

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 30TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 13 is a continuation of the vision John receives, but now the focus shifts to symbols that prophesy of a final corrupt political leader (Antichrist) and religious figure (False Prophet).

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (13:1-4)

Chapter 13 continues the dramatic play.

- The epic cosmic battle has moved to earth and the dragon is about to wage war against God's people.
- Satan will wage war using a "beast from the sea" and a "beast from the earth".
- John sees first "a beast rising out of the sea" with ten horns, seven heads, ten diadems, and "blasphemous names".

Why "Out of the Sea"?

- Maybe a reference to "the abyss", the fear of uncharted waters, or the "sea" of people on earth
- Some believe this is a reference to the Jewish mythology of two ancient monsters Leviathan and Behemoth.
- Either way, it is to paint the picture of something monstrous rising up.

10 horns symbolize political institutions, 7 heads can be the previous empires building up to the Antichrist's, 10 crowns are 3 more than the previous 7 in chapter.

- This is a symbolic way of communicating that this "beast" will be a political leader.
- The blasphemous names show some sort of a claim to divine status and desire to be worshipped and adored.

The description of the body is a reference to Daniel 7, where Daniel sees empires that opposed Judah symbolized by animals- Lion (Babylon), Bear (Persia) and Leopard (Greek).

- This is communicating that this spirit and rebellion to God and opposition of God's people has been brewing for millenniums and has manifested itself in various civilizations, but here it culminates into a single person (1 John 4:3)

What's presented through the work of the Dragon, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet is a blasphemous parody of the Trinity.

- In trying to mimic and mock the death and resurrection of Jesus, the text indicates that Antichrist will be "killed" and come back to life.
- This might be an assassination attempt, but the results will make people believe he is a deity and a new messiah.

The people will be astonished by his apparent "god-like" status as "the whole earth is lead astray", Revelation 12:9.

- After Satan restores the Antichrist, he gives him his authority.
- Following a leader is one thing, but the world begins to worship the beast, therefore worshipping Satan.
- V4 further parodies Christ by twisting scripture.

PERMITTED TO WAGE WAR (13:5-10)

The first order of business for the beast is to utter "haughty and blasphemous words" and to attack "God's name", & God's dwelling ("tabernacle", those who dwell in heaven).

MOST LIKELY THIS IS REFERRING TO:

1. Antichrist proclaiming himself as god and savior (2 Thess. 2:4)
2. Violent anti-Christian and anti-Semitic rhetoric

Eventually this verbal assault on God and heaven will become a physical assault on God's people on earth- the saints (vs. 7).

- Vs. 7 indicates that this beast will be allowed to "conquer" God's saints.
- This can only mean that Christians during this time will be imprisoned and killed (vs. 10)- and this something that God allows.

John writes that the beast was "given power to make war against the saints"

- It appears as if all authority is granted by Satan to the Beast, but ultimately all of this is under God's sovereign plan and authority!
- Though hard to understand, God has allowed whatever evil has and will happen to take place (Job and Romans 13).

Jesus talked about "false Christs" & "false prophets" in Matt. 24:24 deceiving many people, even ones that had the appearance of being a Christian.

- Here we see that anyone who is not a follower of Jesus will be deceived (vs.8).
- Those who truly ARE believers will not fall for the tricks or deceptions, but will suffer for their faith (v9-10).

Vs. 9-10 commands anyone who is willing to listen to listen!

- We're reminded that this will be a time of inescapable intense suffering, but it will be short and believers will be rewarded eternally!
- This is not fatalism, but rather submission to God's sovereignty in suffering.
- In this, we must remain strong (v10b)

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH (13:11-15)

John now sees "another beast" (Greek phrase means, "of another kind") rising up out of the earth.

- The beast coming from the earth doesn't correspond to anything in the O.T.
- This may be a picture of this false prophet being indwelt by a demon from the abyss, which is pictured as the flaming depths of the earth.

The Beast from the Earth had 2 horns like a lamb- showing that he will have the appearance of meekness and humility, but will be like a dragon in his motives (Matt. 7:15)

- The function of this beast is to ensure that the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast (vs. 12).
- How will he persuade? He will perform miracles and persuade people to follow the Antichrist.

We must worship in Spirit AND Truth (Jn. 4:24).

- This false teacher will trick many people by doing elaborate miracles
- We believe in miracles, but we must be careful to examine all things.
- Docetism- or the idea that Jesus was a good man, but never died on the cross or is a deity- may be another means of the false prophet's deception

An interesting view is that the 2nd Beast is not an actual person, but simply a representation of a worldwide false religion.

- Satan continues his mockery of the triune Godhead with the appearance of this 2nd beast.
- Verses 14-15 describe the false prophet making some kind of statue or man-made image that will come to life and have a "spirit" in it in honor of the Antichrist.

What this will look like, we have no idea, but think of modern-day technology (holograms, CGI, cloning, etc.)

- This image of the Antichrist will "live" ("animate", so it has the appearance of being alive, or the power of the demonic).
- Again, we don't know what this will look like, but those who do not worship the image of the Antichrist will be killed (v. 15).

THE MARK (13:16-18)

The "mark of the beast" is possibly one of the most famous and talked about things in book of Revelation.

- Many have speculated that this will be computer chips in wrists, barcodes on foreheads, retinal scans or face recognition software.
- My personal viewpoint is this "mark" simply represents allegiance and is a sign of ownership, and maybe isn't even a physical mark (Rev. 7:3).

The "mark" will be used not only to show allegiance and loyalty- no one will be able to buy or sell unless they have the mark.

- This will have a huge economic impact on all people in the world and will change all commerce and exchanges of currency.
- Anyone not wearing "the mark" will be unable to feed their families and they will be social outcasts due to poverty & ridicule.

In describing the mark, John notes that it will consist of "either the name of the beast or the number of his name".

- This is saying that the Antichrist will have a universal designation consisting of his name within a numbering system.
- John then writes, "this calls for wisdom"- a warning to be wise and discerning and understand the number connected with Antichrist's name.

The number connected with Antichrist's name is "666".

- Maybe this simply symbolic of Satan's blasphemous parody- the Trinity in its perfection would be 777, Satan's parody is 666.
- The understanding of this passage heavily depends the practice of "gematria", where special meaning in words and names is found by adding up the numerical values of letters.

Gematria was very common in the 1st century (Pompeii archeology), but us modern readers don't have as many clues or details.

- Wisdom for us is best to just confess our ignorance, use discernment, and accept we will only know when the events unfold.
- Wisdom is also majoring on the majors instead of trying to break codes, look for signs, and try and outsmart the Word.

"This calls for wisdom..."

- **The best way to determine what is counterfeit is to truly know the real thing.**