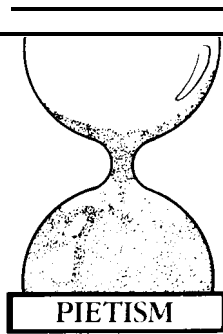


Dispensationalism in Transition

Challenging Traditional Dispensationalism's "Code of Silence"



Vol. VIII, No. 11

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December, 1994

HEADS OF STATE AND HEADS OF THE BEAST

by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th. D.

I come now to what probably is my concluding article in response to Robert Thomas' critique of my *Before Jerusalem Fell* (BJF). Note well: I have not come to the conclusion of this article: it is ten pages long and I have only made it to page three! But it is becoming evident to me that it would take several years to complete my response in the small space provided in this newsletter. If I continued I might miss some claim that the world is ending; there is more to life than this one issue! Perhaps I will produce a tape in response. That could be a little quicker. But, who knows, perhaps next month I will recant and plod on for at least one more issue!

A Final Objection Considered

Because of space constraints, I was not able to finish Thomas' hermeneutic objections to BJF. He has one other point in this section, to which I now turn.

Thomas writes: "Another puzzling discussion concerns the raising of the beast from his death-wound. At one point Gentry identifies Galba as the seventh king of 17:10, in strict compliance with the consecutive reigns of Roman emperors. But suddenly he skips Otho and Vitellius to get to Vespasian who is the eighth and shifts from counting kings with his identification of the healing of beast's death-wound as Rome's survival from its civil war in the late sixties. This is enough to dash in pieces any effort to decipher a consistent pattern of hermeneutics, because such is non-existent."

Thomas' Sneak Attack

This complaint as presented is simply unjustified. I am not saying Thomas should agree with me if he carefully read BJF¹. But it is simply *not* the case that Gentry "suddenly skips Otho and Vitellius to get to Vespasian."

Now follow me carefully: this statement is from his paper which was *era*lly presented to the Pre-Trib Study Group². Almost certainly his hearers did not have BJF open to the pages to which he was referring. That being the case, and if his hearers had not previously read BJF (and looking at the Pre-Trib Study Group's masthead's names, I rather doubt they have), they could jump to either one of four erroneous conclusions.

They might think either that: (1) I was wholly unaware of the existence of Otho and Vitellius, thereby accounting for my "sudden" skipping of them. In which case I made an embarrassing historical blunder in my doctoral dissertation. Or (2) perhaps I was slyly hoping my readers knew nothing about "the Year of the Four Emperors" and were thus unfamiliar with the rapid succession of emperors involving Otho and Vitellius. In which case I was culpably devious in hiding relevant countervailing evidence. Or (3) I was arbitrarily shifting the textual evidence to suit my preconceived opinion. In which

case I am naively stumbling through Revelation without any consistent bearings (Thomas' viewpoint). Or (4) I had slipped back into my old dispensational mode and was inserting convenient gaps where necessary. Of course, were that the case I am sure dispensationalists would commend me for my innovation.

I am sure Thomas wanted his auditors to think the third option was true, But if his audience was unfamiliar with BJF they would have no inkling that I *specifically responded to just such an objection* and explain why I skipped Otho and Vitellius. Mine is no *sudden* shift, i.e., no shift lacking any hermeneutic explanation, or advanced warning. Despite his otherwise careful critique, Thomas has simply dealt unfairly with my treatment of the seven kings.

Let Me Explain

On page 314 of BJF (right in the middle of the context footnoted in Thomas' presentation) I *specifically consider the very objection Thomas offers! Now whether it is convincing to him is another question. My point here is that I do not "suddenly skip" Otho and Vitellius. Let me relate the two paragraph defense I present in BJF for my omitting these emperors, (I reprint this material since the reader may not have a copy of BJF, in that it is out of print. If anyone has a contact with a reputable publisher that might be interested in reprinting BJF, please contact me at the address below.)*

On pages 315 and 316 of BJF I write:

The reference to the "eighth" king (Rev. 17:11) might seem a difficulty for this view. This is because the eighth emperor of Rome was actually **Otho**, the second of the interregnum rulers, and not **Vespasian**, who actually gave life again to the Empire. Exegetically it should be noted that in the chronological line of the seven **heads/kings**, John speaks of the matter with exactness by use of the definite article. That is, he writes in Revelation 17:10 (we translate it literally): "the [hoi] five fell, the [ho] one is, the [ho] other not yet came, and whenever he comes a little time it behooves him to remain." But the definite article is conspicuously absent in the reference to the eighth **head/king** in Revelation 17:11: "And the beast which was and is not, even he is an eighth." Of course, there is no indefinite article in Greek, but the omission of the definite article that clearly and repetitively defined the chronological series of **head/kings** ("the five," "the one," "the one to come") vanishes before the eighth is mentioned. Thus, the eighth is "an eighth," i.e., it refers not to any one particular individual, but to the revival of the Empire itself as the heads are beginning to be replaced. The