acts 2:1–4
Leviticus 10:1–11

What other verses come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

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What relationship do the following verses have with Revelation 13?

Revelation 16:13, 14
Revelation 19:20
1 John 4:1
Matthew 24:24
Daniel 3
1 Kings 18
Acts 2:1–4
Leviticus 10:1–11
**LAMBLIKE**

A symbolic lamb appears twice in Revelation 13. Verse 8 speaks of a group of people whose names are written in “the Book of Life of the Lamb” and who refuse to worship the beast. This scene describes those who stand with Jesus to the very end. All of us can belong to that group; all we need to do is follow the Lamb. Verse 11 says the earth beast has “two horns like a lamb,” but unlike horns from previous beasts (Rev. 13:1), these horns are not crowns, signifying that this nation will have neither king nor pope.

When the earth beast creates an image of the sea beast, directing the people’s worship to the joint church-state power the image represents, it yields its lamblike qualities and falls back into the dragon-like oppression of the Dark Ages. This explains why it is called an image (a reflection or replica) of the sea beast. Nobody can study biblical prophecy without also studying history. The Bible highlights certain chapters of human history and warns us that they will be repeated in the last days. The discussion of the beast’s image tells us that the history of the sea beast (the Roman Catholic Church) is one chapter of history that will be repeated. This beast represents the religious entity that dominated Europe for over one thousand years, under whose reign millions lost their families, property, and lives for offenses such as refusing to partake in the Catholic mass or owning, reading, or sharing even a portion of the Bible with others. The Spanish Inquisition was one of the many violent and cruel efforts of the state church to eliminate all dissenters. The crusades were another attempt to destroy those who did not conform. Understanding the danger of these histories repeating, Ellen White notes: “Let the principle once be established in the United States that the church may employ or control the power of the state; that religious observances may be enforced by secular laws; in short, that the authority of church and state is to dominate the conscience, and the triumph of Rome in this country is assured” (*The Great Controversy* [1911], 581, emphasis added). The Bible predicts that earth’s final world power is going to reflect the religious oppression of the Dark Ages.

The last two centuries have witnessed some of humanity’s cruelest tyrannies, both religious and secular in nature. Millions of lives have been lost to genocide, ethnic “cleansing,” and intolerant dictators, among many other crimes. Christian believers have suffered some of the worst persecution from hostile atheistic regimes. But the time since Jesus’ death shows that religious tyranny can be just as deadly as secular tyranny, if not more so. It’s difficult for Christians to admit that some of the worst acts of oppression in human history have been committed by Christians toward Muslims, Christians toward Jews, and Christians toward other Christians, but the Bible did prophesy this failure. The prophecy regarding the beast’s image is another clear warning that although secular tyranny may have been the dominant form of persecution for the past two centuries, the world will ultimately relapse into the religious from experienced during the Dark Ages.
THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

“When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of ‘heresy.’ In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends.” (Ellen White, The Great Controversy [1911], 443.)

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” (Ibid., 445.)

“Let the principle once be established in the United States that the church may employ or control the power of the state; that religious observances may be enforced by secular laws; in short, that the authority of church and state is to dominate the conscience, and the triumph of Rome in this country is assured.” (Ibid., 581.)

“When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9–11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: ‘The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.’ 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.” (Ibid., 594, 595.)

“The principles necessary for our youth to cultivate must be kept before them in their daily education, that when the decree shall go forth requiring all to worship the beast and his image, they may make the right decisions, and have strength to declare, without wavering, their confidence in the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, even at the very time when the law of God is made void by the religious world. Those who waver now and are tempted to follow in the wake of apostates who have departed from the faith, ‘giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,’ will surely be found on the side of those who make void the law of God, unless they repent and plant their feet firmly upon the faith once delivered to the saints.” (Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5 [1889], 525.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Where is Jesus in Revelation 13?

Why should young people care about the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation? Are they relevant to our daily lives?

In what ways has the church suffered from secular tyranny in this world? Religious?

How does the earth beast (Rev. 13:11–18) convince the world to follow its religious agenda?

If the beast powers will perform miracles too, how can we tell which are of God and which aren’t?

How does the image of the beast prophecy change the way you see current and future events?