

SESSION 7

REVELATION 13:1-10

The Beast Out of the Sea

I. INTRODUCTION: THE IDENTITY OF THE BEAST

A. Among commentators there has been much speculation as to the identification of the two beasts in Rev 13, especially the first beast out of the sea. Those who have taken the preterist approach to the book have made the assumption that the first beast represents the Roman Empire as John knew it in his day. Some of the factors that contributed to such an understanding would include:

1. Rome was the power in John's day, and he himself was being oppressed by Rome.
2. The beast has obvious similarity to the 4th kingdom of Dan 7, which depicted the Roman Empire.
3. Roman emperors in the late 1st century and in the 2nd century appropriated blasphemous titles to themselves (deification) and sought to be worshiped.
4. Reference to seven hills (Rev 17:9) has been thought to refer to the seven hills of Rome.
5. The wounded head of the beast (13:3) could look at Nero Caesar (there was a myth of the first century that Nero would be revived to reign again).

Nevertheless, this view has insuperable problems:

1. The ancient situation involving Rome simply does not fulfill all the criteria regarding the beast. For example, the *worldwide* emphasis (such as in 13:7) is more extensive than Rome ever was. Of even greater significance are the *individual* aspects (pointing to a person rather than an empire). These will be pointed out in due course.
2. It was not the Roman Empire that was worshiped (note 13:8).

B. Recognizing that the book cannot be relegated completely to the past, others have sought to amend the Roman view in such a way that John could write of Rome and yet so as to describe *something* capable of future fulfilment. Mounce, for instance, states,

There is little doubt that for John the beast was the Roman Empire as persecutor of the church . . . yet the beast is more than the Roman Empire . . . The beast has always been, and will be in a final intensified manifestation, *the deification of secular authority* [emphasis mine].¹

Though such a view solves the temporal reference, it still is inadequate to explain the *individual* factors.

C. Another popular view arose out of the polemics of church history. Luther, Calvin and other Reformers took the view that the first beast was the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

D. Others, resisting the suggestion of a concrete historical fulfilment altogether, have opted for some kind of symbolic reference. Alan Johnson follows Berkouwer and others in identifying the beast as a present threat of *theological heresy* (in keeping with the Johannine

¹Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 251.

Epistles) rather than any eschatological figure of the last time.² For others, it represents the *incarnation of evil* (so Morris). A broader view sees the beast as the aggregate of empires of the world under satanic power in opposition to Christ (Alford, Bullinger).

- E. In contrast to these suggestions, the identification of the beast as an *individual* is attested from the earliest times as Johnson himself acknowledges:

Irenaeus (d. 202) gives the first extensive discussion of the Antichrist. He is to be an unrighteous king from the tribe of Dan, the little horn of Daniel 7:8, who will reign over the earth during the last three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth "week" (Dan. 9:27). Irenaeus identifies the Antichrist with the first beast of Rev. 13 and the "man of sin" ("lawlessness," *NIV*) of 2 Thess. 2:3-4, who will exalt himself in the Jerusalem temple (rebuilt) (*Contra Haereses* 5.25.1-5; 5.28.2; 5.30.2; ANF, 1:553, 556-59).³

How is the student to decide which approach is the correct one? The fact that obvious symbolism is employed need not cause us to adopt unrestrained speculation. Rather, we should form our interpretation on two key principles (*good hermeneutics!*):

- 1) Scripture is harmoniously consistent with itself. Therefore, this passage must be examined in light of all other related Scriptural passages that address this theme.
 - 2) We need to look carefully at the textual clues to determine whether this figure is a literal individual or a more abstract idea.
1. Drawing on the analogy of Scripture, Rev 13 cannot be seen in isolation, but rather in connection with further data in The Book of Revelation as well as such passages as Daniel 7 and 2 Thess 2.⁴ I feel that textual clues from these passages (and others) point to the conclusion that the "beast" of Rev 13:1-10 involves a literal individual who appears in the end times. Consider these observations:
 - 1) His body is destroyed and given to the burning fire in Dan 7:11. True, death and hades are thrown into the lake of fire (and are not individuals), but Rev 19:20 says that the beast is thrown *alive* into the lake of fire;
 - 2) Rev 17:11 specifies that he is also a king (in 17:17 he receives a kingdom);
 - 3) 2 Thess 2:4 seems to be a clear link with Rev 13:4, but in 2 Thess it also points out that he takes his seat in the temple of God;
 - 4) Rev 13:17-18 points out that the number of his name is that of a man;
 - 5) Though the word for beast is θηρίον (neuter gender), he is referred to by a masculine pronoun "him" in 13:8 (cf. 13:14).⁵

Yet, we must also ask the question, "Is the beast *only* an individual?" Before we try to answer that question, it seems appropriate to reflect back on the concepts from Daniel.

²Alan Johnson, "Revelation," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 522.

³*Ibid.*, 521.

⁴For a complete comparative analysis of this figure, we ought to correlate the following passages: Daniel 7; 8:23-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 13:1-10; 17:8-14, 16-17; 19:19-20; 20:10.

⁵Thomas (2:164) develops this point:

"The masculine pronoun αὐτόν (*auton*, 'him') confirms an earlier conclusion that the beast must be a person as well as a kingdom. With the neuter θηρίον (*thērion*, 'beast') as its antecedent, grammatical agreement would have called for a neuter pronoun, but the writer chose the masculine because this agent of the dragon is a living king."

2. A Review of Daniel

a. Vision of the Four Beasts in Dan 7

This builds on Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Dan 2 involving successive empires followed by a leap to Christ's kingdom.

b. General Interpretation of the 4 Beasts of Dan 7

- (1) kings (7:17)
- (2) kingdoms (7:23)

c. Specific Interpretation of the 4 Beasts of Dan 7

- (1) Lion = Babylon
- (2) Bear = Media-Persia
- (3) Leopard = Greece [4 heads = 4 generals of Alexander the Great]⁶
- (4) Dreadful = Rome

d. Parallels from Dan 7 to Revelation

- (1) Dan 7:11-14 — Christ receives a kingdom after the slaying of the "little horn" from the 4th Beast.
- (2) Dan 7:21-22 — The "little horn" wages war with the "saints" and overpowers them until the Ancient of Days intervenes; then the "saints" take possession of the kingdom.
- (3) Dan 7:23-25 — Out of the 4th kingdom (Rome) arises ten kings (= 10 horns).
The "little horn" subdues three of these 10 kings.
The "little horn" is allowed to have power 3 1/2 years.

e. Daniel relies on a typico-prophetic depiction of the Antichrist

In Daniel 8:23-26 and Dan 11:21-35, the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) serves as a typico-prophetic reference to the Antichrist.

Greece under	}	4 Horns	}	Small horn from one
Alexander		(generals)		(Seleucid line)

3. From the above, we can now try to understand the relationship between the 4th beast of Daniel and the beast of Rev 13. Is the evidence pointing to an *individual* in tension with the *kingdom* aspects? Thomas (2:154) has wisely observed,

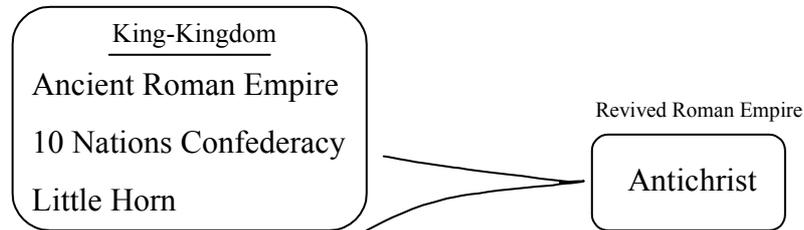
Since the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is a composite of the other three, this beast must be a panoramic representation of dominant world empires of all time, but in Rev 13:1-10, John's vision focuses on that series of empires as they come to their climactic end.

In Daniel 7, the beasts could represent an empire or the one who headed the empire. As we have already shown, the Beast of Rev 13 certainly has individual traits. In Rev 17:9-11, however, the Beast also represents an empire.

⁶Lysimachus took Thrace; Ptolemy took Egypt; Seleucus took Syria and Babylonia; and Cassander took Macedonia.

4th Beast of Daniel

Beast of Rev 13



Thus, the First Beast of Rev 13 is both the Antichrist and the kingdom over which he is head. It is both an individual and an empire. With this, Thomas concurs:

The best solution to the problem appears to be a combination of the view that this is the revived Roman Empire and the view that this is the end-time false Christ. This final world empire will embody a satanically empowered individual who will present himself as a counterfeit Christ in order to deceive the earth-dwellers (2:154).

II. NOTES ON REV 13:1-10

CONTEXT:

Chapters 12 and 13 are very closely related. Satan is introduced in ch 12 as the great red dragon (12:3,9) having seven heads and 10 horns. The beast in ch 13 is empowered by Satan and has the same characteristics. Ch 12 focuses upon Satan (the dragon) and his special hatred for the nation of Israel; ch 13 focuses upon "the beast" and his hatred for the saints from all the nations. [Note that ch 12 left off with the dragon's hatred for "the rest of her offspring." Ch 13 shows how he carries this out.

A. Verse 1

1. "from the sea" –

In 13:1, the beast comes up out of the sea (θαλάσσης). This could possibly look at his rise from the Gentile nations in light of Rev 17. In 17:1 we are introduced to the "great harlot" who sits on many waters (ὕδατων πολλῶν). The explanation is given in 17:15, "The waters (ὕδατα) which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." One problem with this suggestion is this: if the *sea* represents the great mass of humanity, why is the 2nd Beast of Rev 13 said to be "out of the earth"?

It is more likely that the *rise from the sea* is to be connected with Dan 7:2-3 (only use of "sea" in Daniel). Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another." So, the Beast of Rev 13 is cast in the same way. The numerous parallels of Rev 13 & 17 with Daniel would support this suggestion.

We should also note that in Rev 11:7 and 17:8, the Beast is coming up out of "the abyss." Thomas suggests that the sea stands for the abyss (the source of demonic powers opposed to God), since in ancient thought the sea was viewed as the reservoir of evil. He notes, "To say

that the sea stands for the abyss carries on the OT concept of the sea, that it is the source of satanic sea monsters (cf. Job 26:12-13; Pss. 74:13-14; 87:4; 89:9-10; Isa 27:1; 51:9-10" (2:151).

2. Horns and Heads

a. Has 10 Horns (10 diadems on his horns)

- (1) The 4th beast in Dan 7 has ten horns (Dan 7:7)
- (2) The 4th beast including its extension with 10 horns/little horn is eventually slain and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire (Dan 7:11; cf. Rev 19).
- (3) The 10 horns in Dan 7:24 are 10 kings which arise out of the 4th kingdom (and they are *contemporaneous rulers*, since the little horn subdues three of them).
- (4) The ten horns are interpreted in exactly the same way in Rev 17:12-13. They are 10 kings who unite to form a kingdom and eventually merge their power with the beast. Notice that Rev 17:17 says they give "their kingdom" to the beast.

b. Has 7 Heads (with blasphemous names on his heads)

- (1) Nothing in Daniel is said about the beast having more than one head. In fact, the implication in Dan 7:20 is that it has one head (with 10 horns on this one head).
- (2) The 7 heads are explained in Rev 17:10 as *sequential rulers*! According to Rev 17:11, there is also an "eighth head," and the beast himself is the 8th head. The beast is now said to have seven heads, because there is a relation between seven kings/kingdoms and this "beast" in Revelation. These are the world monarchies which precede the kingdom of the Antichrist.
- (3) The question to ask is whether the seven rulers are sequential in history or only in the tribulation period.
 - (a) Charlie Dyer – during the trib. period, since the harlot rides on them all (see 17:9).
 - (b) Better – **sequential in history (prior to trib)** [so Thomas, 2:155]. Notice the statement in 17:10 that five have fallen, one is, etc. Note the relationship of the "one is" of 17:10 with the "is not" in 17:8. This seems to be from John's perspective at the time he wrote (not from the trib. perspective).

B. Verse 2

1. The leopard, bear and lion

These three animals are the same three animals mentioned in Daniel seven (only in reverse order; Daniel looks ahead while John looks in retrospect). The 4th beast of Dan 7 was not named by type; it was dreadful or terrifying! The beast of Rev 13 corresponds to the "little horn" that came out of the 4th beast of Dan 7, but the fact that he is like these other animals suggests that the beast/Antichrist will be the embodiment of all that was expressed in the four beasts of Dan 7. He is the climax and culmination of all the others. [Compare Dan 2 where the image is "one image," i.e., the Gentile powers are different but viewed as one].

<u>Daniel 7</u>	<u>Rev 13</u>
Lion – Babylon	Beast with 10 horns & 7 heads
Bear – Medo-Persia	Like a leopard
Leopard – Greece	Feet like a bear
Dreadful Beast – Rome	Mouth like a lion
10 horns	
Little horn	

2. Dragon gave him "his power, and his throne and great authority"
This shows a clear link with 2 Thess 2:9 with the "lawless one" whom the Lord will slay at His Coming.

C. Verses 3-4

1. "fatal wound was healed"

- a. "one of its heads as if it had been slain"

Note: the word for "slain" (ἐσφαγγμένην) is the same as used of the Lamb in Rev 5:6. This may represent Satan's attempt to *counterfeit* the death and resurrection of Christ.

- b. "fatal wound" = Lit., "death blow" (ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου)

- c. Some have argued on the basis of the term "slain" (which obviously speaks of the Lamb's literal death) that the Beast actually dies and is raised from the dead. Others would not go this far: "While the resurrection of a dead person seems to be beyond Satan's power, the healing of a wound would be possible for Satan, and this may be the explanation. The important point is that the final world ruler comes into power obviously supported by a supernatural and miraculous deliverance by Satan himself."⁷ The "miracle" could either be a deception or it involves power permitted by God. In any case, it is meant to authenticate the Beast, in the same way that the death and resurrection of Christ authenticated Him.

2. "whole earth . . . followed after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon"

As a result of the fatal wound that was healed, this feat evolves into worship of both the dragon and the Beast. Take note of 2 Thess 2:4, "Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." Satan has always wanted the worship that rightfully belongs to God alone (cf. Isa 14:14). All false religion through the ages of history has been the deviant working of Satan. In the tribulation, this will be the final form of Satanic religion, and it will be universally accepted (except by believers).

Rev 13:8 – "All who dwell on the earth will worship him" (except those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life). Cf. 13:12 – the false prophet makes the earth dwellers to worship

⁷John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT*, 960.

the first beast.

Compare 2 Thess 2:3! Based on my studies of the 2 Thess 2 passage, I have concluded that there is a correlation between the "apostasy" and this worldwide worship of the Beast. The "apostasy" will be a clear indication that the Day of the Lord has commenced. In essence, the "apostasy" is the dramatic turning away from the true God of heaven and participating in the worldwide system of worshipping the Antichrist. Care must be taken not to equate the "apostasy" with the worldwide worship, for they do not seem to be entirely synonymous. The worldwide worship includes those who join in the apostasy, but the latter probably has reference to those individuals who "depart from" worship of the true God (a point in keeping with the meaning of the word itself). This will be Satan's grand attempt to steal away the worship that belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Verse 5

Note how vv 5-7 of Rev 13 are reminiscent of Daniel. 42 months = the last half of Daniel's 70th week (i.e., 3 1/2 years). His time of power will continue until personally slain by Christ at the Second Coming (Rev 19:19-20).

Apparently, the Beast is in league with the 10 "horns," but he subdues three of them (which is probably before the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week). Apparently, the remainder of the 10 give their kingdom to the Beast before the midpoint (note 17:17). But see also Rev 17:12 which says that they "receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour."

E. Verse 8

Regarding this universal worship, Thomas (2:164) states,

Hand in hand with an enthusiastic antagonism against anything Christian will develop a conscious bowing of the knee before Satan's representative and his principles on which the beast will base his kingdom. Universal worship of the beast will be the ultimate achievement of those seeking one worldwide religion as they withhold from the true God His central place.

"written in the book" – This record goes back to the foundation of the earth, not the cross or even the time that a person trusts in the Lord.⁸ The saved are foreordained to salvation before creation (cf. Eph 1:4). Cf. Rev 3:5; 22:19 on the promise not to have one's name erased.

F. Verse 9

"if anyone has an ear" – This is a frequent phrase from the gospels (Matt 11:15; 13:9,43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35) as well as in Rev 2–3. It occurs in a context in which there is unbelief and a wanton rejection of the truth. It may point forward to the proverbial nature of v 10 (i.e., "Hear this; don't give in!").

⁸ Notice the difference between the *NASB* and the *NIV*. The latter has "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world," whereas the former has "everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world." Although in the Greek text the phrase "from the creation/foundation of the world" does follow "the Lamb that was slain," more likely the phrase modifies "the book that was written" in light of Rev 17:8.

G. Verse 10

"Destined" – This is a reminder to those who do have an ear and seek to follow the Lamb rather than the beast. They may be captured and martyred in their obedience, so they are to persevere, i.e., they need patient endurance and faithfulness.⁹ But this is a testimony to God (12:11).

Notice the translational differences between the *NASB* and *NIV*:

NASB – "if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed"

NIV – "if anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he must be killed"

This involves a very difficult text critical problem (see Thomas [2:166-68, 170-71] for details). The option reflected in the *NIV* has the advantage of helping to prepare the saints for suffering by calling attention to the inevitability of persecution (which harmonizes well with ἐδόθη ["given"] statements in vv 5,7.

⁹ On the translation of πίστις as "faithfulness," see *BAGD* (2nd ed.), 602 1a.