

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 26TH–27TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (REVELATION 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 (Rev. 12:17–18).
- Satan will wage war using the “beast from the sea” and a “beast from the earth.”
- John sees first “a beast coming up out of the sea” with ten horns, seven heads, ten diadems, and “blasphemous names” (v. 1).

To understand the significance of the imagery of this vision of the beast, we must be somewhat familiar with the book of Daniel.

- Revelation 13 draws heavily from Daniel's prophetic imagery of beasts and kingdoms, particularly focusing on the final rebellion against God, led by one end times figure who seeks (and likely achieves) world domination so that he can destroy the people of God.

Both Daniel and Revelation present a consistent theme: the rise of oppressive, blasphemous rulers, their temporary reign (42 months, v. 5; Dan. 7:25), and God's ultimate judgment.

- This “beast” has been foreshadowed throughout history in certain aspects of Rome and other totalitarian states and dictators, but there is coming one final Antichrist figure who will fulfill this prophecy completely.

WHY “OUT OF THE SEA”?

This can be 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 idea of the two ancient sea 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 12.

- 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 a desire to be worshiped 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 communicates that this spirit of rebellion toward God and opposition of God's people has been brewing for millennia 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 the 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.
- 2 Corinthians 11:13–15

The people will be astonished by his apparent “god-like” status as the “whole world” is led 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 worshiping Satan.
- V. 4 further parodies Christ by twisting Scripture.

PERMITTED TO WAGE WAR (REVELATION 13:5–10)

The first order of business for the beast is to utter “boasts and blasphemies” and to attack God's name and 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 (v. 7).

- V. 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 (v. 10; Jer. 15:2)—and this is something God allows.

John writes that the beast was “permitted to wage 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 messiahs” and “false prophets” in Matt. 24:24 deceiving many people, even ones who had the appearance of being a Christian.

- Here we see that anyone who is not a follower of Jesus will be deceived (v. 8).
- Those who truly ARE Believers will not fall for the tricks or deceptions but will suffer for their faith (vs. 9–10).

Vs. 9–10 command 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 (v. 10 b).

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH (REVELATION 13:11–15)

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

- This beast coming from the earth doesn't correspond to anything in the book of Daniel or the O.T.
- This may depict 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 two 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 (v. 12).
- How will he persuade? He will perform miracles and persuade people to follow the Antichrist.

Miracles are a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8–10) and are used by God for the edification of the church and the spread of the gospel.

- We don't worship the miracles of God, we worship the God of miracles.
- If we make miracles, signs, and wonders our primary focus (and not the preaching of the gospel and making disciples), we set ourselves up to be deceived and led astray.
- Matthew 16:4

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 carefully examine all things to make sure they are of God!
- Docetism (the early Christian heresy that Jesus never died on the cross) or Arianism (the idea that Jesus wasn't divine) may be 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 “breath” in it in honor of the Antichrist.

What this will look like, we have no idea, but think of modern-day technology (A.I., deep-fake 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 (REVELATION 13:16–18)

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

- Many have speculated that this will be computer chips in wrists, barcodes on foreheads, retinal scans or face recognition software.
- 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 to show allegiance and loyalty, and 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 and 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 the Antichrist's name.

The number connected with the Antichrist's name is “666.”

- Maybe this is 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 on the practice of “gematria,” where special meaning in words and names is found by adding up the numerical values of letters.

One predominant idea (especially in the early church) was that this number identified the Antichrist with Caesar Nero.

- But in order to make the name “Caesar Nero” fit, one must take a variant spelling of the Greek form of a Latin name, transliterated into Hebrew characters.
- The truth is, if you torture a number long enough, you can make it say anything you want!

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 to outsmart the Word.
- 2 Thess. 2:3 tells us that the, “man of lawlessness” will be revealed—and when he is, understanding and wise Christians will be ready.

STAYING SOBERMINDED.

- The beast will be controlled by Satan and be the very personification of unrestrained evil: yet he will be worshipped and adored by the world.
- Power and charisma are seductive, and many who are unwise are led astray by them.
- Do not be seduced into giving your heart or allegiance away to any human being, be it a political leader, spiritual leader, or entertainer.
- Don't get fooled by popular consensus or group think or changing cultural ethics.
- Just because everyone around you is led by sin, immorality, lawlessness, rebellion, or allegiance to something or someone who isn't Jesus, that doesn't mean you have to be as well.
- We're called to be wise enough not to fall for it, and to patiently endure in faithfulness (vs. 10, 18).