

Thoughts on the "Seven Heads and Ten Horns"

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Introduction

The four chapters which use the expression "seven heads and ten horns" (or "ten horns and seven heads") form a connected series.

Table 1
Overview

Ref	Heads and Horns	Beasts	Wound	Head	When?
Dan 7	Seven heads, ten horns	Four	No wound mentioned		
Ref 12	Seven heads, ten horns	One	No wound mentioned		
Rev 13	Ten horns, seven heads	One	Wound (simultaneous), recovery	Same	?
Rev 17	Seven heads, ten horns	One	Wound (simultaneous), recovery	Different	#6

In table 1, by "simultaneous" I mean that a second power is active at the same time the first one is inactive. This fact alone will enable us to understand the relationship between the power that "is" and the one that "is not" in Rev 17:8(x2) and 11.

The Four Chapters

In Dan 7 the heads and horns are not mentioned together, because they are associated with four separate beasts; in Revelation the characteristics of Daniel's beasts four are combined as one composite beast. I have emphasized the number our, but notice that the four beasts of Dan 7 represent five distinct phases of power. The little horn is related to, but must be distinguished from, the terrible fourth beast.

In Rev 12 the only new information is the above shift from four beasts to one.

In Rev 13 John returns to the composite beast of the preceding chapter, and he makes an explicit connection with Dan 7 by listing the original four beasts, but in inverse order. What Daniel gave as lion, bear, leopard, beast, John now repeats as beast, leopard, bear, lion. This list contains no new information in and of itself, but we now learn that one of the sea beast's five phases of power receives a mortal wound. What we are not told is which part. Another important bit of information supplied in Rev 13 is that the entire sequence of strength, followed by weakness, followed by renewed strength (ABA') involves only one head, or historical entity. "One [sg] of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed" (Rev 13:3). From this I gather that there was a head before the wound, the head was wounded, and the head that was wounded is the one that recovers from the wound. Separately, while the sea beast is temporarily incapacitated, the earth beast supports it in every way it can.

Heads and Horns

In Rev 17, again there are "seven heads and ten horns," and again these are associated with one composite beast. Again there is a pattern of strength, weakness, and renewed strength. But this time it is symbolized using separate heads. In Dan 7 the five phases of power associated with the beasts that come out of the sea map neatly onto the first five heads of Rev 17, plus the fifth one's wounding and recovery. Alternatively, we could speak of the first four (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) plus the last three (the little horn before, during, and after the wound; $4+3 = 7$). The power that "is not" is the wounded sea beast, and the power that "is" is the helpful earth beast. This is not new information. What is new in Rev 17, that we didn't know before, is when the wound occurs. The wound occupies period #6.

Dan 11

Already in Daniel we see a hint of the above sequence. Both secular and spiritual Rome are Rome, but spiritual Rome, after a difficult rise to power (11:29-30a), remains supreme throughout the rest of the section (11:30b-39). Then, in vs. 40 there is a major Southern attack. This would not have been possible before, so the fact that it is possible in vs. 40 represents a change. The larger the attack, the larger the change that makes it possible. We know two powers are involved in vs. 40, because of the word *'immô* "with him." This word requires a minimum of two powers. But the verb which describes what the king of the South does "with him" is singular. This fact implies that the king of the South inflicts a one-sided mauling on the king of the North. The wounded sets about to respond, gradually passing through countries and getting himself into position for an attack on "Egypt" in vss. 41-43. In vss. 44-45 the king controls, not only His own Northern forces, but the forces of "Egypt," and those of the Libyans and Cushites. He has conquered everything there is to conquer and can now exhibit all the power he had had previously, before the wound. "And when he does come he must remain only a little while" (Rev 17:10). What cuts this time short is the fact that Michael stands up (12:1).

If we wish to know where we are in Dan 11:40-45, we can always find out by asking one question: How angry is the king? If he is not angry yet, and is not persecuting yet, we are not in vss. 44-45 yet.

Conclusion

My point is that a sequence of strength, weakness, and renewed strength (ABA') can be seen in Dan 11:29-39/40-43/44-45 (ABA'), and in Rev 13:1-3 (before, during, and after the wound = ABA'), and in 17:8-11 (#5, #6, #7 = ABA'). In all of this, God is telling us one thing, repeating Himself to make the explanation as simple as possible, adding details gradually as we are able to assimilate them. The papacy was powerful during the middle ages, it has been weak through much of the past 200 years, but its power and influence will return – in cooperation with the earth beast – just before the second coming. We are seeing this now.