

## Revelation 13 – The Sea and Land Beasts

### I. The Beast From the Sea (1-10)

#### A. The Sea Beast's Appearance (1-2a)

##### 1. It rises out of the sea

- a. The sea represents the hosts of the Gentiles (see biblical evidence from the last chapter)
- b. The Roman ships came into Asia Minor (where the seven churches were) and to Jerusalem from the west across the sea
  - i. This is how governors, dignitaries, and soldiers would have arrived in Asia Minor
  - ii. It appeared as if Roman ships rose out of the horizon (prophetic visionary language)

##### 2. It has seven heads and ten horns (1a)

- a. It looks just like the dragon from the last chapter
- b. Also a composite picture of the beasts from Daniel (see below)
- c. The seven heads –

- i. Revelation 17:9 - Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits

- Anyone reading this would naturally see a reference to Rome here.
- Rome sat on seven famous hills – Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, Viminal.

- ii. Revelation 17:10 - and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

- At the time of John's writing, five kings have fallen (Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius), one king currently ruled (Nero), and one was yet to come and remain only a short time (Galba, reigned for about six months before he was assassinated)

- iii. These descriptions point to the Roman empire as the sea beast

- Also note that the beast is sometimes spoken of as a kingdom and sometimes spoken of as an individual
- We still speak like this today. When Germany invaded Poland, people said "Hitler invaded Poland"

- d. The Ten Horns – The ten horns mirror the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7.
      - i. The ten horns are identified in Daniel 7:24 as ten kings that arise from the kingdom
      - ii. This is the same interpretation of the ten horns in Revelation 17:12 - “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.”
      - iii. These are the subordinate rulers who serve the Roman Empire. – Each province was allowed to keep a ruler as long as they were subject to the empire. During war, these auxiliary nations went to battle with the Roman legions against enemies.
  - 3. It has blasphemous names on its heads (1b)
    - a. The Caesars (which Revelation says the heads represent) were worshiped as gods – especially in the outlying provinces like Asia Minor
    - b. The name being on the head is a caricature of the high priest in the Old Testament who wore a turban with the words “Holy to the Lord” inscribed upon it
    - c. The heads are inscribed with the blasphemous names of its false worship
  - 4. It has features of Daniel’s beasts (2a)
    - a. The seven heads are a combination of all the heads of Daniel’s four beasts in Daniel 7. The third beast in Daniel has four heads, which makes a total of seven between all four beasts.
    - b. This beast has attributes of a leopard, a bear, and a lion
      - i. These are descriptions of Daniel’s first three beasts
      - ii. Daniel 7:4 - The first was like a lion
      - iii. Daniel 7:5 - And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear
      - iv. Daniel 7:6 - After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard,
    - c. Each of Daniel’s beasts represents a kingdom set against God’s people – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Daniel’s fourth beast is Rome.
    - d. Here John uses the culmination of all the beasts to show the eschatological enemy persecuting God’s people.
- B. The Sea Beast’s Power (2b-3a)
  - 1. It gives it’s authority and power to the dragon (2b)
    - a. Remember the dragon, in this vision, is attacking the “other” children of the woman

- b. The dragon gives this beast (Roman Empire) his authority to persecute and kill believers
  - c. The first widespread persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire was at the hands of emperor Nero (this wasn't yet a systematic persecution throughout the empire, but it was by far a grander scale that had been seen before)
  - d. In chapter 12, Satan has lost authority to accuse the saints before God, but he still expresses his hatred through evil earthly agents.
2. It is healed from a mortal wound (3a)
- a. Remember the heads represent seven kings, five have fallen and one is reigning at the time of John's writing.
  - b. There are two major interpretations of this healing of the mortal wound
    - i. The dominion of Satan is defeated at the cross and is dealt a killing blow. In Daniel's prophecy, the kingdom of Messiah would crush the world's powers. So by the cross and resurrection, Christianity is born and grew until it looked like the whole empire would be taken over. Satan's head had been crushed, but it was revived as widespread persecution broke out – allowing the empire to revive.
    - ii. The other interpretation – Nero Caesar killed himself on June 9, 68 A.D. After this Rome plunged into civil war as four different emperors took the throne in the space of one year. Each was killed and it seemed as if Rome was tearing apart. There was also a great decrease in persecution after Nero's death. Finally Vespasian, the general leading the conquest against Judea returned to Rome, took the throne, and became the first emperor of the Flavian dynasty.
      - Tacitus writes: This was the condition of the Roman state when Suetonius Galba [who succeeded Nero] chosen consul for the second time, and his colleague Titus Vinius entered upon the year that was to be for Galba his last **and for the state almost the end.** Histories 1:11:425
      - Tacitus also writes that during that year there were three civil wars and foreign enemies attacking the empire.

- Josephus writes that at this time Rome was “laid waste” (Wars 4:10:2) and was “near ruin” (4:11:5)
- F.F. Bruce states, “Rome, they thought, was on the verge of destruction by civil warfare; the empire was about to break up” Israel and the Nation (p. 224)

#### C. The Sea Beast’s Following (3b-4)

1. The land followed the beast (3b)
  - a. Two possibilities
    - i. The whole Roman world marveled at the strength of the empire’s recovery. The kingdom seemed invincible – especially since the internal civil wars couldn’t stop it.
    - ii. The whole “land” aligned themselves with the beast and followed it. These are the Jewish people themselves. We see this throughout Acts. The Jews aligned with Rome in persecuting the Christians. The Jews continually brought allegations and charges of sedition and rebellion against the Christians. This is Paul’s case throughout the final chapters of Acts. – Even at Jesus’ trial before Pilate, the Jewish leaders cried out “We have no king but Caesar.”
2. The land worshiped the dragon through the beast (4a)
  - a. By aligning themselves with the beast against the Christians, the people of “the land” were inadvertently worshiping the dragon himself.
  - b. The Jews had truly become a synagogue of Satan, just as John has said in the letters to the seven churches.
3. The land worshiped the beast because of its might (4b)
  - a. The power of the Romans seemed overwhelming
  - b. They were in control of everything in Judea and all the provinces where Jews and Christians dwelled.

#### D. The Sea Beast’s Activity (5-7)

1. It blasphemes God’s name and God’s people (5-6)
  - a. It is allowed authority to blaspheme for 42 months
    - i. Notice that it says the beast was allowed to speak – God is still in control even now.
    - ii. He is given a mouth to speak blasphemies – these blasphemies are against Christ – in Acts 26, Paul tells Agrippa that in his persecuting days he forced believers to blaspheme. He forced them to renounce Christ
    - iii. The 42 months here is not the same period as the 42 month siege of Jerusalem. This most likely

refers to Nero's persecution of Christians which (according to Dio Cassius) began in November of 64 A.D. and lasted until Nero's death in June of 68.

- b. It is allowed to blaspheme God and His Saints
  - i. This also alludes to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 7:25 - He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.
  - ii. Notice that the tabernacle of God is defined for us in v.6 - it is those who dwell in heaven. (dwell and tabernacle are from the same root). These are actions taken against God's saint (who Paul says are seated in heavenly places)

2. It makes war against God's saints (7)

- a. This persecution of God's people is also foretold in Daniel 7.
  - i. Daniel 7:21-22 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.
- b. Tacitus writes of Nero's persecution: Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and

was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed. (Annals 15:44)

E. The Sea Beast Forces a Response (8-10)

1. Those whose name is not recorded worship the beast (8)
  - a. By submitting to the beast's whims and following after him, the land worships the beast
  - b. Worship doesn't necessarily mean bowing down and praying to something. Worship means giving allegiance and reverence to something
  - c. This could relate to the Roman world or to those who dwell in the land (We have no king but Caesar)
  - d. Those who follow the worldly empire rather than God demonstrate that their names have not been recorded in the book.
2. The saints are called to faithfully endure (9-10)
  - a. Pay close attention (those who have an ear, let them hear)
  - b. Remember that John is writing to the churches of the first century – encouraging them to endure
    - i. John takes this text from Jeremiah 15:1-2: "Then the Lord said to me, 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.'"
    - ii. The beast is allowed to make war and conquer the saints for a time. John makes sure they know that bad things will indeed happen, but God is in control. He is still sovereign and His children have already won. Regardless of whether they must die by the sword or go into captivity, they are victorious.
    - iii. He says specifically that this is a call for the endurance of the saints.

II. The Beast From the Land (11-17)

A. The Land Beast's Appearance (11)

1. This beast rises from the land – he is home grown

- a. There are two plausible possibilities for this beast's identity – Either the imperial cult or the High Priest Aristocracy of Judaism.
  - b. We have seen before that “the land” is a synonym for Israel in Jewish writings
  - c. This beast rises from among the people themselves
  - d. This beast will be later identified as “The False Prophet” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) – This beast has religious significance.
2. It has two horns like a lamb
- a. Possibly an allusion to Daniel 8:3 and the ram with two horns.
  - b. This beast looks like a lamb
    - i. From an outward appearance, this beast looks good and righteous.
    - ii. He is a parody of the true lamb of God.
  - c. This beast speaks like a dragon
    - i. He accuses and slanders God's people as Satan does
    - ii. He deceives and draws men away from God

#### B. The Land Beast's Activity (12-17)

1. It makes people worship the first beast (12)
- a. Notice that the authority of the 2<sup>nd</sup> beast is exercised only in the presence of the first beast. He has no authority except what the first beast has given him.
  - b. The Jewish leadership repeatedly brought Christians before the Romans to have them tried and judged.
    - i. This is seen throughout Paul's imprisonments and trials in Acts. The Jews depended on the authority of Rome
    - ii. Imperial policy was not to go after Christians but when they came to trial, they were forced to either worship the emperor by offering incense to his image. This led to many of the Jews bringing accusation against Christians for any offense – guilty or innocent, they would be forced to denounce Jesus.
2. It deceives by great signs (13-14)
- a. It works great signs (13)
    - i. He has all the earmarks of being truly religious and godly
    - ii. The reference to fire coming from heaven is a reference to Elijah's activity in front of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18) – although the land beast does not do this by God's authority – they simply copy what looks like God's work.

- iii. The reference to fire coming from heaven also brings forth images of the inauguration of the tabernacle and Solomon's Temple when God lit the holy fires. (Lev. 9:24; 2 Chronicles 7:1)
    - iv. From all appearances this beast speaks for God, but he does not.
  - b. It deceives the land dwellers (14a)
    - i. By these signs and appearance he deceives those who dwell on the land
    - ii. Those who dwell in the land is an expression that is used repeatedly for the Jewish people
- 3. It forces men into idolatry (14b-15)
  - a. It erects an image for the first beast (14b)
    - i. Some think this image is the Temple itself – The High priesthood was appointed by the Romans and the provincial rulers Rome appointed
      - The Priesthood had a vested interest in pleasing Rome and keeping the people in line. They effectively turned Temple Judaism into a puppet of the Roman state.
      - John 11:47-48 – “So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”
    - ii. Some think that this refers to the Jews informing on the Christians which led to them being forced to worship the emperor's image.
  - b. It forces the worship of the image (15)
- 4. It forces men to receive the beast's mark (16-17)
  - a. The placement of the mark
    - i. It is on the right hand or on the forehead
      - This is an OT reference
      - Deut. 6:6-8 - And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
      - Deut. 11:18 - Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your



soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

- The right hand spoke of one's behavior being governed by God's word and the forehead spoke of one's thinking being governed by the word. This image comes directly from Deuteronomy.

ii. The mark of the beast is always associated with the worship of the beast in Revelation

- The mark is equivalent to worship of the beast.

b. The Reality of the Mark

i. The Mark of the beast is directly parallel to the seal of the lamb

ii. If you believe the mark is a literal marking that is placed upon the forehead, you must also believe the seal of the lamb is as well.

- This is a parody of the seal of the lamb – Ezekiel 9:4-6 - And the Lord said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it."

### III. The Mark of The Beast (18)

A. The Mark is a Number of a Man

1. Notice that the mark doesn't symbolize a kingdom or a group
2. It is the number of a man using the ancient practice of Gematria. The one who understands is told to "calculate" the number of the beast.

a. Gematria is an ancient practice of assigning numerical values to letters and counting those values to reach a number.

b. The number of the beast is 666 – Notice that this is not three numbers. It is not six-six-six. The number of the beast is one number. The number is six hundred and sixty six.

c. Using the Gematria table for the Hebrew alphabet, the number 666 equals the name Nero Caesar.

d.  $n=50$   $r=200$   $w=6$   $n=50$   $q=100$   $s=60$   $r=200$  thus:  
NRWN QSR=666

i. נרון קסר

3. As Christians were commanded to offer incense to the image of the emperor, they would receive a certificate called a Libellus (in fairness the only certificates we have

found are from the third century) – This certificate bore the emperor's seal and was necessary to be involved in the Roman society (i.e. buying and selling)

4. Also, as a Jew being ostracized and excommunicated from the Temple and Jewish society bore similar penalties.