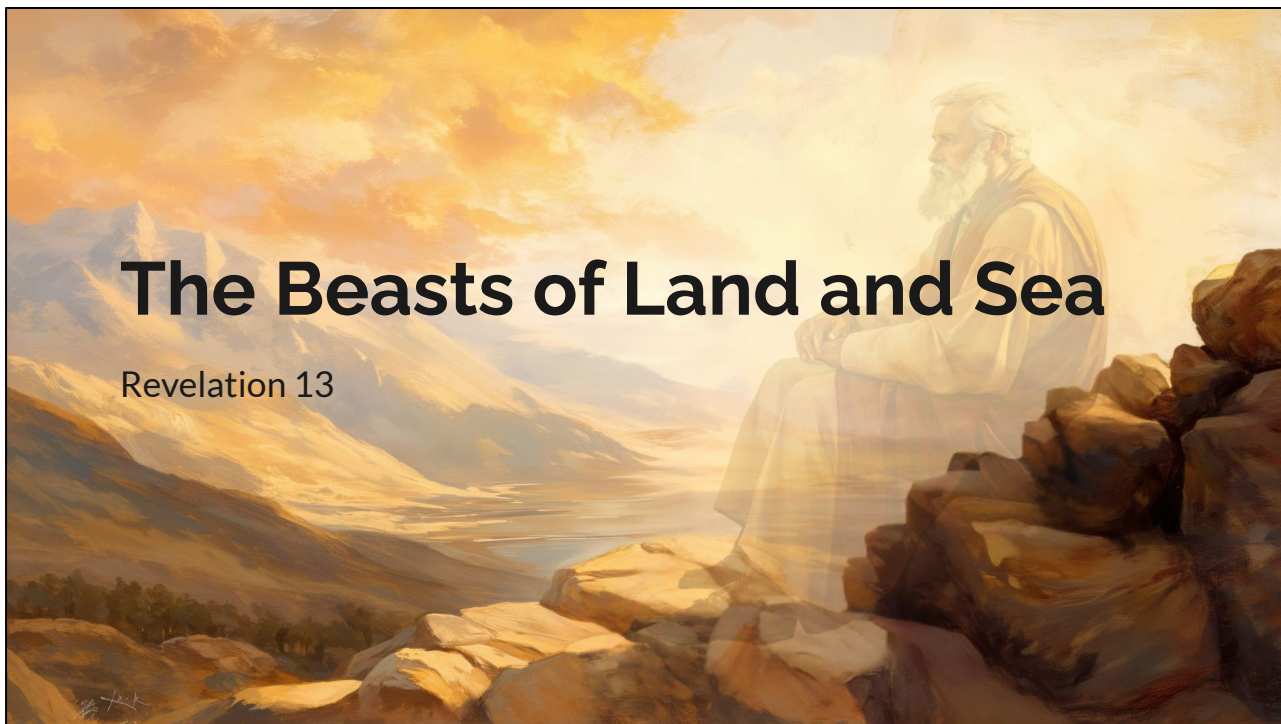


# The Beasts of Land and Sea

Revelation 13



## Revelation 13:1-4 (The Beast from the Sea)

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Chapter 12 ends with "And he stood on the sand of the sea." This is a reference to the dragon (not John as in some translations).

It is best to see this as Satan's plans were thwarted in stopping Christ and his followers from escaping and so he stands on the sand of the sea and looks for another "army" to use in his service to wage war against God and his people. He summons a supporting cast that will wage war against the infant church.

1. We see the beast rising out the sea (referring to the Gentile world).

## Symbol of the Sea

“Ah, the thunder of many peoples;  
they thunder like the thundering of the sea!  
Ah, the roar of nations;  
they roar like the roaring of mighty waters!  
The nations roar like the roaring of many waters,  
but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away,  
chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind  
and whirling dust before the storm” (Isaiah 17:12-13).

(Cf. 2 Sam 22:4-5; Ps 65:7-8; Isa 5:30; 57:20; Jer 6:23; Rev 13:1, 11)

Scripture uses the sea to speak about the Gentiles (nations) and especially their military strength used to persecute the people of God.

2 Samuel 22:4-5

4 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.

5 “For the waves of death encompassed me,  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;

Psalm 65:7-8

7 who stills the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples,

8 so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.  
You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

Isaiah 57:20

20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea;  
for it cannot be quiet,  
and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

Revelation 13:1

13 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

Revelation 13:11

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

## Daniel's Beasts

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.<sup>2</sup> Daniel declared, ‘I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.<sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another...” (Daniel 7:1-3).

Nearly identical language is used in Daniel to describe beasts coming out of the sea.

Daniel's beasts represent kingdoms or empires. They are all Gentile nations (Babylon, Persia, Medes, Greece, and Rome).

## Daniel's Fourth Beast

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.” (Daniel 7:7).

Horns is a reference to military might. Psalm 75:10, “All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.”

Revelation 5:6, “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”

Seven heads (Rome's seven hills cf. Rev 17:9) and ten horns referring to rulers of kings (cf. Rev 17:10 Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, NERO [one is], then Galba (who reigned only 7 months), the 10th king would be Vespasian who ruled when the temple was destroyed)

## Revelation 13:1-4 (The Beast from the Sea)

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Therefore, there are clear allusions to Daniel's beasts. This doesn't match any one in particular but seems to embody aspects of all four. This is like an empire of all empires, greater than Babylon, Media, Persia, or Greece.

Verse 2 tells us that the dragon gave it its power.

In 2 Timothy 4:17 Paul writes, "But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth." This is a reference to the persecuting power of the state, which was Rome in Paul's time and the language is used here too.

Verse 3. Some have supposed that this is a reference to the death and resurrection of an antichrist figure. Others supposed that John believed in the Nero myth that he would return from his death.

However, it is best to see that this is a reference to "one of its heads" receiving a mortal wound but the beast survives.

In June, 68AD Nero died. This brought the empire into violent convulsions of civil war and anarchy in which three emperors succeeded one another in the space of less than 18 months.

The empire seemed doomed. However, Vespasian led the empire to recovery and rather than weaker, the empire was now stronger.

Verse 4. Therefore, no one can stand against the beast. Not even turmoil at the highest level can topple it.

# The Identity of the Beast

1. “Out of the sea” coming from the Gentile world fits Rome.
2. Blasphemous names were used in Rome:
  - Dominus et Deus noster (Our Lord and God) [Domitian]
  - Divus (Divine/God) [Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian, Titus, and Nerva]
  - Divi Filius (Son of God) [Augustus]
  - Soter (Savior) [Nero]
  - Pontifex Maximus (Highest Bridge-BUILDER/Supreme Pontiff) [Emperor as the head of the pagan state religion]
3. The “mortal” wound of Nero’s death, empire’s recovery under Vespasian.

Nero had coins minted that said Nero, Savior of the World.

#4. Nearly all interpreters identify the beast with Rome and Rome’s leader. Sometimes referring to the emperor (one person) or referring to the empire (collective). Both ways of speaking would have been coming as the emperor and the empire are one in being.

The futurist believes that the Roman empire will be revived near the end. The antichrist will be a Roman man and will lead a revival of the old, pagan Imperial Rome under a new Roman head or emperor.

Again, there is agreement but I think it best to see this has the empire that existed rather than an empire that will exist again.

#5. The dragon will use the beast, this empire to attack believers. State persecution of the Church has thus always been one of Satan’s most devastating means of discouraging the church, often driving her underground, as under some emperors, or the modern communist states.

## Revelation 13:5-10 (War with the Saints)

<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

V. 5. We've already considered the blasphemous titles given to the emperors.

We note again the time period of 42 months, the 3 ½ year period from 66 - 70 ad that marked the Jewish war and the siege of Jerusalem ending with the destruction of the temple.

V. 7. God gives authority to make war and even conquer the saints. This means that Christians were killed. Paul and Peter were both killed in Nero's reign as well as other believers.

The Roman empire had authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation.

V. 8. All who dwell worship it. They would use the titles of divus, deus, and theos to participate in the imperial cult or emperor worship. This "worship" was everyday, practical allegiance and obedience to the Roman empire and the emperor.

Consider in Jesus' trial how the Jews were given the opportunity to own Christ but they proclaimed: "Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." JOHN 19:15

This was a great blasphemy and apostasy, a denial of God and worship to the emperor instead of God and his Christ.

## Philip Schaff

Some Christians were arrested, confessed their faith, and were “convicted . . .” says Tacitus, “of the crime . . . of hating the human race.” Their Jewish origin, their indifference to politics and public affairs, their abhorrence of heathen customs, were construed into an “odium generis humani” [hatred of the human race] . . . there began a carnival of blood such as even heathen Rome never saw before or since . . . A “vast multitude” of Christians was put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of

Here we see first century “hate crimes” sound familiar?

## Philip Schaff (cont.)

wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. The satanic tragedy reached its climax . . . Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob while Nero, in fantastical dress, figured in a horse race, and displayed his art as charioteer. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries; but only the cruel ingenuity of this imperial monster, under the inspiration of the devil, could invent such a horrible system of illumination (History of the Church, vol. 1, 381-82).

Here is the beast of Revelation 13 making war against the saints.

## Revelation 13:5-10 (cont.)

<sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive,  
to captivity he goes;  
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,  
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

John is writing to his audience calling them to endurance and faith.

Again, he says these events are soon (1:1,3). And people need to endure.

The beast will have many victims. Rome will be a fierce persecutor of the church around the empire. The saints must endure and remain faithful to Christ until the end.

## Revelation 13:11-15 (The Second Beast)

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, <sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

## The Traits of the 2nd Beast

1. Rises from the “earth” or “land” (v. 11). This could be a reference to Judea.
2. Two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon (v. 11). Less authority and an imitation of the Lamb.
3. This beast is later called the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).
4. It serves the first beast and makes other worship it (v. 12).
5. It performs signs (vv. 13-15).
6. It kills the saints for refusing to worship the beast (v. 15).

#2. Jesus said: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). They appear lamb-like but speak the words of the devil.

#3. This suggests a religious nature to this beast.

#4. This religious power or authority is a puppet to give power to the first beast. The first beast is political this one religious, but both are working in concert against God and his church.

#5. These signs include:

- Making fire come down from heaven (v. 13). This could be a parody of the two witnesses where Satan imitates God’s miracle working power. In this case, these false prophets speak like the two witnesses sent by God to proclaim the truth.
- It works deceptive signs. False signs to make people worship the beast.
- It creates an image of the beast and calls people to worship it (a statue, drawing, idol, etc).
- It would give breath to the image of the beast such that it would speak (some suggest this is a robot, or supernatural power, or simply symbolic language that they speak lies as prophets, claiming the image has special power.

## The Identity of the 2nd Beast

1. A symbol for the cult of the emperor which sought to enforce worship of the Caesars.
2. Roman procurator in Judea, serving the emperor in Rome.
3. The Jewish religious system.

#1. This is the most common interpretation and one that I think is most likely.

This beast symbolized the Roman “Commune” or “Concilia.” This was an official body set up in the provinces to enforce emperor-worship. They would work in tandem with the proconsul, the political leader in Judea (the two horns).

One commentator writes, “John and his readers knew what this imperial cult meant since it was better organized and enforced in Asia Minor than in any other part of the Roman Empire. It was composed of deputies whose duty was to build images of Domitian, altars at the images, and legislate in any way they considered best to enforce the state religion.”

Thomas Nelson. Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated (p. 357).  
Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

#2. Some suggest Gessius Florus who was especially cruel to the Jews during that time period (64-66AD).

#3. When Jesus was being tried, the Jews said, We have no king but Caesar. They persecute the church.

#4. Futurists believe in a false prophet (sometimes a Jew) in the future who will do incredible signs and erect a statue that will speak (like a robot or mechanical, but fake and not a true work of God.)

The first seems the most convincing to fit with the description of the second beast and how closely it resembles the first beast and works in concert. The imperial cult was an important aspect among the Caesar's and fits with the blasphemous names of the first beast.

This fits the cult's role in compelling worship of the emperor (the first beast), using statues (images that could "speak" via oracles or mechanisms), performing public "signs" like festivals or miracles attributed to emperors

## Revelation 13:16-18 (Mark of the Beast)

<sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. <sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

The “mark” is seen in verse 16.

Some view this as a future cashless society (credit cards were suspect) where everyone has a number and that would be put in us with technology (a computer chip or laser tattoo). A literal mark. This is fanciful and not exegesis.

For the cult of the emperor, they were enforcing participation through economic exclusion—e.g., certificates or guild memberships required for trade, often tied to cult rituals. Refusal could lead to persecution or death.

Rather than God’s seal, this was the devil’s seal.

Later there were times in Rome when you needed to offer a sacrifice of incense to the emperor and would receive a certificate showing your allegiance to the empire. Without you could lose not just your job but your property or even your life.

TRansition: The mark of the beast (v. 17) is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

## The Number of the Beast – 666

John writes, “This calls for wisdom... let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast... number of a man...”

נרון קסר *NRON QSR* (50+200+6+50+100+60+200=666)

There is a variant of 616 that drops the second “nun” so that it appears as *NRO QSR* (50+200+6+100+60+200=616)

Therefore, the beast is Emperor Nero, representing the Roman Empire.

The Greek word for “calculate” is “to add up digits and calculate a total.” (BDAG).

John called for and expected people to understand who he was speaking of. He didn’t want the Roman authorities to know if they were to read his letter while he was in exile. But his audience would have known or been able to calculate.

\*\* This also supposed that the identity of the Beast is contemporary to the readers in the first century. Another clue that this was relevant for them and not for a future generation 2000 years+ removed.

Chilton writes, “All the earliest Christian writers on the Apocalypse, from Irenaeus down to Victorinus of Pettau and Commodian in the fourth, and Andreas in the fifth, and St. Beatus in the eighth century, connect Nero, or some Roman emperor, with the Apocalypse Beast.”

Thomas Nelson. Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated (p. 357). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Others have suggested 666 is the number of man (6) compared to God (7). And dragon, beast, and false prophet.

Some suggest this a resurrected Nero or a Nero-like figure in the end.

This argument fails since the text does not have three 6s (6 6 6). But rather the words six hundred and sixty and six.

## Significance of Revelation 13

1. Satan's attacks which failed against Christ and the earliest Jewish believers will be intensified through the state (Rome). The state has been (and remains) one of Satan's most powerful weapons against God's people.
2. While the "beast" referred to Rome and its emperor, it referred to Babylon, Persia, and Greece, along with other empires or governments who set themselves up against God.
3. The state uses false religion to serve itself.
4. This severe persecution calls for endurance and faithfulness.

#1. People are enamored with the power of the state and will use it to impose their will. This continues to happen through governments around the world today.

#2. We are living in a beastly society where the government continues to grow and has persecuted the church. It demands allegiance.

#3. Communist countries use state religions to reinforce obedience to the state.

There is a cult like religion today with LGBTQ and Indigenous and climate change that all props up and brings allegiance to the state. You must affirm and agree or else you cannot buy and sell.

This is not necessarily what was predicted by Revelation 13 but it is an application of it.

During COVID there were suggestions that the mask or vaccine was the mark of the beast. I would say, and did say, it was "a" mark of the beast. It is what the beast does to enforce allegiance, using marriage licenses, buying/selling property, occupations, to enforce allegiance to the beast/government.

#4. The greatest persecution has come at the hands of the state. Religion has

the power to persuade (with words). The state has the power to coerce (with swords). History is full of times of great suffering and persecution by the state (Christians in Rome, English Reformers, Christians in communist countries).

So we must endure and remain faithful.