

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA

Introduction:

1. The second section of the book of Revelation began with a vision of a conflict between a woman and the dragon.
2. It was revealed that this woman represented God's faithful remnant, while the dragon symbolized Satan.
3. The devil tried to defeat God's purpose in Old Testament times and in the life of Jesus; however, he failed.
4. Thus, he sought to destroy that which was precious to God – the church.
5. In chapter 13, two beasts are introduced as the servants used by Satan to make war with the people of God.

- I. The Beast from the Sea (13:1-10)
 - A. The chapter begins with John saying, "I stood upon the sand of the sea."
 1. Interestingly, the ASV reads, "...and he stood upon the sand of the sea."
 2. It translates this phrase as the end of the previous sentence and applies it to the dragon.
 3. In other words, the dragon is at the joining of sea and land to oversee the rising of his two beasts of persecution.
 - B. The first beast seen by John was rising out of the sea.
 1. The imagery of this vision is taken from Daniel 7:1-2.
 2. The sea symbolizes the nations or peoples of the world – the "sea of humanity" – particularly, those who do not follow God (cf. Psalm 65:7; Isaiah 17:12; 57:20; Jeremiah 51:42, 55-56; Eze. 26:3; etc.).
 - C. The description of this beast is significant for it is nearly identical to the description of Satan (12:3).
 1. Its seven heads symbolize fullness of intelligence and wisdom (for its evil work and purpose).
 2. Its ten horns represent complete power in its realm.
 3. Its ten crowns indicate full authority and rule in its realm.
 4. The point of this description is to emphasize that this beast is entirely Satanic in its nature – it serves as a tool of the devil.
 - D. Upon the heads of this beast were "names of blasphemy" – indicating a complete lack of reverence and respect for God.
 1. This demonstrates that the beast's wisdom, power, and rule are directed against God and all things godly.
 2. When the Roman Emperors began to appropriate for themselves the name and worship of God, they fulfilled this symbol.
 - E. This beast is also described in terms of three animals – a leopard, a bear, and a lion.
 1. Again, this relates to the prophecy of Daniel 7.
 2. The first three world powers of Daniel's vision were represented by a lion (Babylon), a bear (Medo-Persia), and a leopard (Greece).
 3. The fourth world power (Rome) was a diverse beast that was dreadful and terrible.

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Lesson Twenty-Three

Revelation 13:1-10

4. However, influences of the first three powers would be carried over into the fourth (Dan. 7:12).
5. Thus, Rome was built upon and incorporated traits from the previous world empires.
6. The beast from the sea is the Roman Empire.
- F. The power, throne and authority of this beast came from Satan.
- G. As John observed this beast, he saw one of its heads appear to be wounded to the point of death, but the deadly wound was healed.
 1. There is much speculation about this image, especially by those who try to make a literal application of the symbols.
 2. Some interpret it as a reference to Jesus' crushing the head of the serpent by His death, resurrection, and ascension (cf. Gen. 3:15).
 - a. They claim that it "stunned" the devil long enough for the church to gain a foothold in the world.
 - b. However, that deadly wound will never be healed for it robbed Satan of his greatest powers.
 - c. Furthermore, that was a wound to Satan, not Rome.
 3. The best explanation is found by recognizing the beast's purpose.
 - a. Rome had become a tool of Satan by persecuting the church and individual Christians.
 - b. This began in earnest during the reign of Nero.
 - c. Upon his death, the persecution ended until it was "resurrected" by Domitian some 13 years later.
 - d. From the perspective of the Christian, it looked like Rome had been defeated until the persecution began anew.
- H. It is important to understand the relationship of the world to the beast.
 1. The world of sinful humanity admired and worshipped the Roman Empire and the Roman Emperor.
 2. As a result, they were actually worshipping Satan, for he was the power behind the throne.
 3. In their arrogance, they claimed that there was no power that could compare with or make war against Rome.
- I. Verse 5 reveals the central truth of the book of Revelation: God is in control and rules in the nations of men (cf. Romans 13:1-4).
 1. Though Rome had become a tool of Satan, God was only allowing Rome to persecute the church for a limited time.
 2. It appeared that Satan and Rome were winning the victory over the church, but it was only a brief triumph.
 3. After 42 months (cf. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; Daniel 7:21), the church would be delivered, and Rome would be defeated.
- J. While Rome continued to blaspheme God and persecute the church, the beast was worshipped by wicked and sinful humanity.
- K. But those whose names were in the Book of Life would refuse such transgressions.
- L. The reader is encouraged to pay close attention to what is revealed.
- M. A day of justice and judgment was coming – the persecutors would become the sufferers.
- N. Thus, the faithful must patiently endure and hold on to their trust in God.