

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Twenty-Four

Revelation 13:11-18

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH

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.

II. The Beast from the Earth

(13:11-18)

- A. The second beast John saw came up out of the earth.
 1. Remember that the earth is the sphere of Satan's influence (12:9, 12).
 2. It was the earth that "swallowed up" the lies and errors of Satan.
 3. Thus, this beast arises out of the ranks of humanity deceived by the wiles of the devil.
- B. The beast appears to be innocent and harmless, having two horns like a lamb.
- C. However, when he speaks his true nature is revealed – he has the voice of the dragon.
 1. This beast is a servant and spokesman of Satan.
 2. He is a wolf (or dragon) in sheep's clothing (cf. Matt. 7:15).
 3. This beast is false religion. *{In fact, this beast will be called "the false prophet" in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.}*
 4. The beast from the sea represented the persecuting power of Rome in the form of political, state-sanctioned abuse.
 5. The beast from the earth represents the persecuting power of Rome in the form of paganism and emperor worship.
- D. This beast was subordinate to the beast from the sea.
 1. The sea-beast had been given power and authority from Satan.
 2. The land-beast exercises the authority of the sea-beast.
 - a. The chain of command is: Satan – sea-beast – land-beast.
 - b. Or, Satan – Roman government – enforced religion
 3. Thus, religious and political pressures were used to force Roman citizens to practice paganism and emperor worship.
- E. This beast continues the deceptions of Satan by performing false miracles.
 1. Keep in mind that whatever God does in truth, Satan attempts to counterfeit (cf. magicians of Egypt [Exo. 7:11-12, 22; 8:7, 18-19]).
 2. What God's two witnesses could do, Satan's two beasts attempt to duplicate (cf. 11:5; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thes. 2:9-10).
 3. The difference between genuine miracles and false wonders can be seen clearly (cf. Acts 8:5-13).

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- F. The goal of these deceptions was to convince them to make an image of the sea-beast and worship it.
 - 1. In other words, Rome would entice people into paganism.
 - 2. Under Domitian, the worship of the emperor literally involved the making of and bowing down before images.
- G. This was accomplished further by giving life to the image of the beast.
 - 1. This does not mean to make statues actually talk or act.
 - 2. Instead, it was the duty of the pagan priests to "give life" to emperor worship – make it seem vital and powerful.
 - 3. One way this was done was by killing those who would not worship the Emperor or Rome.
- H. Furthermore, the beast would force all to receive a mark in their right hand or on their forehead.
 - 1. Again, Satan was attempting to counterfeit God's sealing of His people (cf. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 3:12; 22:4).
 - 2. By receiving this mark, one was declaring his allegiance to the beast – thus, to Rome and its false religion.
 - 3. This would be a legal decree backed by both the government and the religious system.
 - 4. Just like the seal of God, this mark does not have to be something literal.
 - 5. It symbolizes their devotion to the Emperor and paganism in both attitude (*forehead*) and in action (*right hand*).
 - 6. Christians did not need a literal stamp (or a lack of one) to show that they were not pagans!
- I. Those who would not bow down to the pressure of Roman power would find great difficulties in life.
 - 1. They would not be able to buy or sell unless they participated in worship of the emperor.
 - 2. Homer Hailey calls this "scarcity through discrimination" (cf. 6:5-6).
 - 3. No one would give a Christian a job for fear of incurring the wrath of Roman authorities.
 - 4. They could not join the trade guilds, for they usually involved the worship of idols.
 - 5. Thus, many Christians would suffer hunger and poverty.
- J. Finally, the nature of this beast is confirmed and emphasized by the revelation of his number – the number of a man.
 - 1. Note that this verse begins with these words: "Here is wisdom."
 - 2. The focus of this verse is on the number; but numbers are used symbolically in this book.
 - 3. Something repeated three times symbolized completeness (cf. 4:8, *the holiness of God*; 8:13, *the doom of the world*; etc.).
 - 4. The number 7 symbolized perfection and the fullness of God.
 - 5. The number 6 is the number of man – just what this number (666) is revealed to be.
 - 6. Thus, the number 6 repeated three times indicates something that is completely human in origin, function, and purpose.
 - 7. It is the number of a man, but not a specific man.
- K. Thus, 666 is the number of complete imperfection, doom and failure.
- L. When opposed to God, man will always fail.
- M. Rome would learn this lesson the hard way.