

“THE BEAST OF THE SEA.”

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 13:1-10

Introduction.

Wow, more incredible visions and mind boggling images of great and terrible things.

In Chapter 12 we encountered the woman and the dragon. The dragon we were told was the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, the deceiver of the world. When he failed in his attempt to kill the woman's baby son, he attacked the woman who fled into the wilderness and escaped. Failing again he made war on the rest of her offspring who kept the commandments of God and held to the testimony of Jesus, meaning the church of Jesus Christ on earth.

In Chapter 13 we are given more detail about this war that Satan is waging against the church, against Christians.

The beast of the sea, vss. 1-2, 4.

Remember we are at a disadvantage twenty centuries away from when this was written. John's readers understood the apocalyptic style of writing. These images were not as strange to them as they are to us. Their minds would have gone straight to the OT and the book of Daniel.

Daniel 7:3-7 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a *lion* and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a *bear*. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' 6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a *leopard*, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had *ten horns*.

The beasts in Daniel's vision described successive world empires, idolatrous kingdoms. They are interpreted as four great kingdoms or empires with four great kings. They are called great powers.

Daniel 7:17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.'

Daniel 7:24-25 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom *ten kings* shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 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*.

The beast in Revelation combines all those past powers. For John this was the Roman Empire, but for each generation of Christians there are parallels.

For John and Christians of his day, Nero was the beast and with good reason. He killed his own mother and countless others who opposed him or angered him. He was worshiped as a god.

John's beast epitomizes all worldly and tyrannical powers, not just the four mentioned in Daniel. Each age has its powers that be.

Governments and political powers have been easy weapons in Satan's hands. There are multiple manifestations throughout history of satanic opposition and oppression of the church. All over the world today there is much state-controlled and state-sanctioned persecution.

In ancient times there was Satanic perversion of state power in Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome. Through the centuries there have been great state promoted heresies. In the middle ages the immoral and heretical Roman Catholic papacy was seen as the beast; then the enlightenment, deism and evolutionary Darwinism; modern Protestant liberalism; Marxism and communism; Nazism; state persecution of Christians in China, Albania, North Korea; Roe v. Wade, the gay rights movement, radical feminism, materialism, secularism, New Age, and countless other attacks on Christ and the church.

In the words of one pastor:

“The beast, then, is a trans-cultural, trans-temporal symbol for all individual and collective, Satanically-inspired, opposition to Jesus and his people. It is anything and everything (whether a principle, a person, or a power) utilized by the enemy to deceive and destroy the influence and advance of the kingdom of God” (Sam Storms, <http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/the-beast-in-biblical-eschatology---part-i>).

Notice something else about the way John describes this beast. The last sentence of chapter 12 references the dragon standing on the sand of the sea. The first sentence of chapter 13 references a beast rising out of the sea.

The dragon (Satan) summons one like him, in his image.

Revelation 12:3 Behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

Revelation 13:1-2 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

The beast sounds like the second person of an unholy trinity. Satan is intent on being God and putting the beast in place of Christ. This is his great deception, the false messiah. The beast is a reflection of Satan, a counterfeit, blasphemous image of Christ, a false messiah.

Notice all the parallels to Christ:

The beast is an image of Satan (dragon) as Christ is the exact image of God.

Jesus reflects the moral perfection and character of God, the beast reflects the character of Satan, unnatural, brutal, blood thirsty, full of blasphemy.

The beast has ten crowns; Christ has many crowns (Rev. 19:12).

The beast has blasphemous names written on him, Christ has worthy names on Him (19:12).

The beast receives from the dragon his power, throne and authority. Christ receives the same from the Father.

The beast has a healed fatal wound, a counterfeit of the resurrection.

The beast and the dragon are both worshipped, as are the Son and the Father. Songs sung to both.

The beast utters blasphemies; Christ utters praise and truth.

The beast makes war against God and the saints; Christ makes war against sin, evil, Satan.

Both do miraculous signs. Both mark their subjects, mark of the beast and the Holy Spirit.

Satan is a counterfeiter, he inspires worship through imitation, through smoke and mirrors, through impressive but deceptive displays of power.

But governments are no messiah. World powers and worldly authorities are opposed to God, opposed to the church, opposed to the Gospel. We can forget about governments helping usher in the kingdom of God. We can forget about politicians defending the rights of Christians and of churches. The day is coming when we will lose all our rights and privileges. The day is coming when we will be like the churches in countries like China that have no favored status, no political clout or recognition.

The beast's mortal wound, vs. 3.

The beast suffered a mortal blow on the cross, but for now continues to exist and do evil.

His legal and moral authority are gone, but he still can persecute, deceive, kill and destroy.

This speaks of the rise and fall of empires and governments and political powers and oppressors. One falls and another rises to take its place.

The wound and recovery is a counterfeit of Christ's resurrection (seemed like, a poor imitation). This wound and recovery doesn't help anyone.

Only Christ has eternal life and only Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

The beast's blasphemous and murderous ways, vss. 5-8.

Blasphemy represents bold, proud, attacks and arrogant claims to divinity. The blasphemous names reveal the beast's hatred of God and of all things holy and of everything to do with God.

In every age where there is persecution, there is enmity with God, people who despise what is sacred or true or beautiful. The recent Supreme Court decision is a form of blasphemy against God and His Word.

But there is hope here in two forms. Satan has no power or authority of his own and can only do what he is allowed to do. And his power and authority will only be for a limited duration.

God will allow Satan to have his way and to appear to win for 42 months, three and a half years, meaning for a short set time. Notice Satan doesn't get to determine the time, God does.

We have encountered this limiting of persecution and distress in chapters 11, 12 and 14.

Mark 13:19-20 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. 20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

All who do not belong to Christ, follow the beast. All who are not under the power of the Holy Spirit are under the power of Satan. There is no neutrality, no middle ground, either we are for Christ or we are against Him.

The assurance of our salvation rests with God. There is great comfort in the doctrine of election and of God's save keeping of the saints, His children. He has written their names in His book.

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

The call to endure and persevere against the beast, vss. 9-10.

There have been and always will be times of severe trial and testing and tribulation. Christians have, and are and will continue to face and experience great persecution and death. Some will be taken captive, some will die by the sword.

If God calls us to suffer or even die for our faith, we will have opportunity to bear witness to Him and our love for Him and our trust in Him.

There are *three ways to endure and persevere*, three ways for the church to prevail, three ways to counter the counterfeit, to counter the power and authority and influence of Satan as exercised through unholy governments.

Worship.

In the first century to say “Jesus is Lord” could get you killed for not worshipping Caesar. What are the Caesars today to whom we must say “Jesus is Lord?” Self, success, sex, money, power, pleasure, comfort, ease and countless other idols and objects of affection and worship, anything for that matter in which we place our hope and trust.

Worship is the ultimate subversive and even seditious act. To worship the true and living God is to declare our allegiance and loyalty to someone beyond earthly powers and things.

Worshipping God is our weekly exercise in dethroning all other idols and gods, all other allegiances. Worship is where we say God is above our nation and all nations.

Preaching and proclaiming the Truth of God.

Preaching the truth is a treason when done against the falsehoods of those in power, against those trying to subvert the truth or deny the truth.

Preaching the Word says that there is a higher authority than those who have put themselves in authority.

To preach the greatness and glory of God, to preach the authority of Christ over all, to preach the truth of the Word of God is to stand up to all unrighteousness, to expose the darkness, to call to account those who deny or reject God.

To preach the Word of God is to be politically incorrect and therefore unpopular.

II Timothy 4:2-4 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Holy Living.

Holy living is subversive when it is contrary to the pleasure seeking ends of modern life. Pleasure is one way a government gains control over a people. They will give us what we want in exchange for our allegiance, our souls.

Today entertainment is god, we are amusing ourselves to death. We are anesthetizing our souls.

We must resolve ourselves to holiness, to righteousness, to obedience, to living as true salt and light, in such a way that it makes clear the difference between worldliness and godliness.

Holy living is subversive in that it makes bad consciences uncomfortable. People with bad consciences don't like having their consciences pricked or exposed. They avoid guilt and shame at all costs.

Preaching can be silenced, but holy living still speaks, still points to truth, beauty and goodness.

Holy living declares what we love, that we love God and His Word, that we love truth, that we love His ways more than our ways, that we love others more than we love ourselves, that we love purity more than pleasure. Subversive living is living to a higher authority.

These are the weapons of our warfare against Satan and Satan's power and influence. These are how we hold off the principalities and powers.

I Peter 2:11-12 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.