

## Revelation XIII- Enter the Beasts, Part I

[Read Revelation 13]

### **Introduction:**

At the end of chapter 12, we saw that satan had failed to flush out the church in her infant stage (by means of persecution and doctrinal corruption), and so he then turned to make war against the individual saints, who make up the church. In verse 17, we read, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. And indeed, this is what he has been doing since the time of the apostles, and that which he will continue to do right up to the end of the church age.

We are in a war, brethren; the dragon/satan is constantly striving to oppose the people of God, and he does so with particular means. And the good news is that those means are not hidden from us. Our great God has given us the upcoming chapters of the Revelation to expose those means to us, so that we will be prepared to stand fast, and to persevere, in light of the inevitable opposition that will come against us. Our God, here pulls back the curtain; He takes us behind the scenes of what is visibly seen, so that we can have a thorough understanding of how the enemy is at work, seeking to destroy our testimony in Christ. Remember, the Christ child has already succeeded! He stands victoriously at the right hand of God, interceding on our behalf, and leading us forward in the battle. And the dragon, who can no longer touch the child, vents his wrath against the Christ, by seeking to destroy His people; His church.

Chapter 13 gives us a description of two (out of three) of the dragon's main allies, whom he uses unto the end of seeking to destroy the people of God. Having failed to destroy the whole concept of the church from the outset; having failed to prevent the church from taking root, standing on the sand of the sea, he brings out his first beast; his first means of contending with the people of God. This beast is described in verses 1-10. And then, in verses 11-18, we are given a description of a second beast, who comes up from out of the land. For this morning, we will lay a little additional ground work, with the intent of considering the first beast, before getting to the second beast, Lord willing, next time.

## **I. Ground Work for Understanding the Beasts [Read Ephesians 6:10-13]**

Brethren, this text is critical for helping us to begin to understand Revelation, chapters 13 and following. You see, we are always in danger of limiting our opposition to what we can see and touch and feel, rather than recognizing that the real power lies behind the physical realm. For example, there is the danger of limiting the first beast to one of his physical manifestations, which actually serves to represent only one fraction of a demonic power that is far more broad and wide. So many people attempt to identify the beasts by physical labels alone (Nero, Vespasian, Dometian, a pope or many popes, Hitler....etc) and in doing so, they greatly limit and narrow down the real scope of this beast's presence and power. At best, all of these and far more, are individual representations and manifestations of a demonic power that lies behind them all.

We don't wrestle with flesh and blood. We don't wrestle with popes and individual kings and governors and dictators. Indeed, these are simply symptoms and fruits of higher powers and demonic forces; rulers of the darkness of this age (the whole age of the New Covenant). This is significant to understand, because it will greatly determine how you engage in the warfare. If you see not beyond the physical realities, then you will not be inclined to use spiritual weapons for the warfare, which is what the Apostle Paul is here calling us to do. He is saying, "Look, the battle is not physical! The real battle is spiritual! And you must understand this and prepare accordingly, if you are going to win the battle!" Daniel hits clearly on this in his book, when he shows how demonic rulers actually lie behind the rulers of Babylon and Greece and etc. And Michael the Archangel, the protective representative of God's people, fights against these very rulers. And so, brethren, even as the symbol of the dragon is representative of a spiritual devil; even as it gives us a tangible expression of the invisible devil who lurks behind the scenes, these beasts are ultimately demonic powers, which operate *in* and *by* various physical, visible means. They themselves, however, are not limited to any one visible reality; they are transtemporal; they arrive in many forms throughout the course of the entire church age, until the demonic powers themselves are ultimately defeated and destroyed by Christ Himself, at His second coming. And so, indeed, at the end, we can presume that they will take on some final form, before they are ultimately defeated, to take no other form ever again.

Now, with all of that said and in mind, let us begin to consider the first beast, who comes up out of the sea.

## **II. The Beast From the Sea [Read verses 1-10]**

Let us consider several facts about this first beast, before concluding with a summary understanding of who or what he is:

1) This beast is described as a composite of the four beasts that are described in Daniel 7. [Read Daniel 7:1-8]

Notice, Daniel describes the first beast as being like a "lion"; the second as being like a "bear"; the third being like a leopard (with four heads); and the last as a hideous monster with iron teeth, having ten horns (and one that later comes up spouting blasphemies).

The sea beast in Revelation is a composite of these beasts from Daniel 7. He was like a leopard, having feet like the feet of a bear, and having a mouth like a lion, and a blasphemous name written on his heads (vs. 2a). He also has seven heads, combining all of the heads of the beasts of Daniel 7, and reflecting the image of the dragon, who has seven heads and ten horns ("The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" -Rev. 13:2b). The seven heads and ten horns, bearing the image of the dragon, indicate that this beast is the perfect expression and epitome of all evil. He is a co-conspirator with satan himself, serving to contend with the church, in arrogant opposition to Christ.

Now, if we are going to understand why this beast is a composite of the beasts recorded in Daniel, then we must understand a little bit more about the beasts recorded in Daniel. Again, keeping in mind that there are always demonic beings working behind the scenes, we find, in Daniel's vision, that the four beasts, represent four successive empires, ruled by their respective kings. In the case of Daniel's vision, it is clear that individual kingdoms are in mind. And from an historical standpoint, one would be very hard pressed to argue differently.

The first beast is clearly meant to be represented in the Babylonian empire, with Nebuchadnezzar serving as the representative ruler. It was like a ferocious, powerful lion, which

had eagle's wings. It soared high and lofty, that is, until its wings were plucked off, and it was made to stand up like a man and to have the mind of a man. Was it not king Nebuchadnezzar, who, after successfully conquering pretty much the whole known world, was exalted in his own eyes, and after failing to humble himself, God had brought him back down to earth. He lost his reign for a while, and lived out in the wild, like an animal, eating grass like an ox, growing hair as long as eagle's feathers, and nails like bird's claws. He wanted to soar high in his pride, so God made him live like a bird for a while. Until he came to his senses, looked up to heaven, and acknowledged God. Then God returned him to his kingdom and re-established his great success, but now as a man with a man's mind, seeing things in their proper perspective.

And when Babylon had fallen, the empire was shared by the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians having the greater part. This is represented by the lop-sided bear that devoured much flesh. And following the rule of the Medes and the Persians, came the Greek empire, most notably prospered by Alexander the Great. This is represented in the beast that was like a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back. The Greeks swept in and took over the entire empire at a speed that was quite unmatched. And it had four heads, because following the early death of Alexander, the empire was divided among four of his generals, Antipater, Lysimachus, Seleucus I Nicator, and Ptolemy I Soter. And then lastly, the most grotesque and fierce empire of all, and the empire that lasted the longest, was the Roman empire, out of which came the most horrendous and blasphemous kings of all, even beyond description. These four empires and their respective kings are the individual manifestations of the four beasts, listed in Daniel 7.

Where then does this bring us, with respect to the hideous, composite beast of Revelation 13:1-10? The great sea beast of Revelation 13 is a composite beast, best represented in all four of the empires described in Daniel 7. And the reason for this is because John is not emphasizing any individual empire, but rather the demonic beings that lurk behind all oppressive, harsh, persecuting empires, who will seek to destroy the church throughout the entire church age. No *one* empire or person is implied by this beast, although clearly, the emphasis of John's day, would have been the Roman empire. In other words, brethren, this beast is first the Roman empire, but then it includes every other anti-christian empire/government which exists until the end of the church age. The demonic beings at work behind these empires, continue to exist throughout the whole duration of the church age, moving from one rising empire to the next,

when the previous one has fallen. Empirical tyranny and governing persecution is one of the great means, which the devil uses to persecute, torment and kill the people of God, in opposition to Christ, the Ruler of His people.

Notice brethren, in verse 5, we are told that this beast is given his authority for 42 months. Does this time period sound familiar? We have already seen that this same time period has been mentioned several times in the last few chapters, though in different forms (3 1/2 years, a time, times and half a time), all representing the same slot of time, namely, the entire duration of the church age. This beast functions and wars against the people of God for the entire church age, clearly indicating that he is transtemporal, and not to be limited to any one individual or time period.

2) In verse 3, we find that this beast had received a mortal wound on one of its heads, which was healed. In some way, a major blow, indeed, a very noticeable death blow was given to this beast, of which we are meant to take notice. The scar is present, and the blow was severe. How are we to understand this? Some would relate this to that which happened to the Roman Empire, following Nero's suicide in AD 68. For several years after this, the Roman empire became very unstable, and seemed to be beyond recovery. There was civil chaos, and the short rule of the kings that followed, seemed to indicate that it could not regain its power and grip. And during this time, the persecution of the church quieted down greatly. However, when Vespasian took power, he began to restore order and stability to the empire, so that Rome regained its great power. And by the time Domitian reigned from AD 81-96, the persecution of Christians was reinstated.

While this is probably pictured here in some sense, I believe that the beast's wound runs deeper than this. This mortal blow was given by Christ Himself, when He had defeated the devil at the cross. Remember, in King Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the large statue, Rome was the final portion (including the feet and toes), and Christ is the large stone, which hits the statue right there, shattering the whole idolatrous image. And while this is ultimately fulfilled in the complete sense, when Christ returns, the first major blow came when Christ was given all authority on heaven and earth, following His resurrection from the dead. At that moment, the kingdom of God was secure and every other kingdom had its doom ultimately sealed. This was both a major blow to Satan and the beast, who comes up out of the abyss and the sea, with this

mortal wound. And though it is healed for a time, as the beast will continue to persecute the church for the duration of the church age, the deadly wound is a clear indication of the imminent doom soon to come upon the beast, upon the final return of Christ. Every oppressing, persecuting power, received a blow at the cross. And as every empire rises and falls, this wound is a reminder of the inevitable fact that it is Christ who ultimately reigns supreme. The encouragement to the people of God, and the sobering warning to those who worship the beast, is that the mortal wound (D-Day) has already come, and the final victory is under way and soon to arrive.

3) All the world worships the beast, who has been given his authority from the dragon (the beast takes what Christ refused to take, when He was tempted in the wilderness-- vs. 3, 4, 7-8). Under the threat of losing their position in society, material possessions or even their lives, the world willingly worships and serves the beast. The saints, who have been written in the Lamb's Book of life before time, remain faithful and refuse to worship the beast. This life has no grip on them. They recognize the utter deception and the devil's hand behind all of this, and they remain faithful and obedient to Christ (whose authority was given Him by God). They endure persecutions, sufferings, hardships, material loss and death, because their lives and their hearts are set in heaven with Christ. They are not holding on to this life, which is everything to those who are not written in the Lamb's Book of life. The world is powerless against the dragon and the beast. They serve, worship and marvel at the beast. They give to the beast, what the saints give to Christ alone.

4) This beast makes war with the church/saints, and in some sense, prevails (vs. 7). It conquers the saints. Now, as we have already seen, this does not mean that it destroys the faith of the saints. That is impossible, because they are sealed and protected by God. What it does mean is that he persecutes, oppresses, harms and ultimately kills the people of God. And while this takes place all throughout the history of the church age, in the beast's final manifestation, just before the return of Christ, he will virtually put out the light of the church, altogether (actually serving as the beginning of the final judgment to come upon the world-- Rev. 11:7ff). Empirical rule will always be the primary destroyer of God's people, right to the end.

5) This beast seeks to imitate Christ (the glorious Lamb that was slain) in many respects. He has been given authority and power over every tribe, people, language and nation. He has

received a mortal wound, but has been resurrected in some sense. He is marveled at and worshiped. He has horns and he has seven heads, attempting to mimic the number of perfection. He is an antichrist, seeking to contend with and oppose the true Christ. He has a blasphemous name on his head, claiming to be divine.

It is further interesting to note that it is often the case that governmental rulers and empirical powers have always sought to contend with Christ in this respect. Consider the example of empirical Rome for a few moments, which was clearly the manifestation of the beast in John's own day. The Roman empire was the beast to John and his contemporaries, and the rulers often received divine honors. Temples were built on behalf of them and worship was enforced by the empirical cult. Great advantages were given to those who participated in such worship, and great disadvantages (being barred from trade guilds, persecutions, and sometimes death) were imposed on those who refused to participate in the deification of the Roman rulers.

"During his lifetime Augustus had allowed his eastern subjects to pay him divine honors, and at his death the Romans proclaimed him *divus* (one like the gods). On his coins Nero was referred to as Savior of the World. The Roman senate regularly declared its deceased emperors divine. Domitian was addressed as *Dominus et Deus noster*, Our Lord and God..." (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation Revised*, Page 245-246).

These kinds of blasphemous claims travelled all throughout the years of the Roman empire, right into the rule of the Roman Catholic Church and its demonic, worship demanding popes, and into the present day, wherever empirical reign contends with biblical Christianity (Islamic countries...etc). The devil indeed uses empirical powers to contend with and blaspheme Christ and His church.

In fact, upon careful examination of the two beasts, you will find that, along with the dragon, they form a demonic triumverate in opposition to the glorious Trinity. The dragon/satan seeks to mimic the Father, giving his supposed authority/throne and power to the antichrist beast (who mimics Christ). And as we will see next time, the second beast, which comes out of the earth, seeks to mimic the Holy Spirit, by doing all that he can to bring the world to worship the first beast. Even as the Holy Spirit magnifies and points to Christ, the second beast, often seeks to magnify and glorify the first beast in the presence of the world. And even as Christ seals His

people with His mark of ownership, the beast puts his mark of ownership upon the unregenerate world. Carrying this one step further, in many ways, the lustuous whore of babylon (whom we will come to consider in the upcoming chapters) is a gross mimicry of the glorious Bride of Christ, the church. These kinds of opposite parallels are indeed evident though.

### **Conclusive Thoughts Concerning the Beast from the Sea**

Now why are we given this important information about the antichristian empirical powers of this world? So that we can be reminded that these powers operate in accordance with the dictates of their demonic influences. We are not wrestling merely with flesh and blood, brethren. We are wrestling with demonic rulers/powers, who war from within their own dark realm, in the heavenly places, manifesting their evil intentions through antichristian empirical powers. We need to ever be reminded of all that is really going on, so that we will remain faithful, abiding in Christ without compromise, even unto death. When we are tempted to compromise unto the saving of our own lives or unto the maintenance of our own creature comforts of living, we must remember all that is going on behind the scenes, and we must stand firm to the end, unto the realization of our guaranteed and assured final victory in Christ.

Indeed, we will face hardship and suffering, and maybe even death, but we have the big picture; we have been given the Revelation. Notice, what we are told in verse 10, just before we are given a description of the second beast. [Read Rev. 13:10].

Here it is, brethren! The great message of Revelation, given to those who have "ears to hear." What is our call? Endure...stand fast...persevere...keep the faith, no matter what. If your faith brings you into captivity, then go into captivity. If your faith brings you to be slain with the sword; to martyrdom, then be martyred. But don't compromise. The dragon's days are numbered. The beast's days are numbered. In the end, one kingdom will stand...the Kingdom of God and His Christ! And those who keep the faith to the end, will enter it. Those who love not their lives to the end, will meet that sure victory. Christ's victory on the cross has ultimately disarmed the devil and his beasts; their end draws near, fear not their empty threats, which can only harm the body...and nothing more.



[Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26ff; 3:5, 12, 21]. How do we conquer? By persevering and enduring to the end, in Christ, with an uncompromising faith! "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" (Rev. 13:9).