



 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Searching Deeper

FREEDOM LOST



FREEDOM LOST

Did you ever have a childhood friend you saw again after many years? By then, they were all grown up, and you might have wondered, *How did that sweet kid turn into someone so different from how they started out?* Like people, nations change as they grow, and the end result does not always reflect the way they began. Revelation 13 traces the life cycle of one nation that goes through a significant change from the principles on which it was originally established. This prophetic nation even plays a role in prompting every person to make a decisive choice before Jesus returns. Studying Lessons #21 and #22 first will prepare you to understand what Bible prophecy teaches about this nation.

1 What means can Satan use to carry out his plans on Earth?

Revelation 2:10 “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison . . .”

One way Satan can work is through the actions of human governments. Satan used a decree of the Egyptian Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew sons (Exodus 1:22), and the Persian King Ahasuerus to threaten the Jews (Esther 3:8–11). He used King Herod to kill the baby boys of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16); and the Roman governor, Pilate, to crucify Jesus (Mark 15:15). In the corrupt church of the Dark Ages, religious leaders used the power of the state to persecute and kill men and women it accused of heresy. The evil actions of governments reveal the working of spiritual forces behind the scenes: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

2 What backdrop in Revelation sets the stage for the final events of prophecy?

Revelation 12:17 “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

In symbolic language, Revelation describes the events on the world stage that lead to the conclusion of the sin controversy on Earth. The resurrected Jesus is not defeated by the dragon through the Crucifixion (Revelation 12:5). Neither can Satan eliminate Jesus’ true followers through persecution and deceptions (Revelation 12:14–16). So he prepares for a final spiritual attack by arranging an alliance of two world powers that will carry out his final assault on those who obey all of God’s law. Together, the three-fold collaboration counterfeits the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The first ally, symbolized by the sea beast in Revelation 13:1–8 is the religious institution of papal Rome (see Lesson #21).

3 What is the second ally in the dragon’s strategy to make war against God’s commandment-keeping people?

Revelation 13:11 “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.”

A beast in Bible prophecy represents a nation or world power (Daniel 7:23). This nation is a world government with distinct symbolic features.

4 What are the distinguishing features of the second world power in Revelation 13:11-17?

1. **It comes from the earth.** The first beast came from the sea, which represents a populated area (Revelation 13:1, 17:15). By contrast, this nation arises from a sparsely populated area, away from the crowded continent of Europe with its ancient governments and histories.

2. **Unlike the first beast of Revelation 13:1, its two horns have no crowns.** This nation's system of government is different from the monarchies of Europe. It has no royal family or kingly crown. Instead of being "subjects" who submit to a monarch, its people are "citizens" who possess rights.

3. **It is a lamb-like nation.** Twenty-eight times in Revelation, a "lamb" represents Jesus. This nation begins by advocating lamb-like principles that match the principles of Christ, such as liberty, individual conscience, and morality.

4. **It comes on the world scene about the same time that papal Rome receives its deadly wound,** removing its governmental power in 1798. Revelation 13:10 describes the sea beast receiving its deadly wound with the words, "He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword." The very next historical event John witnesses is the appearance of the nation represented by the earth beast (Revelation 13:11).

5. **It grows in power without conquering any nation.** Instead of replacing the previous beast, as the other kingdoms of Bible prophecy did, this nation exists alongside papal Rome, the first beast of Revelation 13.

6. **It has two horns** that represent the two cornerstones of its power—civil liberty (freedom from the rule of a king) and religious liberty (freedom from the rule of a pope).



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7. **It develops worldwide power and influence** and becomes the dominant national power on Earth (Revelation 13:12).

5 What nation does the "beast coming up out of the earth" represent?

Only one nation arose from a relatively sparsely populated area of the world, in the late 1700s, governing without a monarchy, growing in power without conquering nations, claiming Protestant Christian principles, granting liberty from the tyranny of kings, and promising religious freedom. The United States of America is the only nation in history that fits the biblical description. This nation is pictured as coming from "the earth," and in Revelation 12:16, the "earth" offered protection from the flood of Satan's deceptions. When Protestants sought a place where they could worship God freely without the threat of persecution, they sailed across the ocean to the New World. The community they established grew up into the "beast coming up out of the earth"—the United States—where citizens were granted freedom from the control of religious laws. As its "two horns" of power, America's civil liberty is its representative form of government called Republicanism, and its religious liberty is based on the principles of Protestantism.

6 What relationship does the Bible say the earth beast (the United States) will have with the sea beast (the papacy)?

Revelation 13:12 "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

The relationship becomes one of united interests, in which the United States enacts civil policies that lead people to bow to the policies and practices of the papacy. In 1798, the French army took Pope Pius VI captive to France. This inflicted the deadly wound that ended the papal tradition of exercising its power through secular kings and governments. The healing of the deadly wound means that the papal organization will regain its former power—the power of working through a mighty government. By working in unity with the papacy to enforce its religious laws, the United States will bring final healing to the deadly wound, so that the papacy will again exert its influence with power.

7 Why would citizens who value freedom go along with laws that promote religious control?

Revelation 13:13-14 "He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do

in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.”

Many people will support religious laws when dramatic events take place that appear to indicate God’s approval. In the Bible, when God brought fire from Heaven, it confirmed that He was leading (Leviticus 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; Acts 2:1–3). However, the symbolic fire that will persuade the majority is not from God, but from Satan, who can work miracles and even appears as a wise spiritual being from Heaven (2 Corinthians 11:14). Supernatural signs and messages that appear to be from the dead will begin false revivals. God warned us not to believe these messages, because the dead do not talk or act (Leviticus 19:31). These deceptive messages, miracles, and revivals will turn the attention of people to corrupt religious leaders (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). Public statements wrapped in spiritual language will convince people that religious laws can restore society, and that their government is acting on their behalf to carry out God’s will. By popular demand, the policies of the papacy will become the desire of the people. In this way the majority will “make an image to the beast” (Revelation 13:14).

8 What is the image to the beast that “those who dwell on the earth” rally together to support?

The Old Testament prophetic book of Daniel shows an example of what this image will be. Like King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who set up a physical image and threatened to kill anyone who would not bow down and worship it, this symbolic image will include a decree that compels people to worship (Daniel 3). However, the image to the beast in America will not be a physical statue. Like an image reflected in a mirror, it will be a twin version of religious control that duplicates the papacy’s history of using civil governments to enforce its religious laws—especially a day of rest (Sunday) for all people. Despite their differences, influential churches will unite around the teaching of Sunday rest that they hold in common. Widespread church and civil support for the papacy’s claim of global leadership will result in a united call for religious laws. When the influential churches of America, that were originally established on the Protestant principle of liberty, influence the state to enforce their decrees for Sunday rest, the image to the beast is formed.

9 How will the lamb-like beast begin to speak like a dragon?

Revelation 13:15 “He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

A nation speaks through its laws, and to speak like a dragon, the United States will enact laws that require what Satan desires for himself—worship (Matthew 4:9). The image of the beast will symbolically come to life when the American government actively requires obedience to the papacy’s counterfeit day of worship. By acting as a spokesman for the papacy’s religious laws, the American government will give the image of the beast great power to speak and to take life. Giving worship to the image of the beast gives worship to the first beast that it represents, and worship to the first beast is directed back to Satan, indirectly giving him what he desires (Revelation 13:2–4).

10 What authority will the United States exercise on behalf of the papacy?

Revelation 13:15, 17 “... And cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ... And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

The United States will compel its citizens to receive the mark of the beast. Nations have at least three ways to compel people to obey:

- **Persuasion** – Governments may appeal to reason with convincing arguments. This is how God interacts with us. “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord ...” (Isaiah 1:18).
- **Reward and Penalty** – Promises of financial benefit and safety will entice some to adopt practices they would otherwise reject. Liberty of conscience is threatened when governments use financial pressure that restricts freedom to buy or sell.
- **Force** – Finally, when religion and government unite, the result is always coercion by threats and violence. When facing a death penalty for remaining loyal to God’s commands, half-hearted and false believers will be sifted out until only God’s few loyal followers remain. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11).

11 What is the mark of the beast that the United States will enforce by law?

The mark of the beast is obeying the enforced requirement to rest and worship on Sunday in compliance with the religious laws of the papacy. (See Lesson #22 for a study on the mark of the beast.)

12 Will the power to compel worship be confined to one nation?

Revelation 13:12, 14–16 “And he ... causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast And he deceives those who dwell on the earth ... and cause[s] as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark”

Just as Jesus’ offer of salvation is universal (John 3:16), Satan’s desire for worship is not confined to one region or nation (Revelation 12:9). The world’s governments have become interconnected so that what affects one, affects all. Through its global influence, the United States will lead nations around the world to enforce the same law requiring worship. “... And all the world marveled and followed the beast” (Revelation 13:3).

13 Why is the United States singled out from among the many nations of the world in this prophecy?

Of all the modern nations of the world, only the United States is pictured in Bible prophecy because of the role it plays in final events. This nation will bring about the enforcement of the mark of the beast that then spreads worldwide. As a result, all people will be required to make a choice that shows on which side they stand in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

14 Will human promises of safety protect those who go along with the command to worship?

Revelation 16:1–2 “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’ ... And a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”

Accepting the mark of the beast will be accompanied by the promise of continued freedom to buy and sell, but the promises of men do not overrule the consequence of rejecting God’s law. “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5). Only trusting God completely by not receiving the mark of the beast will shield anyone from the judgment of the plagues.

15 Isn’t America a nation of liberty?

Exodus 1:8, 11 “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens....”

The nation of Egypt after the death of Joseph is an example of how governments change. Gradually, the lamb-like beast will begin to speak

like a dragon, with little notice of the change. The outward character of a nation and its people change quickly when threatened by desperate times that call for desperate measures. In fact, laws requiring Sunday worship have been previously enacted, and remain on record. But they will not be enforced until an opportune time. When a government consolidates control over the daily issues of life such as finances, food supply, transportation, and health, it can apply pressure that will urge people to comply.

16 What conditions will bring about this dramatic change of attitude in the people and the nation?

Luke 21:25–26 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Matthew 24:7, 9 “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”

The condition of our world is deteriorating. Extreme weather and widespread disasters are becoming more frequent and more severe. Wars, terrorism, and immorality prompt people to seek urgent solutions, even appealing to spiritual leaders. When the majority is desperate to preserve peace and safety, people will even sacrifice the religious freedom they once took for granted. But Jesus says, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ...” (Matthew 16:26).



“Through its global influence, the United States will lead nations around the world to enforce the same law requiring worship.”

17 What is God doing while liberty of conscience is being restricted?

Revelation 14:9–10 “Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships 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, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation....’”

God is sending His final warning to the world. The third angel’s message is an invitation of mercy. Satan works through coercion, but God desires only a response from love. His clear invitation to anyone who has not yet heard is to put our faith in Jesus for salvation, and not in man-made traditions. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17). Even when God’s commandment-keepers are unjustly accused of being national enemies, God will use His faithful friends to give His message. “You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak” (Matthew 10:18–19).

18 What will happen to people who have never had the opportunity to hear about God, His law, and the Sabbath?

Revelation 18:1, 4 “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”

Those who have had the opportunity to respond to God’s invitation of mercy will reveal their decision for or against God when worship on the counterfeit Sabbath is required by law. This is why Peter says, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). For all the others who have never heard, God’s warning message will intensify until everyone will have the opportunity to hear and make a decision. When honest-hearted people recognize Bible truth for the first time, God will give them power to leave what they formerly believed and reveal the sincere loyalty that is already in their hearts. “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). “... Creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).

19 Will this series of events really happen as the Bible says?

Numbers 23:19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man,

that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

Isaiah 46:9–10 “... I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”

Amos 3:7 “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

The predictions of men have not proven true, but we can trust the promises and prophecies of God. There is no need for God’s followers to be surprised by the events He has promised will take place. “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly” (Luke 21:34).

20 What encouragement does God give to those who would rather let go of their life than let go of Jesus?

Revelation 2:10 “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Matthew 5:44–45 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven ...”

Isaiah 41:10 “... Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”



“... God’s warning message will intensify until everyone will have the opportunity to hear and make a decision.”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. Understanding Bible prophecy changes the way we look at the news of world events. Jesus told us, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42). We watch by first keeping our eyes on Jesus, then we remain watchful to avoid sin. And finally, we watch to recognize what God promised would take place. What do you see transpiring that confirms what God said would take place?

2. The Bible says that “none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10). In Israel, there were wise men “who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). How can understanding the times change the way you live each day?

3. Matthew 7:13-14 tells us that man’s way seems easy and convenient, but God’s way is narrow and requires sacrifice. How can you step out in faith right now so that you will trust and obey God even when it is unpopular?

4. God’s many promises are experienced fully when we go through a trial of faith. For example, “... In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). How can God’s promises deepen your trust in Him so you will not be afraid?

5. God has plans for you to be part of proclaiming the gospel! Who do you know that needs to hear what you have learned? “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Proverbs 9:9).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN GOD'S PROPHECY ABOUT AMERICA?



1. I have no need to worry about which candidate will be elected. "... He removes kings and raises up kings ..." (Daniel 2:21). "All nations before Him are as nothing ..." (Isaiah 40:17).

2. I can remain an honorable citizen even when a government dishonors God. "So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful ..." (Daniel 6:4).

3. When a religious revival appears to take place, I can know if it is truly from God. "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

4. Knowledge of Bible prophecy prepares me to help others who face a decision of loyalty. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

5. Even if those around me turn away from God's commands, I can trust Him. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (Psalm 27:10).

6. I am safe when I follow close to Jesus because He is victorious over every beast. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

7. God's way is not difficult when I remember that Jesus is my helper. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

8. God's promise is worth the cost. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. God has explained what will happen before Jesus returns, so we will not be surprised.

2. Satan works through governments and leaders to deceive people into worshipping him instead of God.

3. Bible prophecy reveals that the United States will play an important role in end-time events.

4. The United States government will enforce the papal requirement to rest and worship on Sunday, instead of the seventh-day Sabbath.

5. Financial pressure and the threat of death will be used to compel people to obey.

6. God sends a final warning message of mercy so that all people will choose to trust Him.

7. To everyone who puts their faith in Jesus, God gives power to keep His commandments.

Additional Notes:

GOD'S END-TIME CALL

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14 invite each of us to choose sides in the final showdown between good and evil. Where will you stand?



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