

REVELATION

Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ
Today at the Edge of History

Chapter 13

Text: Revelation 13 - Look! The Two Beasts

The Beast out of the Sea

13 And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. ⁴ Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. ⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷ He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear.



William Blake: *The Great Red Dragon and The Beast from the Sea* (1810)

The profound religious insight that lies behind these kaleidoscopic pictures in chapter 13 is that men and women are so constituted as to worship some absolute power, and if they do not worship the true and real Power behind the universe, they will construct a god for themselves and give allegiance to that. In the last analysis, it is always a choice between the power that operates through inflicting suffering, that is, the power of the beast, and the power that operates through accepting suffering, namely, the power of the Lamb.

- Bruce Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, p.77

¹⁰ If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go.

If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

The Beast out of the Earth

¹¹ Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. ¹² He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. ¹³ And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. ¹⁴ Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered

them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. ¹⁶ He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell unless he

had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him

calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

Read & Reflect - 13:1-18

First Reading/First Impression: What word or phrase did you find most immediately puzzling in this chapter? Why?

What word or phrase did you find most important? Why?

Second Reading/The Main Point:

What is one description or activity of the two Beasts that helps followers of Jesus Christ understand why it is so difficult to maintain loyalty to Him?

Search

13:1-18 - List the words and phrases that describe the two beasts and the activities that characterize each.

	Description of the Beast	Actions of the Beast
The Beast from the Sea*	<i>vv. 1-3, 5, 7 -</i>	<i>vv. 1, 6, 7 & see also 11:7 -</i>
The Beast from the Earth**	<i>vv. 11 & 18 -</i>	<i>vv. 12-17 -</i>

* mimicking the description of Jesus in v.5

**mimicking the description of the Holy Spirit in Rev. 11...

(see also the description of the Dragon in Rev. 12 vs. that of God in Rev. 4)

13:1 - Where does the first Beast come from? What significance might there be to his rising "out of the sea" (ancient symbol of chaos)?

STUDY GUIDE FOR SEEKERS AND FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST

13:2, 4, 5, 7, 14, 15 - From whom do the beasts get their power & authority?

13:4, 8 - How do people respond to the Beast from the Sea?

13:7 - What happens to Christ's followers who stand against the Beast?

13:9-10 - How might the words here bring comfort to Christians suffering at the hands of the Beast? What are "the saints" (= God's people) called to do?

13:12 - For whom, and by whom, is the "Beast out of the Earth" working? What does he compel people to do?

13:13-17 (note esp. v.14) - How does this second Beast achieve his goal?

13:16-17 - Where have we seen a "mark/seal" before? How is this "mark" different than God's (see 7:2-4, 14-17)?

Apply

1. What does the fact that one Red Dragon (Ch. 12) and two Beasts adds up to THREE (a "Trinity") suggest about the nature & objectives of evil?

2. Given that the Dragon signifies the Devil (12:9), what forces in the world might the Beast from the Sea and the other Beast who serves him and deceives people represent?

3. What insights from this chapter can help you toward "patient endurance & faithfulness" as you resist these forces?

The dragon goes after the disciples of Jesus, but not directly. He goes after them through the beast from the sea, through dragon-manipulated political powers... The beastliness of political power is born of blasphemy. Political powers do not set out to be bestial. They set out to be their own master, and in the process they turn bestial. No one can be God but God. And when the state seeks to be God, it does not become divine, it becomes demonic.

- Darrell Johnson,
Discipleship on the Edge, p.233



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Summary... From 11:19--where the temple of God is "opened" and the Ark of the Covenant (where God meets humanity and where His throne is placed)--to 15:4 we are presented with seven scenes which are "the drama behind the drama," the action behind the throne. Chapter 12 (the Cosmic War between the Dragon & the Woman) was the first scene. Chapter 13 presents scenes 2 & 3 (the arrivals of the Beast out of the Sea and the Beast out of the Earth). All along we have been emphasizing that Revelation is a Book about Christian Discipleship (more than a "crystal ball" to use to see the future)... Even this section about the two Beasts, who along with the Dragon from a sort of "Counterfeit Trinity" of Evil, suggests this in v.10: *"This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."* The identity and activities of the two Beasts help believers understand why loyalty to Jesus Christ is so difficult to maintain.

THE FIRST BEAST:

13:1 - **"out of the sea"**... symbol of chaos. This "beast" is produced by or gives an answer to people's fear of chaos (Human governments of all kinds do this.)... **"blasphemous names"**... Roman emperors assumed deifying titles (like Domitian's *Dominus et Deus noster* = Our Lord & God)

13:2 - **"leopard... bear... lion"**... John's vision brings together the animal symbols of various kingdoms from Daniel 7 (this "Beast" representing all of them, perhaps, and all like them!)... **"dragon gave the beast his power..."** the beast's power is derived from evil...

13:3 - **"fatal wound"**... An imitation of Jesus, the "slain Lamb" of chapter 5, and an indication of the strong resiliency of the "beast" (you can kill a "head"/king/leader, but the way of the kingdom continues)...

13:4-5 - **"worshipped the dragon... and... the beast... proud words and blasphemies... slander... make war... conquer..."**... the anti-God stance of this evil alliance is made clear (see quotes on pp. 1 & 3)... **"forty-two months"** - period of great evil limited by God (see note on 11:2)...

13:8 - **"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast..."**... those who do not belong to God and worship Christ will praise and support the corrupt and corrupting powerful principalities working in opposition to God...

13:10 - **"If anyone is to go into captivity..."** this is a quote from

Jeremiah 15:2 & 43:11 indicating that the things that are happening are according to God's plan and that His enemies will lose in the end, a comforting notion for those suffering under the "beast"... **"patient endurance and faithfulness"**... This is what Christ's followers are called to exhibit even on the receiving end of the fury of Rome (or of any other oppressive anti-Christ regime)...

THE SECOND BEAST:

13:11-**"...like a lamb... like a dragon"** ...This "beast," now completing the "evil trinity," works to appear harmless (maybe again claiming and counterfeiting the goodness of Christ Himself) but his dragon-like words betray him (see Matthew 7:15 where Jesus speaks of wolves in sheep's clothing!)

13:12-15 - **"authority of the first beast on his behalf"**... this "beast" derives his power from and works for the first. Many commentators believe

that while the first "beast" represents temporal human power divorced from divine rule and wisdom, this second "beast" symbolizes "religious" power serving secular authorities (*"agents of the dragon promoting the worship of the emperor by means of all kinds of spectacular tricks of bogus religion"* - Metzger, p.75)... **"he deceived"**... the way of evil is always the way of lies...

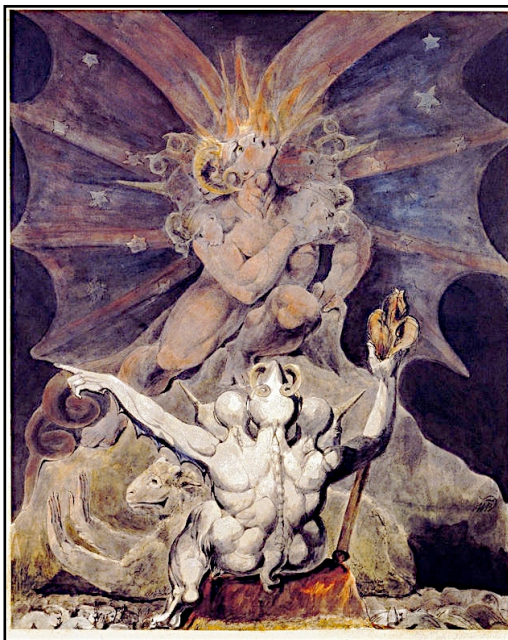
13:16-17 - **"a mark... right hand... forehead"**... another example of evil counterfeiting God (see God's "seal" of chapter 7)... the images may refer to coins usually minted with the ruler's face and name on them, and here

symbolizing economic pressure for those who resist...

13:18 - **"the number of the beast... 666..."** Most likely, above all else, this number - a symbol not a statistic, like all the other numbers in Revelation - symbolizes eternal imperfection. 6 is one short of 7 - the number of perfection/wholeness...

"man's number"... many interpret this to mean the number

of a person's name... By assigning numerals to letters of the alphabet, people have labored for centuries to determine a name for "666"... A possible clue comes from the fact that some ancient manuscripts of Revelation give the number as "616" instead of "666." With this in mind, the most reasonable candidate for a cryptic coded name behind the number is *Emperor Nero*, for the sum total of traditional numerical values for Hebrew letters spelling *Neron Caesar* is 666. The acceptable alternative spelling *Nero Caesar* adds up to 616 (see Metzger, p.77).



William Blake: *The Number of the Beast is 666*, (1810)