

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

TITLE: A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THREE METHODS OF INTERPRETATION OF THE SEVEN HEADS OF REVELATION 17:9C-11 AND THEIR ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAST DAYS EVENTS

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Interpretation of the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast of Rev. 17:9c-11 has in the recent past attracted theological arguments that have left scholars divided into three groups. The first group of scholars, following a literal method of interpretation, interprets the seven heads as seven individual Roman Emperors of the first Christian era. The second group interprets the seven heads as representatives of forms of the Roman administrations from its inception in and around 753 B. C., to the present. Then, the third group of scholars, following a figurative method of interpretation, believes that the seven heads are symbolical heads, representing seven successive world Empires or kingdoms throughout prophetic history. The differences in opinion on the interpretation of the seven heads have led to various contradictory views and conclusions which necessitated this analysis.

The need to understand the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast is threefold. Firstly, a clear understanding of the seven heads is essential for having a correct understanding of Rev. 17 and the whole book. Secondly, a clear understanding of the seven heads reveals how the evil one has been using the heads in his fight against the God of heaven and His children from the time He instituted the church, starting with Israel. Thirdly, it provides a chronological view of all eschatological events that show the time which the present age lives in.

Having carried out this theological analysis of the three main models of interpretation, this researcher is of the view that the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast are symbolic heads which stand for seven successive world kingdoms or Empires. These seven world kingdoms are; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the medieval ecclesiastical church or the papacy. The eighth, which is of the seventh, is the appearance of the whole beast, who is Satan himself.

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DAYS EVENTS

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Ethorn Henry Chombela

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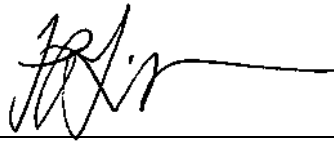
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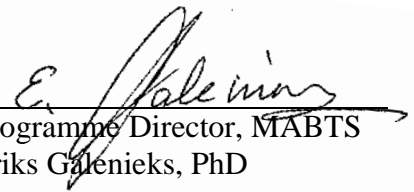
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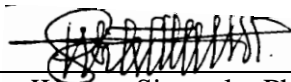
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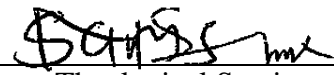
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To God be the Glory

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The interpretation of eschatological prophecies as recorded in the second half of the book of Revelations have in the recent past attracted theological arguments, especially those that have multipurpose symbolisms. Scholars have sought to understand in more definite terms the time frame in which the vision of the seven heads of Revelation 17:9c-11 occurs, whether the vision is historic in nature; that is if it only gives details of events that took place within the hallways of the late first Century A.D.

Or whether the vision is both historical and futuristic; that is if it gives details of events of prophecy from past centuries B. C., perspective and points to the future, describing events that extended beyond the first Century A. D to the period that follows the millennium. In an attempt to answer the two difficulties, scholars have supposed a threefold method of interpretation, although no single submission has found wide support among scholars owing to the fact that each group finds some inconsistencies in their friend's principal opinions' account of the time frame.

The first method of interpretation of the seven heads interprets the seven heads,/kings as seven "successive individual Roman Emperors,"¹ and accordingly; a list of names of individual emperors who reigned as kings is provided "yet with such

¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, The Ages Digital Library Commentary (CD ROM) (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 2000), 716.

much variation as to who makes up the list.”² Because of differing views on the application of this method, scholars who adopt this literal method of interpretation have faced problems to come to terms with each other on the starting point. Some have proposed to start counting individual Roman Emperors from ‘around 44 B.C. the period considered as the beginning of the New Testament to the time John wrote the book of Revelations.’³

While this is the fairly accepted view to pick up the starting point of B. C., and systematically reckon the individual emperors, another group of scholars despite embracing this literal method of interpretation is extremely futuristic; supposing that the vision found fulfillment during the reign of individual Popes starting from around A.D 1929 to the present Pope. They strongly emphasize that since numbers seven and eight have been met, they believe this ‘one’ the eighth goes to perdition.

The second method of interpretation views the seven heads of the leopard-like beast as seven “representative of forms of successive governments or dynasties or models of administrations”⁴ and accordingly specifies a list of seven forms of Roman administrations for the Roman Empire. Even though scholars adopt this figurative method of interpretation at face value, they, however, focus on one single entity of Rome as having met all criteria needed to comprehend this vision. Having agreed to the figurative order of interpretation, they strangely limit themselves to and count successive dynasties or models of administrations that have ruled from the inception of the Roman Empire to the end of the dark ages and forward. They take time to

² Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, The Ages Digital Library Commentary (CD ROM), 716.

³ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 873.

⁴ Mathew Henry, *Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 1401.

understand the rise and fall of one administration to another, from Kings as rulers of Rome through Decemvirs to Imperials. This group of Scholars analyzes how each of these forms of administration symbolically fulfilled prophecy and how the last form of administration satanic in nature will put together all efforts of previous regimes to close the prophetic history.

The third method of interpretation supposes that the seven heads/kings stand for “seven major persecuting powers’ since God first had a chosen people and an organized work on earth”⁵ and accordingly specify list seven major world powers. In this argument, Adventist scholars leap back into history to find the starting point of this prophecy; and accordingly, specify historical powers from Ancient Egypt through the Roman Empire to the papacy. Adventists satisfactorily explain this model of reckoning and call attention to the important roles Egypt and Assyria played with respect to Israel in the Old Testament history and prophecy. Also, they point to some specific circumstances when each of these seven major powers, in turn, attempted either to annihilate God’s people, or to subjugate them, or to obliterate their distinctive religious character as seen through the pages of the Old Testament. Interestingly, Adventist scholars consistently maintain appliance of specific hermeneutic principles of interpretation to arrive at the appropriate meaning of symbolism and its application.

While the interpretation of the seven heads of the beast either literal kings or prophetic representation of some form of governance has caused dispute among scholars, making their method of reckoning supreme and best disputing all others, one must be accurate among them all. In spite of conflicting views, it seems that the third

⁵ Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 2002), 856.

model of reckoning also profoundly accepted by Adventist scholars stands out to be the most appropriate because it follows logical appliance of hermeneutical principles of symbolism and its presentation of the “fulfillment of the eschatological judgment isn’t illogical.”⁶ Despite its impact on the Adventist Church, the first two models of reckoning have however in the recent years caused panic and continued decline in the acceptability of the credible interpretation of scripture by its scholars. For instance, the first model consistently pushes all prophetic interpretation of this passage to the past and extreme future supposing that literally it has been fulfilled, while the second model confines everything into the present day of John to the future negating the past.

Their literal and partial figurative propositions for this passage’s interpretation apparently contradicts the natural course of symbols used, and for these reasons, it is noted that firstly, “it is unnecessary to propose source and interpolation theories in an attempt to make the descriptions conform to particular first-century events.”⁷ And secondly, to the figurative approach, Beale says “application of the seven heads to *one* beastly figure points to one transtemporal reality instead of distinct empires.”⁸ Because of the foregoing observations, certain inconsistencies being supported by present-day scholars in interpreting symbols and numbers have in recent past risen to prominence even infiltrating sound interpretation by making strange and erroneous conclusions.

In view of the fact that such suppositions are filled with inconsistencies in as far as the application of the prophetic language and imagery are concerned, it

⁶ Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor, 1979), 54–55.

⁷ Robert Henry Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John Vol. 1 & 2*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1920), 58–59.

⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 873.

becomes difficult to determine on face value which model of reckoning is in line with the sound hermeneutical principles used to interpret various visions as was supposedly intended by the author. For this reason, this research will utilize general and specific hermeneutical principles used to unlock various visions to theologically re-examine and analyze the three main suggested models of interpretation of the vision and seek to affirm the credibleness of the third model of reckoning.

Statement of the Problem

There are theological disagreements among the three main schools of thought on the appropriate model of interpreting the seven heads of Revelation 17:9c-11; whether they represent ‘individual Roman Emperors’ or represent ‘forms of governments.’ Each school of thought presents its suggested model different from the other. One school of thought takes a literal approach while the other two, though they take a figurative approach; differ on forms of government to follow in interpretation. One of their main points of diversity is that some scholars feel that within the text, there is an “obvious addition to the text”⁹ or simply an interpolation. With these dissimilarities on the order of reckoning, which of the three supposed models of reckoning of Revelation 17:9c-11 is more appropriate and follows sound hermeneutical principles, and also gives a proper representation of the seven heads and what they stand for in history?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to re-examine and analyze the three main models of interpreting the seven heads of Revelation 17:9c-11. After analyzing them,

⁹ Robert Henry Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John Vol. 2, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1989), 68.

the study will seek to affirm the best model of interpreting the kings, and will also indicate the time frame of the vision. Lastly, the research will seek to know how these models of interpretations impact the Adventist understanding of the last days' events in relation to the seven heads and how this prophecy finds fulfillment during the period before the eminent return of Jesus Christ.

Significance of Study

The significance of the study is to offer a theological analysis of the three models of interpretation and the time frame in which the seven heads or kings carried out their prophecy fulfilling reign from time past all the way to the end of history. Secondly, it is hoped that the research will be used as a resource for unlocking critical components of this vision and other eschatological events whose understanding is based on the chronology of this vision as an important cross-reference point of this salient prophecy.

Definition of Terms and Delimitation of the Study

Although there are many applicable definitions to the three terms kings, seven and eschatology, for the purpose of this study, the term

“Kings” will be defined as “denoting a dynasty, a form of government, a mode of administration, as what, in fact, ‘rules.’”¹⁰ Further kings are defined as ‘seven heads/kings/mountains to represent kingdoms and not individual kings’ and ‘another expression for world powers or empires.’¹¹

¹⁰ Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, 714.

¹¹ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 511–512, 515.

“Eschatology:” from a “Greek word *eschatos*: which means ‘last’ ... thus eschatology is the study of ‘the last things.’”¹²

“Seven” is ‘the number from a Hebrew word meaning sufficiency or fullness.’¹³ Beale also notes that it ‘is not a literal number designating the quantity of kings in one epoch but is figurative for the quality of fullness or completeness, as in the OT, particularly Daniel 7, and throughout the Apocalypse.’¹⁴

Thus the study will focus on the theological analysis of the three methods of interpretation of the seven heads of Rev. 17:9c-11 and seek to ascertain the most appropriate method of interpretation and time frame of the seven kings in acceptable succession.

Methodology of the Study

The methodology of the study will be a theological analysis of the threefold reckoning of Revelation 17:9c-11. In the quest of analyzing the three models of reckoning, Chapter I of the study will provide the introduction. Chapter II will concentrate on extensive literature review; putting forward the three major principle opinions on the reckoning of the seven kings and the time frame in which the vision falls.

Chapter III will present a synthesized theological analysis of the topic of study, presenting the most convincing and most appropriate model of reckoning in an orderly manner. This will be achieved by systematically presenting the seven heads of

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 1091.

¹³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1991), 647.

¹⁴ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 868.

the vision chronologically from the time the vision came into effect from Centuries B.C, into John's time and all the way to the time of judgment. Lastly, Chapter IV will present the summary and conclusion of the study, bringing forth acceptable findings as well as putting forward unresolved challenges of study and recommendations for further research.

In pursuant of this research, primary and secondary sources will be used in studying this topic. Other sources will include on-line resources, recordings both audio and video materials to further the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three main models of interpretation of the seven heads of Revelation 17:9c-11. These three models of interpretation, each has its own main points of reference it uses from one point to another to come up with a final interpretation. In this section; literature review will, therefore, explore in details these three main suggested methods of interpretation to see how each one was developed to the end.

The Literal Interpretation Method: Heads as Individual Roman Emperors

Scholars of the literal method of interpretation like McGee and Beale agree from the onset to take the vision of Revelation 17:9c-11 literally. They believe taking the vision literally will give the most plausible interpretation of the seven heads/kings. Hence this group of scholars agrees that the seven heads/kings of the leopard bodied beast represent the “seven successive individual Roman Emperors,¹ also understood as ‘individual rulers.’²

In spite of the above seeming comprehensive agreement on the one side that the seven heads/kings are literal individual Roman Emperors, literal interpreters face serious challenges when it comes to the final list of Emperors. Noting this challenge of variations on the lists, Garland, one of the proponents of the literal interpretation

¹ Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, 716.

² John Vernon McGee, *Through the Bible Commentary: The Prophecy (Revelation 14-22)*, ed. Radio program Bible and Bible commentary, vol. 60 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 97.

method acknowledges that ‘immediately there are admitted problems,’³ that further cause serious variations on the manner of enumerating the seven emperors. Barnes also being familiar with this challenge explains that the biggest problem of enumerating the seven individual Roman Emperors is, ‘who to include and exclude on the final list of emperors.’⁴ This problem of listing individual Emperors becomes the major point of disagreements among literal interpreters and makes the whole process even more complicated as several lists exist, each strongly supported by this and that group of literal interpreters considering their own list more credible than others.

To start the argument about the list of individual Roman Emperors, literal interpreters make their point of departure from the angle of the composition of the book; that is, when the book of Revelation was written. Well aware of the challenge of the lists leading the debate about the actual date the book of Revelation was written, Aune discloses how each group of literal interpreters tries to suggest a ‘specific date for the composition of Revelation’⁵ so as to validate their support for a certain order of individual Roman Emperors. And since this is the key point of argument for literal interpreters, different scholars have suggested several dates. But literal interpreters seem to support at least three dates that stand out as dates when John wrote the book of Revelation.

The first of the three range of dates proposed by literal interpreters, are what some scholars like Albert have called ‘earlier dates’ (suggested by Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus), are days of the Roman ‘emperor Claudius a time between A. D

³ Anthony Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Re 17:9)* (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software, 2006).

⁴ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, 716.

⁵ David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17-22.*, vol. 52C (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 941.

41 to 54.⁶ According to Albert, Bishop Epiphanius is said to have testified and spoke of John the revelator as having prophesied in the isle of Patmos in the days of emperor Claudius. However, Michaelis argues that this range of dates “does not appear from history that there was any imperial persecution of Christians whatever, and when, moreover, the probability is that, of the seven Apocalyptic churches, scarcely one was in existence, and the apostle John was associated with them.”⁷ As observed by Michaelis, other scholars also see no merit in these dates because Andreas and Arethas whose writings dominated the 6th Century, and considered worthy, seem to suggest that the book was composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, but their testimony is considered of ‘little value.’⁸ Hence these early dates are considered a ‘sheer conjecture’⁹ and remain highly disputed as dates for the composition of the book.

The second range of dates was suggested by theologian Charles who according to Stern, thinks of later dates between ‘69 to 79 C. E.’¹⁰ Charles takes 69-79 as possible dates for the composition of Revelation during the ‘reign of Vespasian’¹¹ who he considers the sixth. Scholars like Ford who agree with Charles enumerate the first five fallen kings as “Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.’ ‘The sixth one “is” is Vespasian (A.D 69-79) and the one who “is not yet

⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), xlvii.

⁷ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, xlix.

⁸ *Ibid*, xlvi.

⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 3.

¹⁰ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary: A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament*, Electronic. (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament, 1996), 114.

¹¹ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John Vol. 1 & 2.*, 69–70.

come” is Titus (79-81); Titus comes last as the seventh.”¹² However, Clément’s testimony which Eusebius is in agreement with, doubts if these and any earlier dates than A. D 80s would be ideal for the book’s composition, considering that John wrote the book of Revelation as an old man. For this reason, he thinks it’s unbelievable that between 69-79 “John could be supposed to be an infirm old man; being probably not much above, if indeed so much as sixty years of age.”¹³ Hence many New Testament scholars, who have high regard for the Church father, view Charles and Ford’s basis for proposing as an “assumption based on the use of the present tense ‘is.’”¹⁴ Thus, this second range of dates also remains unpopular and highly unacceptable.

The third and final range of dates suggested by Barnes, who in his exploration of Revelation presents both external and internal evidences suggested ‘‘A. D 93 or 94’ and ‘A. D 95’ or ‘A. D 96’¹⁵ respectively. The major reason for suggesting this range of dates is because of the fact that persecution of the early Christians commenced about A. D. 93 or 94 on the grounds of ‘fear of Domitian that he would lose his empire from some persons among the relatives of Christ who would attempt a revolution.’¹⁶ Barnes also reveals that both the testimony of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria agree that the ‘book was written near the close of the reign of Domitian [sic], and the testimony should be regarded as decisive unless it can be set aside.’¹⁷ Victorinus,

¹² Josephine Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 38 (New York, NY: Yale University Press, 1963), 289.

¹³ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, xlvii.

¹⁴ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

¹⁵ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 46–48.

¹⁶ Henry Hart Milman, *The History of Christianity: From the Birth to the Abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire*, vol. L (New York, NY: A. C. Armstrong and Sons, 1887), 193.

¹⁷ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, xlvi.

bishop of Patew and Jerome also twice expressly wrote that the ‘apocalypse was seen by the apostle John in the isle of Patmos when banished thither by the Roman emperor Domitian.’¹⁸ With this strong proposition, the third date seems to be the fair alternative and more acceptable because it clearly corresponds with the early confession Irenaeus makes that ‘he saw the Revelation...at the close of Dominion’s [sic] reign around A.D. 81-96.’¹⁹ This is also Aune’s point of view as he points out that, ‘the Domitianic... [sic] date prevailed from the second through the eighteenth centuries and again in the 20th century, while the Neronic date dominated the 19th century.’²⁰ Notwithstanding this positive testimony, some writers continue to assign earlier dates so as to hold on to their lists.

After failing to agree on the date for the composition of the book, literal interpreters move on to present the three main emperors they feel should start the list. On the list presented, the three are; Emperor Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, and Claudius. While these three are the main emperors sought to begin the count with, others are of the view that the count should instead begin with Nero or better still with Galba. But research shows that this is insignificant because the reign of Nero and Galba comes at the close of the first Century implying that the counting will then cross over into the second century. If this is the case, the whole idea of counting emperors of the last B. C., century and the first century A. D as the vision entails is then

¹⁸ Gaius Marius Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 264.

¹⁹ Frank Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 406.

²⁰ David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary 52A* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Lvii.

defeated hence rendering the supposition that the count should begin with Nero or Galba as the first emperors is challenged.

Having argued against the count of Nero and Galba as first emperors, the debate then turns to the three main emperors; that is, Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, and Claudius. But, although the three are considered the main emperors, Julius Caesar and Octavian ‘Augustus’ are strongly believed to be the crucial starting points because of the wide scholarly belief that these two Roman Emperors played a ‘major role in making an end to the rule of the republicans and organizing Rome into an Empire respectively.’ This argument for Julius and Octavian mainly comes in from the transitional period as Tremper gives an account of the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire that it ‘took place under the Roman emperors beginning with Julius Caesar (100-44BC), who, after crossing the Rubicon and defeating Pompey, was proclaimed dictator perpetuus.’²¹ Referring to the same transitional period, Tremper further explains how Rome became volatile especially after Julius’ assassination which led to political upheavals for a few decades until when ‘Octavius defeated Anthony at the Battle of Autium in 31 BC, leaving Octavius as the undisputed leader of Rome.’²² Merrill concludes that Augustus Octavius’ leadership and diplomacy gave peace to Rome after the ordeal of her two wars and century strife.²³

Although the argument for Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus as first emperors gets much support, literal interpreters are still divided between the two

²¹ Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, and Mark Strauss, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 1447.

²² *Ibid*, 1447.

²³ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 199.

emperors as they place one above the other. Those who distinctly regard Julius Caesar, Augustus' predecessor, as the first official emperor believe in the fact that he 'technically changed the rule of the republicans to emperors.' This belief seems to correspond with the way the "ancient Greeks and Romans themselves enumerated the emperors, beginning with Julius Caesar and concludes with Marcus Aurelius."²⁴ Aune also adds that "many believe that Julius Caesar is the first because the generic term 'Caesar' was derived from Julius Caesar, it was natural for ancients to consider him the first Roman emperor"²⁵ also confirmed by the writings of Suetonius who began his lives of the Caesars with the "biography of Julius Caesar."²⁶

But against the above belief, Gentry quoted by Beale denies this belief that 'this may have been a widespread, though not necessarily predominant view in the late first century' hence refuting that 'it doesn't demonstrate from the literary context that this was John's view.'²⁷ Beale further argues against this view of Julius Caesar as the first emperor because he thinks that the rule of republicans from 509 B. C., only ended between 44-31 B. C., and gave a transitory period for Octavian 'to receive the title Augustus and proconsular power in 27 BC.'²⁸ Paul concludes by saying, Julius Caesar only 'initiated the practice of emperors'²⁹ hence making this claim for Julius Caesar as the first emperor historically contested.

²⁴ Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary* 52A, 946.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. Dennis Fisher Charles (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1906).

²⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 872.

²⁸ James Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. IV (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance, 1915), 2620.

²⁹ Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Happer's Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstone, MD: Haper 7 Row, 1985), 875.

On the other side, those supposing that the count begins with Augustus; quickly extend their interpretation to Galba as the sixth and that Otho, who reigned only for three months, would be the seventh.’ Although this order of reckoning seems right as Merrill records that Octavian was ‘the first of the emperors, whose leadership and diplomatic genius gave peace to Rome after the ordeal of her two civil wars and century strife,’³⁰ it is against the belief of early historians who counted Augustus second. They believe Octavius Augustus is the one who principally ‘set the fashion for the emperors who came after him.’³¹ This belief also corresponds with many great acts that Augustus did such as restoring the ‘eighty-two ruined temples within the city of Rome’ and building of the ‘great altar of the Augustan peace between 13B. C., and 9 B. C.’³² Tremper sums up the many acts scholars refer to by saying that “it is with his [Augustus] reign the Roman Empire essentially began,’ and ‘that he was the emperor at the time of Jesus’ birth.’³³

Lastly, those supposing that the count should begin with Caligula mainly refer to the fact that John’s concern was with the ‘new age following the redemptive events surrounding the life of Christ, and Caligula was the first emperor to come to power after Jesus’ death and resurrection.’³⁴ It is further suggested that Caligula is the starting point because of the erection of his statue in the Jerusalem temple that ‘probably reminded the Jewish populace of Antiochus Epiphanes’ similar sacrilege.’³⁵

³⁰ Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5:199.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5:163.

³² Achtemeier, *Happer’s Bible Dictionary*, 875.

³³ Longman III, Enns, and Strauss, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1447.

³⁴ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 46–48.

³⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 872.

Quoting Strobel, Beale also reveals that scholars look at Caligula's 'Antichrist characteristics,' testifies to the lasting impression that his reign left on the Jewish mind.³⁶

Further, to justify the reason why the count should begin with Caligula and maintain the number seven, scholars have suggested that the three brief reigns of Galba, Otho and Vitellius should be removed. According to this group of scholars, if the 18 months are removed, it will then give a smooth counting but Beale notes that this 'theory does not adequately explain why not to count the three brief reigns or why the count should not begin with Tiberius, who continued to reign a few years after Christ's death.'³⁷ Interestingly, the view to remove the brief rival reigns during the eighteen months between Nero's death and Vespasian's capture of Rome that they be excluded in the count, as some interpreters have insisted, Robinson insists that 'some ancient writers considered them legitimate emperors (e.g., *Sib. Or.* 5.35; Josephus, *War* 4.491-96; 4 Ezra 12:20ff.).'³⁸ But still writers like Suetonius and *Vespasian I*, seem to cast doubts on the legitimacy of calling them 'emperors,' referring to the three reigns as "usurpation."³⁹ Further, Bruce contends that the three reigns were not significant in the eastern provinces, where "Vespasian's authority was undisputed after his proclamation at Alexandria on July 1, 69 A. D."⁴⁰

Having failed to agree on the date for the composition of Revelation and who to start the count with, each group of literal interpreters maintains their position of

³⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 873.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 874.

³⁸ Robinson, John A. T., *Redating the New Testament* (Norcross, GA: Trinity Press, 1976), 243.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 873.

interpretation starting with; Julius, Augustus, Caligula, Gaius, Nero, and Galba. Each of the supposed starting Emperors has a specific order, and Johnson summarizes well the problems confronting any identification of the heads with Roman emperors, as can be shown in the adapted diagram. The adapted below diagram shows how unsatisfactorily each group of interpreters has enumerated their preferred order of individual emperors from among many. Each order is uniquely crafted to give a distinct order of Emperors.⁴¹

⁴¹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 947.

Table 1. Excursus 17B: Alternate Ways of Counting the Roman Emperors

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Julius C (101–44 B. C.)	1 ^a	1 ^b						1 ^h	
Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14)	2	2	1 ^c	1 ^d				2	
Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)	3	3	2	2					
Gaius (A.D. 37–41)	4	4	3	3	1 ^e				1 ⁱ
Claudius (A.D. 41–54)	5	5	4	4	2			3	2
Nero (A.D. 54–68)	6	6	5	5	3	1 ^f			3
Galba (June A.D. 68–Jan. 69)	7	–	6	–	4	2	1 ^g		–
Otho (A.D. 69)	8	–	7	–	5	3	2		–
Vitellius (A.D. 69)	–	–	8	–	6	4	3		–

(table continues)

^a Sequentially with Julius Caesar first (Dio Chrysostom Or. 34.7; Jos. *Ant.* 18.32 [in the parallel passage in Jos. *J.W.* 2.168, Augustus and his successor Tiberius are mentioned but not enumerated]; Suetonius *De vita Caesarum; Sib. Or.* 5.12; 4 Ezra 12:15; Theophilus *Ad Autolyicum* 3.27; Meyer, *Christentum* 3:525–26 n. 4). *Barn.* 4:3–6a probably begins with Julius Caesar also; see Hvalvik, *Struggle*, 27–32. The three short-lived emperors of 68–69, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, are included in Suetonius *De vita Caesarum; Sib. Or.* 5.35; Jos. *J.W.* 4.491–99, but are often dismissed because Suetonius refers to their brief reigns as *rebellio trium principum*, “rebellion of the three emperors” (Suetonius *Vesp.* 1), as if their short reigns were *interregna*.

^b Julius Caesar first; three short-lived emperors of A.D. 68–69 omitted; Nero is the “one who is” (17:10a), Vespasian is “the other one who has not yet come” (17:10b); Giet, *L’Apocalypse*, 77, 224–25; Ford, 290.

^h First five emperors deified by the senate, followed by Domitian, who claimed divinity while living.

^c Sequentially with Augustus first (Vergil *Aeneid* 6.789–97; Tacitus *Annals* 1.1); Torrey, *Apocalypse*, 58–66; Eckhardt, *Johannes*, 64; J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating*, 248–53.

^d Augustus first; three short-lived emperors of A.D. 68–69 omitted (Swete, 220–21; Wellhausen, *Analyse*, 28; Bousset [1906] 415; Hadorn, 175; Giblin, 165; Smalley, *Thunder*, 47–48).

^e Begins with Gaius, infamous for his treatment of Jews (Brun, *ZNW* 26 [1927] 128–51; Prigent, 261; Ulrichsen, *ST* 39 [1985] 1–20). Perhaps because he is the first emperor to reign following the death and resurrection of Jesus, Gaius’s reign has been regarded as the point at which the old age is concluded and the new age begun.

ⁱ Emperors who died violently (17:10: ἐπεσον), either actually or in rumor (Gaius was the first emperor to “fall” in the sense of dying a violent death, if one discounts Julius Caesar). Gaius is the first emperor to reign after the death of Christ ca. A.D. 30, signaling the decisive turning point in history (Strobel, *NTS* 10 [1963–64] 437–45).

^f Begins with Nero, infamous for his treatment of Christians (Allo, 248–49, 270, 281–82; Reicke, *RSR* 60 [1972] 175–81; Court, *Myth and History*, 126–28). This position is often based on Rev 13:3, where μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ is translated “the first of his heads” rather than “one of his heads.”

^g Scheme of Victorinus, *Comm. in Apoc.* 17.9–11 (Haussleiter, *Victorinus*, 118–19). Tacitus began his *Histories* with 1 January 69, the reign of Galba (*Hist.* 1.1; see Chilver, *Tacitus*, 33–34).

Table 1 (continued). Alternate Ways of Counting the Roman Emperors

Vespasian (A.D. 69–79)	–	7	–	6	7	5	4	4	4
Titus (A.D. 79–81)	–	–	–	7	8	6	5	5	5
Domitian (A.D. 81–96)	–	–	–	8	–	7	6	6	6
The “other” (17:10b)									7
[Neronic Antichrist]								7	8
Nerva (A.D. 96–98)							7		

In summary, scholars of the literal method of interpretation exclusively viewed the leopard bodied beast as an embodiment of the Roman Empire during John’s own day. In light of this understanding, scholars identify the seven heads/kings with seven successive Roman Emperors who reigned during the first Christian era. However, scholars for this model couldn’t agree on critical issues like the date of the composition for Revelation as a determinant, especially for the first and sixth Emperors. They also failed to reconcile the eighteen months reign for three Emperors to smoothen both their interpretation and enumeration. And since each group of scholars rather held its preferred position, they have rendered this model of interpretation unsuccessful coupled with numerous lists of names of emperors.

Figurative Method of Interpretation I: Head as Forms of Roman Administrations

Scholars of the second model of interpretation like Smalley and Barnes take a figurative approach in interpreting the seven heads/kings of Rev. 17:9c-11. They believe that the vision’s best interpretation can only be achieved through using this figurative approach. Hence Barnes’ proposal that the word “kings’ is not to be taken literally, but that it refers to forms of government, dynasties, or modes of administration.”⁴² In line with Barnes’ call, Smalley passionately wrote that the

⁴² Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 716.

‘seven heads/kings are an apocalyptic symbol, representing the totality of the Roman imperial power’⁴³ to which Mathews also agree as well as expanding this understanding by stating that the seven heads/kings represent the “seven’ forms of successive governments or dynasties or models of administrations.’⁴⁴

Having settled on the figurative approach to use in interpreting the passage, figurative interpreters are also faced with three challenges in the quest to enumerate the seven forms of government Rome went through. These three challenges come about because figurative interpreters view the vision of John as pointing to the various forms of administrations to have ruled the Roman Empire while others feel the vision is about Roman administrations. And to explain this difference of opinion, the first challenge that the figurative interpreters face is similar to that of literal interpreters; that is, where to start from. The second challenge is the failure to agree on the sixth and seventh forms of administrations.

To start the argument about the starting point, figurative interpreters point to two forms of administration that they suggest to be considered as the first and these two are; Kings and Republicans. Those supporting the Kings as first form of administration to have ruled Rome believe like Adam Clarke emphatically wrote that ‘it is well known that the first form of Latin government was that of kings, which continued after the death of Latinus 428 years, until the building of Rome, B. C. 753,’⁴⁵ the time Rome was ‘officially recognized as a state.’⁴⁶ Barnes also supports

⁴³ Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation of John: A Commentary on the Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 437.

⁴⁴ Henry, *Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, 1401.

⁴⁵ Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary: Romans to the Revelation*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokersbury Press, 1832), 1040.

⁴⁶ Richard Cavedish, “The Foundation of Rome,” *History Today* 53, no. 4 (April 2003).

this idea that the first administration to rule Rome were that of “kings’ and enumerates them in this order; ‘Kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvir, Military Tribunes and Imperial form,’⁴⁷ from 753B.CE to 509 B. CE. George Arthur Buttrick further explains how the Roman Empire came into existence having been founded by Romulus and Remus and how it extended its powers and says that ‘at first under the kings, some of whom were Etruscan, and after 508 under a republican form of government headed by two magistrates elected annually.’⁴⁸

Further, the support that the count should start with kings refers to Roman historians like Livy and Tacitus who surprisingly give an identical order of forms of administration. Firstly, Livy in his book speaking of the previous parts of his history, and of what he did in writing historical events says:

In five books I have related what was done at Rome, pertaining both to foreign wars and domestic strifes, from the foundation of the city to the time when it was taken, as it was governed by *kings*, by *consuls*, by *dictators*, by the *decemvirs*, and by *consular tribunes*.⁴⁹

Lastly, those supporting that count should start with “kings” refer to Tacitus who in his writing gives the same distribution of power or forms of government, among the Romans, he reckons them in this order:

In the beginning, Rome was governed by *Kings*. Then L. Brutus gave to her liberty and the *Consulship*. A temporary power was conferred on the *Dictators*. The authority of the *Decemvirs* did not continue beyond the space of two years; neither was the consular power of the *Military Tribunes* of long duration. The rule of Cinna and Sylla was brief, and the power of Pompey and Crassus passed into the hands of Caesar, and the arms of Lepidus

⁴⁷ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 717.

⁴⁸ George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrative Encyclopedia*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 103.

⁴⁹ Tacitus Livy, *Annal., Lib. I. Cap. 1.*, trans. William Masfen Roberts, vol. 6 (New York, NY: Everyman’s Library, 1912), 8.

and Antony were surrendered to Augustus, who united all things, broken by civil discord, under the name of Prince in the *imperial* government.⁵⁰

On the other side, figurative interpreters who suppose that the count should start with republicans argue from the historical point of view that the rule of kings in the “entire history of Rome has hardly been counted as Rome’s hence the need to start with the Republic that took over from kings around ‘509 BCE.’⁵¹ This argument is well explained by Steven Kreis who narrates that ‘Etruscans had ruled over the Romans for hundreds of years’ and that in ‘509 B.C., after having expelled the Etruscans, the Romans constructed a form of political organization we call a republic.’⁵² Donald L. Wasson also adds historical information that:

With the exit of the last Etruscan king, Tarquin the Elder, the Roman people were presented with a unique opportunity, an opportunity that would eventually have an immense impact on the rest of Europe for centuries to come: the chance to create a new government, a republic.

Coming to the sixth and seventh forms of administrations, figurative interpreters once again hold divergent views like Barnes laments that, ‘on this plain of interpretation, the main, if not the sole difficulty lies.’⁵³ And true to Barnes’ charge, figurative interpreters are divided into two groups; one supporting Imperials while others are for Emperors. The first group led by historians like Tacitus who has in the recent past strongly supposed that the sixth kingdom is that of the ‘Imperials.’⁵⁴ These scholars believe after the fall of military tribunes, the authority of Pompey and

⁵⁰ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annal.*, lib. i. cap. 1 trans., by Charles Dennis Fisher, (Clarendon: Oxford Press, 1906), 9.

⁵¹ Catherine Steel, “Introduction: The Legacy of the Republican Roman Senate,” *Classical Reception Journal* 7, no. 1 (April 2016): 1–10.

⁵² Steven Kreis, “The History Guide: Lecture on Ancient and Medieval and European History,” August 3, 2009.

⁵³ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 717.

⁵⁴ Livy, *Annal.*, *Lib. I. Cap. I.*, vol. 6, p. .

Crassus was overtaken by ‘Caesar; and the arms of Lepidus and Antony were surrendered to Augustus, who united all things, broken by civil discord, under the name of prince in the imperial government.’⁵⁵ To strengthen this interpretation of the Imperials as the sixth head, Tacitus explained the transition of powers from the military tribunes to the imperials that; the power of Pompey and Crassus passed into the hands of Caesar, and the arms of Lepidus and Antony were surrendered to Augustus, who united all things, broken by civil discord, under the name of Prince in the *imperial* government.’⁵⁶ This is then concluded that with the imperial power being the sixth, ‘the mind would readily and easily turn back to the five main forms of the supreme administration which had existed before.’⁵⁷

While Tacitus and others propose Imperials as the sixth, Bellarmine, a distinguished Roman Catholic scholar in line with Poole’s records, proposes that the sixth form of administration should be that of the ‘Emperors.’⁵⁸ The historical basis for supporting the Emperors is that the administration of the military tribunes was followed by that of the Emperors hence reckoning them as the ‘sixth kingdom.’⁵⁹ In line with Bellarmine, Osiander quoted by Smith, one of the earliest Protestant commentators and theologian, whose writings date as early as 1511, names all the seven heads as ‘Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Dictators, Triumvirs, Emperors, and Popes.’⁶⁰ Others who support the reign of Emperors are Mathews Henry who in his

⁵⁵ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 718.

⁵⁶ Livy, *Annal., Lib. I. Cap. 1.*, vol. 6, p. .

⁵⁷ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament: Explanation and Practical*, 722.

⁵⁸ Robert Bellarmine, *On the Roman Pontiff.*, vol. 1 (Latin: Mediatrix Press, 2015).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, Revised. (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1944), 19.

commentary on the whole Bible adds that the leadership of the emperors was even divided into two; there ‘were pagan, and emperors who were Christian.’⁶¹

Lastly, the seventh head has also been identified differently by figurative interpreters, much more influenced by the first form of administration. The first is Bishop Newton who considers the seventh head as the “Dukedom of Rome, established soon after the exarchate of Ravenna,”⁶² and second is W. B. Godbey who thinks the seventh head is that of the ‘Popes.’⁶³ And lastly, Elliott suggests that the seventh refers to a ‘new form of administration introduced by Diocletian, changing the administration from the original imperial character to that of an absolute ‘Asiatic sovereignty.’⁶⁴

To advance the first argument that the seventh head is that of the dukedom, Barnes reveals that Bishop Newton refers to ‘the short space lying between the decline of the imperial and rise of the papal.’⁶⁵ Bishop Newton thinks it’s the Dukedom because the years ‘566-568 to about the year 727 about two hundred years,”⁶⁶ when Rome was reduced to a dukedom, under the exarchate of Ravenna, and the time when the city revolted from this authority and became subject to the pope, a period according to Barnes “was of a short duration; absolutely considered, it was

⁶¹ Henry, *Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, 789.

⁶² Isaac Newton, *Prophecies*, 575-576.

⁶³ William B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 2000), 129.

⁶⁴ Samuel Elliot, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (Atlanta, GA: Morison, 1938), 212–217.

⁶⁵ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, 723.

⁶⁶ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Rome Empire*, CD ROM., vol. 1 (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), 202.

brief.’⁶⁷ In comparison with the rule of other administrations, even that which preceded it, extended to more than five hundred years, and more than twelve hundred years for that followed it. Hence Bishop Newton and others find this period short and is, therefore, transitional to the rule the Papal, considered the eighth.

On the other hand, W. B. Godbey thinks the seventh head is that of the Popes and enumerates the seven as; ‘kings, consuls, dictators, triumvirs, tribunes, emperors, and popes constitute the seven heads of the Roman beast.’⁶⁸ For Godbey, the enumeration he gives fulfills this whole prophecy and therefore must be understood that the first six forms of governance were all dead and long gone, except the popes. He then concludes that this follows as an ‘irresistible, logical sequence that the pope is the eighth beast.’⁶⁹ For him, the pope qualifies as seventh and eighth, and when the pope passes from the seventh to the eighth, he assumes a new character-the character of the antichrist.⁷⁰ He further explains how the seven heads are linked to the eighth which is according to him is his whole body, or the beast himself. John Wesley also supports this model of interpretation and broadened it that although the ‘beast is in a sense termed the eighth, is of the seven, yea, contains them all.’⁷¹ He concludes by saying that:

The whole successions of Popes from Gregory VII are undoubtedly antichrist. Yet this hinders not, but that the last Pope in this succession will be more eminently the antichrist, the man of sin, adding to that of his predecessors a peculiar degree of wickedness from the bottomless pit. This individual person,

⁶⁷ Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, 717.

⁶⁸ Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 1:129.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 129.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷¹ John Wesley, *Notes on the Whole Bible the New Testament*, The Ages Digital Library Commentary [CD ROM]. (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 2000), 955.

as Pope, is the seventh head of the beast; as the man of sin, he is the eighth, or the beast himself.⁷²

Lastly, Elliott supposes that the seventh head refers to a new form of administration introduced by Diocletian, changing the administration from the original imperial character to that of an absolute ‘Asiatic sovereignty.’⁷³ But Edward Gibbon in his book doesn’t approve Diocletian’s rule to be a new form of governance. In fact, Gibbon in chapter thirteen and fourteen of *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, reveals that Diocletian was firstly one of the first four Emperors namely; ‘Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius.’⁷⁴ Gibbon explains how in four parts Diocletian reigned with his three associates, conquering nations but he does not at any point refer to the reign of Diocletian as a new form of governance. Later Gibbon narrates how Diocletian and Maximian gave up power to the new administrators who adopted a new title from Caesar to Augustus.

In summary, scholars for the first figurative method of interpretation viewed the leopard bodied beast as a total representation of the Roman Empire from its inception around 752 B. C., through John’s day, extending many centuries after the first Christian era. With this understanding that the vision covers a long span of history, scholars interpreted the seven heads/kings as various forms of administrations that ruled the Roman Empire. However, scholars couldn’t easily agree on the first, sixth and seventh forms of administration. This failure came because some scholars understood the heads are forms of administrations that ruled Rome while others argued for Roman Administrations only. Even though these scholars are divided on

⁷² Wesley, *Notes on the Whole Bible the New Testament.*, 955-956.

⁷³ Elliot, Samuel, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (Atlanta, GA: Morison, 1938), 212-217.

⁷⁴ Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Rome Empire*, 1:317.

this opinion, and that they couldn't agree on the first, sixth and seventh administration, this model of interpretation is widely identified with this order; Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Dictators, Triumvirs, Emperors, and Popes.

Figurative Method of Interpretation II: Heads as Major Persecuting Powers

Scholars like Ranko Stefanovic and Francis who are the main interpreters of the third model of interpretation are in agreement with the figurative approach of interpreting the seven heads/kings of Revelation 17:9c-11. They believe taking the figurative approach in interpreting the seven heads/kings gives a profound meaning to the vision which covers a broader and lengthy prophetic period from the time of the nation of Israel to the end of the ages. Hence they propose that the seven heads represent a 'series of seven successive world powers or empires that oppressed God's people throughout history from the establishment of God's church with Israel down to the Second coming.'⁷⁵

Further, scholars for the third model of interpretation explain in a more theological sense that the seven symbolical heads/kings of the Leopard-bodied beast are not only oppressive to God's people but are also "worldly powers through the ages that oppose the God of heaven at the bidding of Satan himself."⁷⁶ And because these powers work at the command of Satan himself, the powers manifest great 'enmity with God'⁷⁷through persecuting God's children and have sought to annihilate them through all the changes of history.

⁷⁵ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 520.

⁷⁶ Kenneth Mathews Jr., *Revelation Reveals Jesus: An Explication of the Greek Text and Application of the Symbolism Therein*, vol. 2 (Greenville, TN: Second Comming, 2012), 930.

⁷⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 230.

In spite of the understanding and agreement portrayed that the seven heads are a manifestation of the worldly kingdoms at enmity with God in all prophetic ages, and the call to interpret the seven heads/kings figuratively, one diminutive disagreement emerge on the appropriate way of identifying these seven heads/kings. Just as presented above in the first two groups of interpretation, scholars for the third model of interpretation are also divided into two groups, mainly because of the different views they have on the placement of the vision. The first group says that the vision must be seen rather from the end of the world around 1798/1844 forward and builds its interpretation from this context making Babylon the first power to be at enmity with God. On the contrary, the second group takes a more favorable approach placement, sees the vision of the leopard-bodied beast from John's perspective and builds their interpretation from this context starting with Egypt and Assyria as the first two persecuting powers.

To advance the first argument, scholars such as William H. Shea, LaRondelle, and Mervyn Maxwell take their point of departure to interpret the vision from the end-time on the present tense 'is.' According to these scholars, the present tense "is" in the passage refers to a "future point distant from John's time to a more 'contemporary' time close to the end rather than the first century A. D."⁷⁸ In support of this position, Mervyn Maxwell explains that 'we have often reminded ourselves that the second half of Revelation, in which our puzzle is located, is concerned almost exclusively with the end time.'⁷⁹ Like Frank E. Gaebelein, Mervyn Maxwell's explanation seems to indicate that the distant time being referred to is the period between 1798/1844 and

⁷⁸ Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:560.

⁷⁹ Mervyn C. Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 473.

later, the era of judgment and the end time for the judgment scene in Daniel 7, which is the opening of the little scroll in Revelation 10, and the preaching of the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6-7. Hence Maxwell writes that 'the time of the vision is the hour of judgment, the end-time, beginning in 1798/1844 at the end of the 1260 and 2300 year-days.'⁸⁰ He argues thereafter for the end period pointing to Revelation 21:9-10 where an angel invited John to watch the holy city come down from heaven to which he equates this same scenario to the vision and says the 'invitation certainly carried John's mind forward to the end of the millennium.'⁸¹

But arguing against the above supposition and demanding that the vision be seen from John's perspective, Ranko and Kenneth A. Strand note that the use of the present tense 'is' must be understood from John's viewpoint at the time of the writing of Revelation.⁸² As observed by Kenneth A. Strand, the Greek indicative verb used "ἔστιν, (Rev 17:10 BGT) is a present active"⁸³ to imply that exegetically the vision referred to John's time. This is the reason why the three scholars Stefanovic, Nichol, and Land believe that there must be a relation to the use of the phrase to a specific time in which John is found and in which one of the seven heads also is in the first century A.D. when John lived. Ekkehardt Mueller in his article *The Beast of the Revelation 17*, accepts this idea and explains that the phrase "one is' must in some

⁸⁰ Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 473.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 55–56.

⁸³ William Bruce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 218.

way or another relate to John.”⁸⁴ And Kenneth A. Strand in agreement with Jon

Paulien lengthily wrote that:

The explanation of the seven heads and ten horns, for example, must be from the viewpoint of John at the time of his writing. After all how else can an *explanation* be given than in terms of what exists, even though the vision itself is from the perspective of eschatological judgment when the beast ‘*is not*’? In other words, though John sees the vision from the ‘is not’ phase (judgment), the heads and horns are historical entities belonging to the ‘was’ phase.⁸⁵

Notwithstanding the demand to see the vision from John’s perspective, scholars like Maxwell who call for end-time interpretation move on to identify the seven heads by specifying this order for the first five fallen as ‘Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Roman Empire and Christian Rome.’ Maxwell moves on to reckon the sixth head as ‘Christian Rome in its wounded state’ followed by the seventh which is ‘Christian Rome in its revived condition.’⁸⁶ Although this is final list that Maxwell gives, on the contrary Smith argues that another enumeration of the kingdoms reveals that the sixth head/king would either be the ‘United Italy’ or ‘Pago-Protestant nations of Europe;’ and on the other hand, the ‘seventh head is a ‘future head yet unknown’ but the eighth is papacy restored.’⁸⁷ Nichol and Ranko also show that those who follow this order enumerate the sixth and the seventh heads that according to these interpreters, ‘the⁸⁸ sixth and seventh heads might be revolutionary France and the

⁸⁴ Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13, no. 2 (2002): 6.

⁸⁵ Kenneth A. Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” in *The Symposium on Revelation-Book I, Daniel and Revelation Committee*, 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 54–55.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 472.

⁸⁷ Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, 63.

⁸⁸ Mervyn C. Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 472.

United States, or the United States and a world organization, or the United States and a restored papacy.⁸⁹

On the other hand, scholars who suggest that the vision be seen from John's perspective agree on all points but differ when it comes to the actual enumeration. The argument for these scholars is that the reckoning should start with Babel while others say the count begins with Egypt as the most certain world empire. Garland being one of those who say that Babel would make a good starting point says 'it's our view that the historical scope of the seven-headed beast ridden by the Harlot and her identification with Babylon points in the direction of Babel as the first kingdom.'⁹⁰ The main argument for Babel is the reference to the life experience immediately after the flood of Noah and how the ante-Diluvians impacted the world history. Garland further explains that the five fallen kingdoms are: 'Babel, Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece.'⁹¹

On the other hand, those supposing the count begins with Egypt are scholars like Nichol, Ranko, Robert J. Wieland and Uriah Smith. These scholars believe that Egypt was the first world Empire to be used as an agent by the evil forces to try and annihilate Israel as Uriah Smith narrates from the point of Ezekiel 29:3 that Egypt was 'a prominent agent of Satan symbolized by a 'great dragon''⁹² and a 'world power that oppressed Israel.'⁹³ Francis Nichol and Wieland affirm that Egypt qualifies to be the first world power because in Ex. 14:9-30, besides enslaving Israel, like Assyria, Egypt

⁸⁹ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:856.

⁹⁰ Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Re 17:9)*.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, 63.

⁹³ Stefanovic, Ranko, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

attempted to ‘annihilate God’s people.... at the Red Sea.’⁹⁴ Ekkehardt Mueller adds that there is ‘additional information found in Revelation which points to Egypt as the first empire.’ He seems to suggest that Egypt is symbolically mentioned by name in Rev 11:8 when he further wrote that ‘Egypt is a symbolical Egypt because it is said that the Lord was crucified there, it still reminds us of the ancient empire of the Pharaohs. It is the earliest empire mentioned in Revelation.’⁹⁵

Having agreed that Egypt was the first world empire for this model of interpretation, Stefanovic, Robert J. Wieland, and Francis Nichol agree that the second world empire to trouble Israel was Assyria. Stefanovic reveals that Assyria qualifies because Assyria ‘was responsible for destroying the Northern kingdom of Israel and scattering the ten tribes throughout the Middle East.’⁹⁶ In Isa. 8:4–8; 36:1–15; 37:3–37, Stefanovic’s position is theologically sound because Assyria under King Sennacherib indeed aimed at subjugating Israel.

Further, Stefanovic, Ekkehardt, and Francis Nichol agree that third persecuting power is Babylon, was the empire responsible for destroying ‘Jerusalem and took the people of Judah into the exile’⁹⁷(Jer. 39:9, 10; 52:13–15). The fourth then would be ‘Medo-Persia in the days of Queen Esther almost annihilated the Jews;’ and that the fifth would be ‘Greece through Antiochus Epiphanes oppressed the Jewish people and tried to destroy their religion’⁹⁸(1Macc.1:20–64; 3:42; 4:14, 36–54).

⁹⁴ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:856.

⁹⁵ Mueller, “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” 30–45.

⁹⁶ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:856.

Finally, the sixth and the seventh heads/kings according to this model of interpretation would be ‘Imperial Rome,’⁹⁹ the kingdom that ruled the world and oppressed the church during the time of John. Smith agrees to the fact that John had the vision of the Revelation around A.D. 96, and says, ‘here he[John] is shown a symbol of the government under which he lived and was suffering persecution; and that symbol was a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns.’¹⁰⁰ Smith understands with all certainty that the sixth head is Imperial Rome because ‘all the features which appear in the dragon, we should expect to find, should we not, in some features or characteristics of the Roman Empire? This would certainly seem to be most natural.’¹⁰¹ Smith concludes that the sixth head is Imperial Rome because ‘all the features which appear in the dragon, we should expect to find, should we not, in some features or characteristics of the Roman Empire? This would certainly seem to be most natural.’¹⁰²

Lastly, the seventh head/king is understood to be coming from John’s perspective as the ‘medieval ecclesiastical Christianity represented in the sea beast that was mortally wounded in Revelation 13:1-10.’¹⁰³ While Stefanovic prefers using medieval ecclesiastical Christianity to refer to the seventh head, Robert J. Wieland, Nichol and Smith prefer Papacy to represent the seventh kingdom. Wieland J. Robert says that the ‘not yet come,’ ‘would be the Papacy, which continued for a space of time that could be considered ‘short’ in comparison to the overall history of the

⁹⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, 63.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

world.’¹⁰⁴ Then referring to the eighth head/king, the four scholars agree that it refers to ‘the healing of the mortal wound of the beast that will appear on the scene before the end of the age.’¹⁰⁵ Hence their final list of seven kings is summarized as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Imperial Rome, and Medieval Ecclesiastical Christianity; and the eighth as revived Papacy after the healing of the wound sustained in 1798.

In summary, scholars for the second figurative method of interpretation see the leopard bodied beast with its seven heads as a symbol of the evil forces oppressing God’s people throughout all ages. Out of this background, scholars say the seven heads stand for worldly powers opposing God at the bidding of Satan himself. Scholars then are of the view that the beast transcends any single world empire stretching many centuries before and after the Christian era to the consummation of world history.

However, these scholars minutely divide into two groups when it came to the placement of the vision. The first group of scholars argued that the vision should be placed at the end-time around 1798/1844 because they took the present tense and equivalenced it to the interpretation of the coming city John in the distant future. And because of this view, Babylon became the first world Power, Christian Rome in wounded or United Italy the sixth and Christian Rome in its revived condition as the seventh and papacy as the eighth. While those suggesting that the vision should be seen from John’s perspective say, present tense used is as an active tense undoubtedly referring to John’s own day. Hence they enumerated the seven heads as Egypt,

¹⁰⁴ Robert J. Wieland, *Revelation of the Things to Come*, 4th ed. (Grantham; England: Stanborough Press, 2014), 174.

¹⁰⁵ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Imperial Rome, and Medieval Ecclesiastical Christianity; and the eighth as revived Papacy.

In conclusion of the literature review, chapter II has revealed that the three models of interpretation all acknowledge the seven heads of the Leopard-bodied beast as a representation for rulership. Although understood differently, each model principally interpreted the leopard-bodied beast with its seven heads as a form of worldly power that at some point ruled the world and persecuted Christians through its seven heads. As a power persecuting Christians, the beast fought and oppressed God's children to the extent of wanting to annihilate them completely. Various activities such as physical wars and persecutions were used by this beast to try and subjugate God's people and force them to abandon their faith in God.

However, in the attempt to identify the seven heads, scholars displayed great difference of opinion. Each group of scholars is of a held view in the quest to provide a plausible interpretation. The review showed that the first group inconclusively argued for literal interpretation and identified the heads/kings as the Roman Emperors that reigned during the first Christian era. The second group of scholars argued for figurative interpretation and identified the heads seven different forms of Roman Administration that ruled the Roman Empire from 753 B. B., extending to John's day to the present. And the third identified the seven as the seven persecuting powers throughout history starting with ancient Egypt, going all the way the consummation of world history.

CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF REV. 17:9C-11

Interpretation of the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like Beast of Rev. 17:9c-11; have been based theoretical assumptions that do not follow theological and hermeneutical principles that are essential in interpreting the symbolic and figurative language of the book of Revelation. In this section, the analysis will follow theological and hermeneutical steps to arrive at an acceptable interpretation of the seven heads. To arrive at such an interpretation, this study will analyze the language, its interpretation, the biblical identification of the beast and thereafter, the actual interpretation of the seven heads.

Identification of the Type of Literature of Rev. 17:9c-11

Genre of the Passage

Acceptable and plausible interpretation of the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast of Rev. 17:9c-11 begins with acknowledging that the last book of the Bible is uniquely constituted with a special genre. From the reading of Rev. 17:9c-11, it is clear that the type of language used is rather unique and therefore needs to be identified for the text under consideration. In accordance with available biblical data and research sources, the book of Revelation in its entire revelatory nature has been understood by many scholars to be characterized with three types of genres. These three types of genres have been particularly identified by scholars as “apocalyptic

prophecy, prophecy, and epistle.”¹ Although these three main types of genres characterize the book of Revelation, it is clear that Rev. 17:9c-11 does not belong to the last two classes of genres; that is, the “epistolary letter’ and the ‘general’ prophecy.”²

Firstly, the argument either to interpret the seven heads/kings literally or figuratively depends on the ability to identify the type of genre that characterizes Rev. 17:9c-11. As acknowledged above, Rev. 17:9c-11 belongs to a unique type of prophecy whose messages transcends the time of the writer going beyond into the future. This type of genre according to Gregory K. Beale in his *Commentary on the book of Revelation* is “apocalyptic”³ prophecy. In agreement with Beale, David E. Aune in his *Commentary* and in line with the majority of scholars agrees that the genre for the large part of the book of Revelation; that is Rev. 4-22:5 belongs to the literary genre of “apocalypse.”⁴ This type of prophecy differs from classical or general prophecy because of the type of the message contained.

Having established that the genre for Rev. 17:9c-11 is apocalyptic prophecy, it is clear that out of the three main models of interpretation, the second figurative method of interpretation of which the researcher is in agreement with understood that the genre for the book of Revelation and that of the chapter plays a fundamental role

¹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 37; David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 1-5:14*, vol. 52a (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), lxxii.

² Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 1-5:14*, 52a:lxxii. Although the book of Revelation qualifies to be considered as an epistolary letter and prophecy, Aune clarifies that Rev. 1-3:22 and 22:21, largely contains epistolary information sent to the seven churches of Asia Minor. On the other hand, Revelation as a prophetic book contains prophetic messages found within the epistolary letters whose messages were firstly meant for particular people but extend beyond the local churches and can be repeatedly applied to this generation like the messages to the seven churches; Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 7.25.9–10.

³ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 37; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 17.

⁴ Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 1-5:14*, 52a:lxxii.

in the final interpretation of the seven heads/kings. The type of genre for a passage detects how that particular text should be taken, either to be taken literally or figuratively. As established, the genre for Rev. 17:9c-11 does not guarantee taking it literally because apocalyptic prophecy discloses “a transcendent reality’ quite different from the realities reflected by other “ancient witnesses.”⁵

John J. Collins advances this idea that revelatory literature mediated by otherworldly beings to a human recipient carries “a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.”⁶ Thus J. L. Koole cautions against negligence of taking apocalyptic prophecy like classical prophecy, Epistles and gospels because apocalyptic prophecy present accounts of ‘mystery of the future, especially of the latter days, as it is made known to him [seer] in a condition of ecstatic vision by means of symbolic figures and events.’⁷ Hence embarking on literal or partial figurative interpretation of the book Revelation and chapter 17 is according to Stefanovic going against the very nature and denies the book of Revelation “of its predictive character.”⁸

Use of Symbolic Language

In addition to the genre, the second aspect which is also important in the interpretation of the seven heads/kings of Rev. 17: 9c-11 is good understanding that

⁵ John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

⁶ John Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (September 14, 1979): 9.

⁷ J. L. Koole, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Edwin H. Palmer (Wilmington, NC: Delaware, 1964), 297.

⁸ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 17.

apocalyptic-prophetic literature rests on the heavy use of symbolic or figurative language. Unlike the literal and first figurative interpreters' supposition to interpret the seven heads for literal emperors and forms of Roman administrations, the book of Revelation and the concerned chapter as apocalyptic literature is known to be full of enigmatic figures that cannot be interpreted without a deep understanding of concerned symbols. For this reason, New Testament scholars have acknowledged and warned that Revelation as typical of apocalyptic writings is replete with "intricate and unusual symbolic language"⁹ which contemporary readers may find exceptionally difficult to understand and later on interpret appropriately. Unfortunately, the first two models of interpretation seem not to have noted that even the chapter is replete with sophisticated imagery which cannot be lightly taken in their process of interpretation.

Further, apocalyptic prophecy and literature uses much symbolic language for two clear reasons, and as interpreters, one needs to be familiar with the reasons. The first of the two main reasons according to Stefanovic is that apocalyptic prophecy "finds literal language inadequate to portray supernatural things and subtle heavenly realities."¹⁰ True to Stefanovic's observation, it has been acknowledged that Biblical prophecy is immensely endowed with many heavenly realities that common words cannot fully explain.

For this reason, apocalyptic prophecy uses composite symbols and images to say in one picture what volumes of words may find difficult to express. Secondly, apocalyptic prophecy is enclosed in symbolic language because the message contained has to be kept as a secret and only intended for the insiders or God's

⁹ Michael L. White, "The Book of Revelation: Understanding the Book of Revelation," *Front Line*, 2, last modified 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypses/revelation/white/html>.

¹⁰ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 17.

faithful children. Arthur M. Ogden confirms that the Apocalypse “hides its message from those who are not God's servants.”¹¹

As observed by Ogden, there's no need to be a genius to conclude that the apocalyptic prophecy comprises hidden messages. We find this exemplified in the life and teaching of Jesus. Like apocalyptic language, Jesus used parables to reveal truth to His disciples and to hide it from His enemies. Similarly, John under the impression of the Holy Spirit uses symbolic language like in the book of Prophet Daniel to hide the message from the enemies of the Church.

How to Interpret Apocalyptic-Symbolic Prophetic Literature

The Sources

The first essential factor in the interpretation of the seven heads of the leopard-bodied beast is to have a thorough trace of the sources of the apocalyptic-symbolic prophetic literature and later on know how to interpret the language. Reading the language for the Rev. 17:9c-11, it is noticeable that the use of composite and perplexing symbolism in the form of a non-existent wild beast to describe the past-future world history suggests that the language used must have been a borrowed language because this trend is altogether new to the NT customs.

Hence without tracing its origin, it is practically impossible to interpret it. For this reason, it is only understood and acceptable before attempting to interpret this language; the researcher should firstly embark on identifying the sources for the language and thereafter, study how sources for this mysterious language were interpreted.

¹¹ Arthur M. Ogden, “The Language of the Book of Revelation,” *AOGDEN*, 17–39, last modified May 28, 1998, www.aogden.com/online/language.

Firstly, it has been established that the language of the book of Revelation and that of the passage was both figurative and symbolic language, a language scholars altogether understand is new to the New Testament writings. True to this supposition, available research resources reveals that the symbolic and figurative language for the book of Revelation and that of the passage has unique sources where the imagery language is weightily borrowed from although no single source suitably characterizes the book. According to one scholar, Stefanovic, the book of Revelation is understood to be linked to at least four primary sources. These four primary sources are; the “Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic writings, the first-century Asia Minor setting, and the New Testament writings.”¹²

Confirming Stefanovic’s listing, Frederick David Mazzaferri in his commentary when he quoted Hendricks acknowledged that the book of Revelation has “the traditions of the OT, later Jewish Literature and Early Christianity”¹³ as its primary sources of the symbolical language.

To start with, interpretation of the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast depends on the thorough understanding of the OT sources. As it will be made clear later, the book of Revelation is deeply rooted in the apocalyptic writings and traditions of the Old Testament. Scholars such as Trudinger, Prigent, and others have clearly shown that “the OT is by far John’s foremost quarry of sources.”¹⁴ It is further acknowledged that John the revelator heavily drew symbols from the Old Testament sources to such an extent that out of “404 verses in Revelation, 278 contain references

¹² Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 18.

¹³ Frederickh Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1892), 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 39.

or allusions, direct or indirect to the Old Testament.”¹⁵ William Milligan also advances this submission to show that Revelation is deeply rooted in thoughts and language of the church’s past and says “to an extent.... it may be doubted whether” the book “contains a single figure not drawn from the OT, or a single complete sentence not more or less built up of materials brought from the same source.”¹⁶ As rightly observed by the three scholars, interpretation of the symbolical language largely depends on a thorough understanding of the OT figures and symbols for anyone to correctly interpret the same figures found in Revelation.

In addition, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary also points out that

a clear understanding of these [Old Testament] citations and allusions in their historical setting is the first step toward understanding the passages where they occur in the Revelation. Study may be given to the context in which John uses them, to ascertain their adapted meaning. In particular this applies to the names of persons and places, and to things, incidents, and events.¹⁷

Hence, without a proper understanding of the OT background as observed by Jon Paulien, “whoever tries to understand Revelation without a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament will find it virtually impossible to understand the book”¹⁸ and its language.

Further, thorough interpretation of the apocalyptic language for Rev. 17:9c-11 is also dependent on having a clear understanding of the Jewish Apocalypticism and its traditions. Research shows that the language of the book of Revelation was also shaped by the Jewish apocalyptic works of “1 Enoch (the Ethiopic Enoch), 2 Enoch

¹⁵ Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1906), cxl–clviii.

¹⁶ William Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1892), 76.

¹⁷ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:725.

¹⁸ Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstone, MD: Review & Herald, 1994), 135.

(the Slavonic Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.”¹⁹ Although not part of OT, apocalyptic works contains useful historical information that to a large extent shaped the theology of the first Christian century because they were based on the visionary experiences where a writer(s) would be carried away into distant places to observe grandeur and majestic supernatural scenes.

Furthermore, the understanding of the language for Revelation depends on having full knowledge of the first-century Asia Minor setting and NT parallels. Firstly, the book of Revelation to a large extent reflects the real first-century world in Asia Minor. Making a comment on the use of Asia Minor settings, David Aune, an expert on the book of Revelation demonstrates certain scenes of the first century reflected in the book.

He talks, for instance, of Revelation 1:18 which is a portrayal of the glorified Christ’s authority and how it surpasses “the authority of Hekate”²⁰ as well as that of every other natural or supernatural authority.”²¹ In this same line, the New Testament parallels that shaped Revelation used the Old Testament prophecies to show the certainty of the promises to Israel. Although different in style, vocabulary, and subject matter, the book of Revelation is replete with numerous parallels and allusion to other books of the New Testament which were written previously.”²²

¹⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 20.

²⁰ Aune, David E., *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 1-5:14*, 52a:117. Hekate was a popular Hellenistic goddess ascribed universal sovereignty; she was considered both the source and ruler of heaven, earth, and Hades, and the agent by which they would to their end. It was believed she held keys for heaven and earth and mediated the happenings between heaven and earth. She was commonly addressed as the beginning and the end.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 22.

Historical Interpretation of the Sources

Having ascertained the four primary sources for the book of Revelation and how each particular source shaped the passage of consideration, the next step in interpreting the symbolic heads of Rev. 17:9c-11 is to know how apocalyptic language contained in these primary sources was interpreted.

Although there are many books to refer to within the primary sources that contain apocalyptic language influential and key to the interpretation of Revelation, the researcher wishes to limit the scope of reference to ‘Daniel’s “apocalyptic”²³ prophecy because it provides an important historical background for understanding the book of Revelation and the text in focus. Richard Lehmann reveals that Daniel “constitutes one of the most certain characteristics of the literature of apocalyptic origin”²⁴ for the book of Revelation. And within the book of Daniel, still, the researcher limits himself to Daniel 2 and 7, as key chapters essential to the uncovering of the apocalyptic language directly linked to the beasts of Revelation 12, 13 and 17 in the following ways.

As a matter of reference, available biblical data clearly demonstrates that the apocalyptic language of Daniel 2 was interpreted symbolically. It is clear that the great metallic image with its four different metals was “symbolically’ or ‘figuratively” interpreted, each as a representation of a particular historical world

²³ John J. Collins, F. M. Cross, and A. Y. Collins, *Daniel : A Commentary on the Book of Daniel. Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1993), 58.

²⁴ Lehmann, Richard, “Relationship between Daniel and Revelation,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies, Book I, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 138; Swete, B. Henry, *The Apocalypse of St. John*. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1906) P. M. Bogaert, "Les Apocalypses conlemporaines de Baruch,d'Esdras et de Jean" inL 'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocafypnque..., 36.

“empire”²⁵ or “world-kingdom.”²⁶ This interpretation is made much more clearer by Keil and Delitzsch who thoroughly explained in their Commentary on the book of Daniel that the parts of the image from the fine gold to the feet, firstly represented Babylon, ruler of whole civilized and the historical nations of his time; and in this sense was a world-kingdom, was the “prototype and pattern, the beginning and primary representative of all world powers,” followed by the “second and third parts of the image which are interpreted of the second and third world-kingdoms”²⁷ of Medo-Persia and Greece.

Secondly, the interpretation of the apocalyptic language for Daniel 7 and its strange wild beasts was not left to speculations. Research and different scholars who have written and attempted to interpret the apocalyptic language for Daniel 7 acknowledge that the four beasts were also interpreted figuratively in line with the metallic image to represent four different “forms of the world-powers”²⁸ in succession. This understanding is further explained by Jamison and others in their Critical and Explanatory Commentary on the Old and New Testaments who give details with precise correctness that the four wild beasts were interpreted symbolically and say;

The ‘beasts’ here represent the world powers, in their beast-like, grovelling character. It is on the fundamental harmony between nature and spirit, between the three kingdoms of nature, history, and revelation, which Scripture

²⁵ J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 307; Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, The Ages Digital Library Commentary [CD ROM]., vol. 8 (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999), 577–578.

²⁶ Keil Carl Friedrich and Fanz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 648–649.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9:556–557.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9:637.

symbolism rests. The selection of symbols is not arbitrary, but based on the essence of things.²⁹

In the same manner, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary makes the same explicative point to the above general agreement that these “four beasts represent the same four world powers symbolized by the metallic image.”³⁰

Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Language of Rev. 17:9c-11

Having established the primary sources of the apocalyptic language for the book of Revelation and how the language specifically that of Daniel was historically interpreted, the study submits that the apocalyptic language in Rev. 17:9c-11 should be understood and interpreted similarly. Unlike the way literal and first figurative interpreters interpreted the seven heads; correct interpretation of seven heads would likewise follow the interpretation of the four different metals of the great metallic image.

Further, plausible interpretation of the seven heads of the leopard-like beast should follow the already laid down interpretation of the four non-existent wild beasts of Daniel 7 that were interpreted as four world kingdoms. Scholars like Stefanovic, Nichol, Ladd, Smith, Maxwell and Strand approve that the seven heads be interpreted symbolically as “a series of seven successive world powers or empires that oppressed God’s people throughout history from the establishment of God’s church with Israel down to the Second coming.”³¹ In addition, the apocalyptic language for Rev. 17:9c-

²⁹ Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

³⁰ Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 820.

³¹ Stefanovic, Ranko, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 520; Nichol, Francis D., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 2002), 854; Ladd, George Eldon, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 222; Smith, Uriah, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, Revised.

11 should be interpreted symbolically because the message in the text points to “events throughout all history, rather than to those primarily in John’s time or the time of the end.”³²

The Interpretation of the Beast of Rev. 17

One of the main problems in the interpretation of the seven heads of Rev. 17:9c-11 lies in the lack of correct interpretation of the beast in order to ascertain who the leopard-like beast represents in this apocalyptic vision. As observed in chapter II, the first two groups of scholars interpreted the composite beast as the “Roman Empire,”³³ during the first Christian era and as the Roman Empire since its inception around 753 B. C. simply because of the way they understood the Beast. On the same hand, some scholars have entirely equated the composite beast to the beasts of Rev. 12 and 13 and to the harlot riding it.

Although some scholars found it suitable to identify the beast with the Roman Empire and the city of Rome, the description of the beast needs critical analysis if plausible interpretation has to be achieved. For this reason, in order to correctly interpret the beast, the researcher is of the view that we look at the two main phrases used to describe the beast namely, the beast’s dimensional period and where the beast came from to have a thorough understanding of what the beast really represents.

(Nashville, TN: Southern, 1944), 17; Mervyn C. Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 473; Strand, A. Kenneth and F. B. Holbrook, “The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies, Book II, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 191.

³² Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 14.

³³ Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 487–491; Ronald L. Farmer, “The Beast Is a Symbol of the Roman Empire and an Allusion to Nero,” in *Revelation, Chalice Commentaries for Today*, ed. Ronald L. Farmer (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 144; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation, Sacra Pagina*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 17.

Its Three Dimensional Periods

The first amazing description given to the Beast of Rev. 17 that shows the beast doesn't deserve to be interpreted as the Roman Empire is the three-dimensional periods in which the beast is said to have existed. The three-dimensional periods ascribed to the leopard-like beast shows the beast is a representative of an antagonistic power, a summation of an evil force that surpasses all evil dominions and must be the king and commander of the abyss. Eugenio Corsini and Edwin Reynolds in their notes point out that leopard like Beast being the summation of all evil in its final form is a representative of "Satan"³⁴ himself, the destroyer and keeper of the abyss. As observed by Corsini and Reynolds, many other scholars agree³⁵ with this interpretation as the most probable interpretation of the beast that transcends all other beasts; being the fallen angel (Rev. 9:1), imitator of God the Father and the great serpent, in the following ways.

Firstly, the beast's use of the three-dimensional name and title points to the actual enemy of God who is Satan himself. Reading from biblical data and available resources, the three-dimensional name or title of "who was who is and who is to come" belongs and is a preserve only for the Godhead and "God the Father."³⁶ Many other scholars including Martin McNamara acknowledge that the tripartite title refers only to God the Father. In his Commentary on the Pentateuch, McNamara points out

³⁴ Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Wilmington, NC: Michael Glazier, 1983), 328; Edwin Reynolds, "The Seven-Headed Beast of Revelation 17," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 6 (2003): 103.

³⁵ Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John Vol. 2, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 111; Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 291–292; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002), 373; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 305.

³⁶ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 523.

that the tripartite title refers to the “great Old Testament covenant name Yahweh (Exod. 3:14), expressing the eternal existence of God in the past, present, and future.”³⁷ With this understanding, by virtue of the beast’s use of the name and title shows that it is only Satan who is a “counterfeit, parody, and opponent of God”³⁸ the Father who claims what belongs to God to be his. Simon J. Kistemaker notes that beast uses the name and title of God because in this prophetic history, he “strives to be like God....”³⁹ the Beast wants to present itself like God, whose presences in the book of Revelation is understood in the light of both his past and future actions.

Further, the Beast of Rev. 17:1-8 shows it is a representative of Satan by imitating the eschatological appearing of God the Father comes to save his people. As observed above by McNamara, the tripartite name of God the Father is a unique salvific name which is a “covenant name of Yahweh.” As a salvific name, the tripartite name is apocalyptically used to refer to the divine “eschatological visitation”⁴⁰ of only the true God at the end of this world. In Rev. 1:8 and 4:8, the name is combined and associated with another divine title, Almighty to show God’s ability to save humanity. Similarly, the beast as a representative of Satan acclaims this divine title blasphemously to show its desire to be like God the Father and carry out its “end-time activity and role”⁴¹ in the fight against the God of heaven, but that leads to its destruction. This matches well with the description given that the beast ascends

³⁷ McNamara Martin, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*. (Rome Italiy: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), 101–105.

³⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 864; Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17-22.*, 52C:939.

³⁹ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 469.

⁴⁰ Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17-22.*, 52C, 939–940.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

from the abyss and goes down to perdition because Satan is the “one playing this eschatological role”⁴² and must be destroyed. Hence it must be understood that the probable meaning of the monster that “holds up the prostitute: represents Satan in his guise as ‘lord of the world,’ a lordship which is both physical and spiritual, religious and political.”⁴³

Beast Coming out of the Abyss

The second point that helps to identify the composite Beast of Rev. 17 as the representation of Satan and counterfeit of God the Father is where the blasphemous beast comes from. Reading the narration given in verse 8, the Bible clearly states that the scarlet beast came up out of the abyss and that after coming out of the abyss, in a short while, he, the beast departs into destruction. The beast is not said of sitting on many waters or coming from the sea, but coming from the abyss.

Firstly, the word abyss occurs nine times in the NT as an adaptation from the Hebrew *tehôm* which in Greek is *abyssos*. In the NT, the word has been used to refer to “the depths of the earth as the prison of spirits and as the world of the dead.”⁴⁴ As observed by Westermann and Jeremias, after its adaptation, the seven times the word abyss appears in the book of Revelation is used as a symbol of the realm of death and predominantly linked to the satanic agencies as a place where demonic powers abide. Stefanovic in his Commentary on the book of Revelation reveals that the “abyss or bottomless pit stands for the abode of the fallen angels, the demons (Luke 8:31; 2

⁴² Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17-22.*, 52C., 52C, 939.

⁴³ Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 328.

⁴⁴ Joachim Jeremias, “Abussos,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Kittel Gerhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), 1:9-10.

Peter 2:4; Jude 6).⁴⁵ Walwoord, Beale, Osborne and Thomas, also show same understanding that the abyss is the dwelling place, realm, or place of detention of demons and is actually a “the preliminary place of incarceration for fallen angels.”⁴⁶

As identified above as a dwelling and incarceration place for the demonic forces, Rev. 9:11 points to the king of the locust who is also the angel of the abyss also called Abaddon/Apollyon or destroyer. Scholars have interpreted this king of the demonic locusts as “Satan himself, the fallen star from heaven (Rev. 9:1), who has been given authority over the abyss and who still has dominion over the earth.”⁴⁷ In this same light, the king destroyer who is Satan himself is depicted in the Beast of Rev. 17: 8 as the beast coming up out of the abyss to mount his last attack like he tried to destroy the male child, the woman, and the church in Rev 12.

Lastly, in Rev. 11:7, Satan is depicted by the beast that comes up out of the abyss or the bottomless pit to temporarily kill God’s two witnesses; that is, the Old and New Testaments. Here again, it is pointed out that the beast that ascended from the bottomless pit had its source of power from the demonic realm hence Ladd points out that the “beast too is of satanic origin and power, and derives his authority from the demonic realm,”⁴⁸ understandably pointing to the beast of Rev. 17. The beast in Rev. 11 used the French Revolution to destroy the Scriptures; the beast of Rev. 17 has

⁴⁵ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 358.

⁴⁶ John F Walwoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 159; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 493; Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 363; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 28.

⁴⁷ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 312; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John Vol. 1 & 2.*, 69; Harrington, *Revelation, Sacra Pagina.*, 172; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 111; Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 291–292; Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 373.

⁴⁸ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John.*, 156–157; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 350.

been using political powers to oppose the cause of God. Thus, the beast that comes out of the abyss should be understood as Satan who works through political powers.

Interpretation of the Seven Heads/Kings of Rev. 17:9c-11

Biblical Usage for Animal Heads/Kings and Mountains

First and foremost, thorough interpretation of the seven heads of the composite leopard-bodied beast also identified as kings and mountains depends on having a systematic understanding of the biblical usage for animal heads, kings, and mountains. Unlike the way it was argued out by the first two interpreters that the seven heads are representatives of the Roman Emperors and forms of Roman administrations, available biblical data and various research sources reveal that the Bible's apocalyptic prophecy uses animal heads in a more exclusive manner, far from what literal and first figurative interpreters supposed. Kenneth A. Strand in his article *in Symposium on Revelation-Book II* articulates that the biblical usage for 'animal heads' is to symbolically represent "kingly rulership" rather than designating "single individuals"⁴⁹ as rulers.

Further, different scholars have come to discover and understand that the biblical usage for animal heads is for representatives of worldly rulership, in the form of a governance system or administration that actually rules the world. In this same light, Ranko Stefanovic, one of the main proponents of the second figurative method of interpretation explains in detail that the biblical usage for animal heads is to

⁴⁹ Strand and B., "The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors," 177.

represent major world “kingdoms and not individual kings.”⁵⁰ Stefanovic further explains in more symbolical sense that animal heads are actually an “expression for world powers or empires.”⁵¹

However, it is arguably challenged with reference to the four heads of the leopard-like beast in Daniel 7:6 that the heads represented individuals like Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigonus, but Douglas Bennet puts this argument into right perspective that the four heads “were part of the kingdom of Greece ‘among whom... empire was divided.’”⁵² These four heads were interpreted for individuals because they were part of a single symbolic animal that stood for a single world kingdom. Unlike the four heads, the seven heads of the composite animal are representatives of seven different kingdoms or world powers including the kingdom of Greece.

Furthermore, interpretation of the seven heads of the composite leopard-like beast also depends on knowing that the Bible equates the seven heads with the seven Mountains/Kings and interprets them the same. From the Biblical point of view, the two symbolic figures have the same interpretation which cannot be separated for one to achieve a theologically acceptable interpretation. Firstly, Paul S. Minear in his book confirms that the scriptural usage for mountain(s) is also ‘employed as a symbol.’⁵³

⁵⁰ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 515.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Douglas Bennet, “The Stone Kingdom of Daniel 2,” in *Symposium on Revelation-Book II, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7*, ed. Douglas Bennet (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 314.

⁵³ Paul Sevier Minear, *Saw a New Earth* (Washington DC: Corpus, 1968), 237.

Also, Andrew M. Woods shows that mountains are “symbolic’ in nature not that they “represent Rome’s topography.”⁵⁴ Strand advances this understanding that the two; animal heads and mountains are “never found used to symbolize an individual monarch or ruler.’ ‘Instead, we find it used as a symbol of a nation or empire.”⁵⁵ This interpretation is exemplified in Dan 2:34-45 where the stone that struck the feet of the metallic image subsequently became a great mountain, filling the whole earth, “symbolically typifying God’s everlasting kingdom and also the ancient Babylonian Empire as a ‘destroying mountain’ that is to become a ‘burnt mountain (Jer. 51:25).”⁵⁶ In line with Strand, Minear explains that in apocalyptic prophecy, mountain(s) are used “figuratively to connote strength,”⁵⁷ discharging the notion that ὄρος means hills for the city of Rome. Beale emphatically summarizes that “Mountains symbolize kingdoms in the OT and Jewish writings, for example, Isa. 2:2; Jer. 51:25; Ezek. 35:3; Dan. 2:35, 45; Zech. 4:7; 1 En. 52; Targ. Isa. 41:15.”⁵⁸

Lastly, the seven heads can be best interpreted symbolically when their interpretation comes at the backdrop of understanding that they are “kings” also. In Revelation 17: 9c, the seven heads are introduced and referred to as kings showing how interchangeably kings, heads, and mountains can be. In the Commentary on Revelation, both Stefanovic and Beale synoptically point out that the word ‘kings’ is

⁵⁴ Andrew H. Woods, “Have the Prophecies In Revelation 17–18 About Babylon Been Fulfilled?,” *Part 1 Bibliotheca Sacra* 169 (n.d.): 79–100.

⁵⁵ Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 186.

⁵⁶ Strand and B., “The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors,” 177.

⁵⁷ Minear, *Saw a New Earth*, 235–36.

⁵⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 868.

used in the Old Testament often used for “kingdom.”⁵⁹ With this information made available, it is clear that the biblical usage for animal heads is not in isolation from mountains and kings, but rather shares the same interpretation.

Consequently, following the established understanding as provided and illustrated in the above-mentioned paragraphs, the appropriate interpretation for the seven heads/kings of Rev. 17:9c-11 would be similar-rulership, kingdoms, or as empires not as individual kings. As clearly shown above, the seven heads of the leopard-bodied beast like the second figurative method of interpretation suggested would be representative of seven world kingdoms, empires or seven successive persecuting powers. Unlike the way literal interpreters supposed, interpreting the seven heads of Rev. 17: 9c-11 as kingdoms will be in line with the already established biblical usage for animal heads and also in line with its equivalent symbols (mountain and kings) that have the same symbolical and figurative interpretation in the Old Testament.

The View of the Vision

In order to have a plausible interpretation of the seven heads of the leopard-like beast, a correct placement of the vision of Rev. 17 matters. A number of scholars have argued that the vision of the seven heads entirely falls in the first Christian era mainly because of the conception that the leopard-like beast is a symbol of the Roman Empire and its seven Emperors are the seven heads. On the other hand, scholars like Mervyn C. Maxwell and others strongly believe that the vision of the leopard-like beast should be seen from the “viewpoint of 1798/1844 and later, the era of the

⁵⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 519; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 868.

judgment and the end time.”⁶⁰ Maxwell supposes this view because, according to him, the view fits in well with the time frame for the judgment scene of Daniel 7, the opening of the scroll in Revelation 10, and the preaching of the first Angel’s message of Revelation 14.”⁶¹ This supposition is also supported by the misapplied truth that the chapter under consideration is concerned almost exclusively with the end of time; hence its interpretation should be in the future.

However, the correct view to the vision of the seven heads is to see the vision from the time of John, when he was writing the book. Unlike the literal scholar’s supposition, seeing the vision from John’s own time matches well with the contextual use of the present tense ‘is’ which clarifies the three-dimensional periods and gives a guide as to which period should be used to see the vision from. Ekkehardt Mueller in one of his unpublished articles and a suggestion for interpreting the seven heads helps us to see the vision from John’s day by pointing out how important and defining the expression of the present tense is.

Mueller notes that the use of a present tense is a sure starting point and that it “must in some way or another relate to John.”⁶² As observed by Mueller, the backdrop to this understanding is the fact that there is a specific time in which John is found and in which one of the seven heads must have existed also. Although it has been argued again that the phrase ‘one is’ shouldn’t be associated with the leopard-bodied beast, it is clear that the use of the present tense ‘is’ must be associated with John at the “point

⁶⁰ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 473; William H. Shea, “The Identification of the Seven Heads of the Beast in Revelation 17,” *Shea*, www.sheah.org; Hans Karl LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: first Impressions, 1997), 410–417.

⁶¹ Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 473.

⁶² Mueller, “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” 4.

of writing the Revelation;”⁶³ for it to have proper meaning to John and more importantly, his readers.

Furthermore, many other scholars like Jamieson, Strand, and Stefanovic have also shown and contended that the vision should be seen from John’s day rather than from any other time. These scholars make it clear that the kingdom referred to as ‘one is’ was a kingdom “existing in John’s days.”⁶⁴ The Seventh-day Bible Commentary also agrees to this understanding as it notes that the point of view for the vision is during “the Roman Empire in John’s day.”⁶⁵ Strand writing about the beast and horns sums it this way:

The explanation of the seven heads and ten horns, for example, must be from the viewpoint of John at the time of his writing. After all how else can an explanation be given than in terms of what exists, even though the vision itself is from the perspective of eschatological judgment when the beast ‘is not’? In other words, though John sees the vision from the ‘is not’ phase (judgment), the heads and horns are historical entities belonging to the ‘was’ phase.⁶⁶

Thus the point of departure for interpreting the seven, like the second figurative interpreters suggested is from John’s viewpoint at the time of writing the Revelation, for it to have had meaning for John when he wrote and to have proper meaning in line with the Angel’s explanation.

⁶³ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

⁶⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments.*; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521; Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 191.

⁶⁵ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:856.

⁶⁶ Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 54–55.

The First Five Fallen Heads

Having established the biblical usage of animal heads, kings and mountains that they denote rulership, and that the vision must be seen from John's own day, the first five fallen heads of the leopard-like beast can be thoroughly interpreted from John's own time. Although it has been argued by some scholars like the literal interpreters who see and entirely place the leopard-like beast in the first Christian era and others who argue that the vision be seen from the end time, it has been contextually clarified that present tense 'is' puts into right perspective the three-dimensional periods and gives a guide as to which period to see the vision from.

This, therefore, follows the understanding that the first five world powers or kingdoms were all fallen by the time of writing the book of Revelation. With this understanding, there's no doubt that the first five powers represented by the five heads had all fulfilled their dual civic duties; that is, functioning both as religious and political heads. These five heads all executed their spiritual and political duties in fighting the God of heaven and His people with a view of not only wanting to destroy their God-given identity but also wanting to annihilate them completely.

Following a thorough foundation laid above in interpreting typical apocalyptic language and knowing that the vision extends far back in the past, the first world power should be the Empire of Egypt, a persecuting power that goes beyond the Kingdom Babylon; the kingdom others considered the first. The main reason for starting with Egypt as the first kingdom is because the Empire of Egypt has been prophetically recognized as the "first world power which came into collision with God's people."⁶⁷ Scholars like Stefanovic, Jamieson, Ladd, Strand and others agree to

⁶⁷ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments.*, 855; Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:855.

this identification of Egypt as the first Empire and explains that Egypt was the first world power that “oppressed Israel”⁶⁸ for many years while they were slaves. In addition to the acts of oppression to Israelite, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary chronicles another one diabolic act the Empire of Egypt as the first agent of the evil forces that it wanted to “annihilate them at the Red Sea.”⁶⁹

Further, the Empire of Egypt fits to be identified as the first one because, within the Bible, additional information relating to this Empire is found from within the book of Revelation, in chapter 11:8 where symbolical data points to Egypt as the first empire. Although symbolically implied, the mention of Egypt points to the ancient empire of the Pharaohs. Hence the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* points out that the nation of Egypt ‘was known for its denial of the existence of the true God and for its defiance of the commands of God.’⁷⁰ This identification of Egypt as the first Empire or Kingdom logically matches well with the interpretation of the sixth and existing kingdom at John’s time of writing. Hence the interpretation of the Egypt as the first world kingdom is appropriate and matches well with the second figurative method of interpretation.

Further, the second kingdom that followed Egypt as the then world power was the ancient Empire of Assyria. The kingdom of Assyria qualifies to be the second major persecuting power because of evil acts done against the church, the children of Israel (Judah) and God of heaven at the influence of Satan himself. A number of

⁶⁸ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments.*; Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 205; E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St John*, vol. 2 (Dublin, Ireland: John Robertson Press, 1852), 245–46; Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Charles C. Cook, 1909), 391–93; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John.*, 227–29.

⁶⁹ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:855.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 7:803.

scholars like Stefanovic, Ladd, Strand, Jamieson and others recount how the Empire of Assyria attacked Israel to the point of wanting to annihilate them. In their various writings, they have pointed out that Assyria was the kingdom “responsible for destroying the northern kingdom of Israel and scattering the ten tribes throughout the Middle East.”⁷¹ George Arthur Buttrick adds that, during the ugly reign of Manasseh, Assyria “poisoned the soul of the people” and that Judah was “reduced to a vassal state and made to bow to Assyria.”⁷²

Lastly, the last three of the first five fallen persecuting powers are straightforwardly identified because these kingdoms are well known and widely acknowledged kingdoms from the book of Daniel. To start with, the last three of the five fallen heads are interpreted in line with the metallic image of Daniel 2, the four beasts of Daniel 7 and the composite sea beast of Revelation 13:1-10. Available biblical data and research sources have established that the powers represented by the heads possessed characteristics prominent in the kingdoms of the metallic image and Daniel 7. In Revelation 13, the sea beast which is identical to the beast of Revelation 17 clearly shows that John alludes to the “same powers in the reverse order of their appearance in history, as he looks backward from his day.”⁷³ With this understanding, the three Empires should be identified as the Empires of Babylon, Persia, and Greece because historical interpretation shows that these persecuting powers were already a part of the first four kingdoms of Daniel 2, 7 and Revelation 13.

⁷¹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John.*, 229; Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 205; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*.

⁷² Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrative Encyclopedia.*, 551.

⁷³ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:817.

The first of the last three kingdoms is identified as the Empire of Babylon, a well-known kingdom during the captivity of Israel Jer. 39:9, 10; 52:13–15. The Kingdom of Babylon qualifies to be regarded as the third because it's the only the world kingdom that came on the scene after the Assyrian Empire and persecuted the nation of Israel. Stefanovic in his Commentary on the book of Revelation reveals that Babylon as a persecutor of God's church was "responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and taking the people of Israel into exile"⁷⁴ during the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar. In the same manner, Medo-Persia and Greece are understood as Empires that "almost annihilate the Jews" during Queen Esther's time and under Antiochus Epiphanes, "oppressed the Jews and tried to destroy their religion"⁷⁵ respectively.

The Sixth Head Kingdom

The interpretation of the sixth kingdom, also described as the existing one is dependent on having a correct viewpoint and understanding on the placement for the vision. As established in the section of the view of the vision, it was clear that the vision is placed in the first Christian era based on the use of the present tense and that it refers to John's point of view; that is, the time of writing of the book of Revelation. With this understanding, the sixth head which is the fourth metal and fourth indescribable beast of Daniel 2 and 7 is interpreted as "Imperial Rome"⁷⁶ by Ranko Stefanovic while the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* identifies the head as

⁷⁴ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521; Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:817.

⁷⁵ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 473.

⁷⁶ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

“Rome,’ in its persecution of both Jews and Christians,”⁷⁷ Dan. 8:9–12, 24, 25; Matt. 24:15, 21; Luke 21:20–24; Rev. 2:10, 13. Although the name for the sixth kingdom seems to be a challenge as even seen from the second figurative method, scholars unanimously point to the same period, a period that has been identified with John, the writer of the book of Revelation.

The Seventh Head (Also The Eighth)

Having identified the first five fallen and the sixth world kingdoms, the seventh kingdom which also turns out to be the eighth is chronologically identified as the kingdom that comes immediately after the fall of the Roman Empire. Reading from available sources, the symbolical kingdom that followed the Roman Empire and meets both the Religio-Political traits all is the Papacy in its ecclesiological nature. In advancing this interpretation, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary points out that the seventh head is the “papacy throughout her history.”⁷⁸

Stefanovic in his Commentary acknowledges that the seventh head which turns out as eighth is the papacy but prefers using another name as the “ecclesiastical Christianity in the sea beast that was mortally wounded in Revelation 13:1-10.”⁷⁹ Although Stefanovic uses ecclesiastical Christianity for the seventh kingdom, the period being referred to even by the SDA Bible Commentary is the same, bearing in mind that it’s the same kingdom that comes immediately after Rome.

Lastly, the eighth king which is of the seventh refers to the restoration of the same ecclesiastical/papacy power after its fatal wound it sustained. However, it must

⁷⁷ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:855.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 856.

⁷⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

be noted that the number ‘eighth’ is also used figuratively not as a literal quantitative referent to an actual eighth king in a historical order of succession from the seven preceding kings. With this understanding, the eighth kingdom refers to the “healing of the mortal wound of the beast that will appear on the world scene before the end of the age.”⁸⁰ In other ways, it refers to his⁸¹ future “attempted mimicry of Christ’s resurrection.”⁸² In this same vein, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* gives detailed information that the word eighth, without an article

suggests that the beast itself was the real authority back of the seven heads, and that it is therefore more than merely another head, the eighth in a series. It is their summation and climax—the beast itself.⁸³

Hence, although the eighth has the same wicked nature as the others, he is different from them in that he is an even “fuller embodiment of Satanic power”⁸⁴ and in that his “reign concludes history.”⁸⁵

Summary of Analysis

From the theological analysis taken in this chapter, it is the opinion of the researcher that the seven heads also identified as kings and mountains be interpreted as seven successive major persecuting kingdoms or Empires at war with God’s children from the time God set up a church starting with Israel. First, the research has in full revealed that heads were used symbolically. From the reading of Rev. 17:9c-

⁸⁰ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 521.

⁸¹ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:855. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, the eighth king is referred to as ‘he’ because in the Greek, the word for “eighth” is masculine and hence cannot refer to a head, the word for which is feminine.

⁸² Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1966), 560–61.

⁸³ Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:855.

⁸⁴ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John.*, 231.

⁸⁵ Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1957), 227.

11, it was discovered that the passage contained apocalyptic language just like the entire book. And from available data, research has revealed that apocalyptic language is usually interpreted symbolically.

Secondly, the seven heads of the leopard-like beast should be interpreted as world kingdoms because of the biblical usage for animal heads. As was discussed above, consistent biblical usage for animal heads shows that they to stand for world kingdoms and Empires rather than individual rulership. This interpretation was confirmed by scholars such as Beale, Stefanovic, Strand and many others. Stefanovic in his commentary pointed out that animal heads stand for world “kingdoms and not individual kings” and that they are an “expression for world powers or empires.”⁸⁶

In addition, the dual identification of heads as mountains and as kings simplifies the interpretation of the seven heads. The simplicity of the interpretation of the heads is affirmed by the interchangeability of the words that heads are kings and mountains. These are not in or an addition to any of the three symbolical figures but that they stand for one symbol. Beale showed that historically, mountains and kings are representatives of world “kingdoms” and “Empires” that ruled the world.

Lastly, the seven heads of the leopard-like beast fit to be interpreted as world Empires because of the nature of prophecy it depicts. More importantly, the type of prophecy contained in Rev. 17:9c-11 is of a cosmic nature, covering a long span of the world history. Kenneth A Strand in his article comparing between classical and apocalyptic prophecy revealed that the apocalypses of Revelation 17 a nature of “cosmic sweep or universal scope.”⁸⁷ As observed by Strand, apocalyptic prophecy

⁸⁶ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 511, 512, 515.

⁸⁷ Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 12.

has a vantage point that draws aside the curtain, as it were, on the entire world scene for the whole span of human history.

For example, as was discussed, the prophecy of Daniel 2 and 7 treat world empires in succession for the remainder of earth's history from Daniel's time until the final consummation and setting up of God's everlasting kingdom. Revelation likewise scans major historical developments from John's own day up to and including a depiction of the grand eschatological finale. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the seven heads of the leopard-like beast coupled with the message contained in the text are world kingdoms and Empire because they have been used by the Satan himself to carry this war against the church and the God of heaven.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, the analysis has shown that there are theological disagreements among scholars on the appropriate method to follow in the interpretation of the seven heads of the leopard Beast of Rev 17:9c-11. The argument whether the seven heads represent ‘individual Roman Emperors,’ ‘forms of governments’ or they represent world kingdoms, or Empires points to credible utilization of theological, exegetical and hermeneutical principles which this researcher, used in this analysis to determine the plausibility of each model.

In this research, the literal method of interpretation interpreted the seven heads as individual Roman emperors at the backdrop of interpreting the leopard-like beast as an embodiment of the Roman Empire during John’s own. However, scholars for this model couldn’t agree on critical issues like the date of the composition for Revelation as a determinant, especially for the first and sixth Emperors. They also failed to reconcile the eighteen months reign for three Emperors to smoothen both their interpretation and enumeration. And since each group of scholars rather held its preferred position, they have rendered this model of interpretation unsuccessful coupled with numerous lists of names of emperors as seen from the adapted list in chapter II.

Further, scholars for the first figurative method of interpretation viewed the leopard bodied beast as a total representation of the Roman Empire from its inception around 752 B. C., through John’s day, extending many centuries after the first Christian era. With this understanding that the vision covers a long span of history, scholars interpreted the seven heads/kings as various forms of administrations that ruled the Roman Empire. However, scholars couldn’t easily agree on the first, sixth

and seventh forms of administration. This failure came because some scholars understood the heads as forms of administrations that ruled Rome while others argued for Roman Administrations only. Even though these scholars are divided on this opinion, and that they couldn't agree on the first, sixth and seventh administration, this model of interpretation is widely identified with this order; Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Dictators, Triumvirs, Emperors, and Popes.

Furthermore, the scholars for the second figurative method of interpretation interpreted the seven heads of the leopard-like beast as seven persecuting powers that have been oppressing God's people throughout all ages. This figurative interpretation came at the backdrop of their identification of the genre for the book of Revelation as an apocalyptic prophecy whose interpretation is symbolic and figurative. In addition, scholars for this model understood that apocalyptic prophecy carries a transcendent message whose application is cosmic rather than being limited to a particular geographical area. Hence scholars viewed the beast transcending any single world empire stretching many centuries before and after the Christian era to the consummation of world history.

Having seen the language for Rev. 17 as apocalyptic and that it carries a transcendent message; scholars were divided when it came to the placement of the vision. The first group of scholars argued that the vision should be placed in the end-time around 1798/1844 because they took the present tense and made it equivalent to the interpretation of the coming city John in the distant future. Scholars with this view identified the seven heads as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Christian Rome in wounded or United Italy the sixth and Christian Rome in its revived condition as the seventh and papacy as the eighth. While those that suggested that the vision be seen from John's perspective say, present tense used is as an active tense undoubtedly

referring to John's own day. Hence they enumerated the seven heads as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Imperial Rome, and Medieval Ecclesiastical Christianity; and the eighth as revived Papacy.

In view of the theological disagreements among the three main methods of interpretation of the seven heads/kings of the Beast of Rev. 17:9c-11, the researcher, having utilized general and specific hermeneutical principles used in interpreting apocalyptic literature, is of the view that the seven heads of Rev. 17:9c-11 should be interpreted as representatives of world kingdoms and empires which are persecuting powers rather than individual kings.

Firstly, the interpretation of heads as world kingdoms or empires is theologically plausible because it also interprets the composite Beast of Rev. 17 as the summation of all evil and representation of Satan himself, who has been using these worldly powers to persecute God's children throughout history. In Rev. 17: 8, the Beast is depicted as using the tripartite name or the three-dimensional times that point to Satan as the imitator of the rule and the title of God. The beast is also depicted as coming up out of the abyss, a sphere and dwelling place for evil agents, demonic forces and in Rev. 9: 11, Satan the king of the locusts and here he goes to perdition clearly refers to the fallen angel Satan

Secondly, the biblical usage of animal heads, kings and mountains shows that animal heads, kings, and mountains have been consistently used for rulership and supreme power to govern rather than individuals. In the light of this understanding, the beast who is Satan uses these seven heads as his oppressive agents in this great controversy. In this controversy, the seven Empires as Satan's agents fight against the cause of the God of heaven and bring persecution to the Church throughout its prophetic history. Following the above understanding, the seven heads/kings of Rev.

17, the first five fallen kingdoms are; the Empire of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The sixth and the seventh are the Roman Empire and the Ecclesiastical Christianity or the Papacy respectively. The eighth should be understood as the actual reappearing of the Beast himself, who is Satan.

Having established that the seven heads of Rev. 17:9c-11; represent rulership in the form of kingdoms and Empires, the most convincing view of Rev. 17 is from the perspective of John in the first Christian era rather than 1798/1844. Seeing the vision from John's own time matches well with the contextual use of the present tense 'is' which clarifies the three-dimensional periods and gives a guide as to which period should be used to see the vision from. This understanding makes it clear that the present tense used relates John the revelator for it to be theologically meaningful even to his audience.

Theological Significance

The theological significance of this analysis to the Seventh-day Adventist Church understanding of the end-time events and the entire doctrine of last things is threefold. Firstly, the chronological layout of the seven heads in succession as provided by this research significantly shows that we're on the verge of the close of history and the Second Advent is apparent. This proper perspective is cardinal to all Seventh-day Adventists because this points to the close of time and reminds us of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This eschatological expectation demands serious introspection and awakening from slumber knowing that we are living in the last days. The fulfillment of this prophecy calls for serious study among Seventh-day Adventists as people that have risen as a result of Bible prophecy, to see how other events connected to this prophecy are unveiling.

Secondly, the significance of this theological analysis to theologians, pastors, and teachers is that; in accordance with other books that teach on how to interpret Revelation, the analysis provides additional theological insights on how to interpret Rev. 17 in the light of the whole book. In its resourceful nature, this research briefly highlights the three types of genres that comprise the book and how uniquely the book of Revelation is endowed with apocalyptic literature that gives it a revelatory nature different from the rest of NT books. For students and teachers, this becomes a key component in the interpretation of the book of Revelation because apocalyptic prophecy carries an apocalyptic message different from classical prophecy.

In addition, this thesis' analysis is a critical resource that provides a good perspective essential to unlocking eschatological prophecies of the second half of the book of Revelation. Although some Adventist scholars like Maxwell and LaRondelle have argued that the view of this apocalyptic vision should be understood in the light of 1798/1844, this study has given reasons in line with scholars like Stefanovic, Ladd, Strand and Smith that this vision should be viewed from John's perspective in the first Christian era. Exegetically, the use of a present tense "is" by the writer and the Angel's explanation of the vision fall into the time of John, and this must have been the understanding of the first Christians. This understanding places us in the right context of interpreting the ten horns, the fall of Babylon in Rev. 18 and any other eschatological prophecy.

Thirdly, the significance of this theological analysis is to influence and provide a reversal of various renewed interpretations of the seven heads/kings of the leopard-like beast of Rev. 17:9c-11 that recently flooded the Seventh-day Adventist Church world over. Some scholars even among Adventists recently associated the seven heads/kings of the beast with the succession of seven popes since 1929 because

such an interpretation is theologically incorrect and unbiblical. Therefore, this analysis implores the church not to consider the recognition of Vatican City as an independent sovereign state through the Lateran Treaty as a sure fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation 17. A clear and biblical interpretation of these seven heads doesn't in any way accommodate the interpretation of John Paul II, pontiff from 1978 to 2005, as the last pope or the election of pope Francis as the eighth king having succeeded Pope Benedict XVI who many Bible prophecy students equate his short reign at the helm of the Catholic Church as the seventh head.

Recommendations for Further Research

In conclusion, the study recommends the following: Firstly, further investigations on the meaning of the ten horns of the Beast to add clearer light on the activities of the beast. Secondly, a research be done to ascertain the eschatological era of the beast-its three stages and the meaning "he goes to perdition." And thirdly, a study be carried out to ascertain the exact meaning of "he remains a little while, and he goes to perdition."

APPENDIX

BEAST OF REVELATION 17

THE BEAST OF REV 17¹

Historical Era	
“Five are fallen.” Was Period	1 st Head
	2 nd Head
	3 rd Head
	4 th Head
	5 th Head
“One Is”	6 th Head John’s Time
“One Is Not Yet Come”	7 th Head 10 Horns Concurrent
Eschatological Era	
“IS NOT”	“Bottomless Pit”/Abyss (Millennium)
“WILL COME”	8 th Head (After Millennium)
“GOES TO DESTRUCTION”	Perdition after Millennium

¹ The above diagram was adapted from Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 56.

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