

The Beast from the Sea:

Revelation 13:1-10

Remember that in Revelation 12:1 John moved to the third interlude, which is mentioned between the 7th trumpet judgment and the 1st bowl judgment. It was this third interlude that began with the great signs of the woman and the dragon. We identified the woman as Israel and the great red dragon as Satan. This interlude now continues with the appearance of a beast from the sea (13:1-10) and a beast from the earth (13:11-18).

The Appearance of the Beast: (vv.1-2)

At this point in the interlude, John now sees another vision. This vision is of the dragon from chapter 12 (Satan) standing on the sand of the seashore. There is some textual difficulty here in this verse, as some manuscripts read "I stood," while others read, "he stood." If it is "I stood" then this would be the Apostle John standing on the seashore, but if it is "he stood" then it is a reference to the dragon from chapter 12. The earliest and best manuscripts would support the reading of "he stood." So this is the introduction of a new vision, in which John sees the dragon (Satan) standing on the sand of the seashore. It is possible that the dragon is summoning the beast from the sea and thus preparing to equip him for world dominance and the oppression of Israel and tribulation saints. It is at this point that we have an appearance of this beast from the sea and his description.

A beast coming up out of the sea: The first description of the Antichrist is a picture of a beast coming up out of the sea. This is a symbolic picture as there is much figurative language used here. It is best to understand this vision as descriptive of the person of the Antichrist as opposed to a literal beast rising out of the ocean waters. The term *beast* here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. "It pictures that final world empire which will find its embodiment in a satanically empowered individual who will present himself as a counterfeit Christ."³⁹² There is some disagreement as to what is meant by the term, *sea* here in 13:1. This passage likely draws from the similar passage of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7:3, Daniel sees four beasts rising out of the great sea. The great sea as used in the Scriptures is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. In another similar passage, Revelation 17:15 we are told that the sea is to be understood as peoples and multitudes and tongues. The best conclusion is that John is witnessing the rising of the beast (Antichrist) from among the peoples of the Mediterranean world. This would demonstrate Antichrist to come from the Mediterranean world and likely the leader of some western nation. Daniel 9:26 reveals that he comes from the peoples that destroyed Jerusalem, whom we know as Rome. So the Antichrist will rise up from the Mediterranean world possibly through a reorganized Roman Empire.

Having seven heads with blasphemous names: The seven heads likely represent seven successive world empires controlled by Satan as mentioned earlier in chapter 12. The blasphemous names indicate that these seven world empires were in direct opposition to God and His plan. There are two different views as to the identity of these seven world empires.

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One view sees them consisting of:

1. *Sumeria*, under Nimrod.
2. *Egypt*, Israel's first oppressor
3. *Assyria*, who destroyed Israel.
4. *Babylonia*, who destroyed Judah.
5. *Medo-Persia*.
6. *Greece*.
7. *Rome*, ruling at the time of Christ.

This particular view sees all seven heads as past historical kingdoms that oppressed God's people throughout Biblical history.

A Second View sees them consisting of:

1. *Egypt*.
2. *Assyria*.
3. *Babylonia*.
4. *Medo-Persia*
5. *Greece*.
6. *Rome*.
7. *A Revived Roman Empire*.

This view sees these seven heads as successive world empires, who have all oppressed God's chosen people (Israel). The only difference is the first kingdom of view 1, Sumeria was prior to the founding of Israel and is replaced by the future world empire of Antichrist, which will be a revived Roman Empire and will indeed oppress Israel during the last half of the tribulation. This second view seems to fit better in the context of the Book of Revelation and the Tribulation Period. It also makes more sense in this being an identification of the Antichrist. Antichrist will rise to power from a revived form of the Roman Empire, which stands in a long line of nations, who have been influenced or controlled in some way by Satan and who have oppressed Israel.

Having ten horns with diadems: The term *horn (kerata)* is taken in a figurative sense for power or strength such as in Luke 1:69. In a general sense it is a symbol of power or might. Here in the context of Revelation 13 it is likely representing 10 powerful rulers (cf. Daniel 7:24). This is further evidenced by the 10 diadems, which are on the horns. These diadems are a mark of kingly rank. It is best to understand that these 10 rulers or kings, who have great power, make up the revived Roman Empire and it is out of these 10 nations or rulers that the Antichrist will rise up and take control of

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the world. This is supported by the previous revelation of Daniel 7:15-26, which demonstrates that the Antichrist will indeed rise up out of a kingdom of ten-rulers.

The beast which I saw was like a leopard: "The selection of these three animals is related to the similar revelation given in Daniel 7, where the successive world empires are described by the lion, referring to Babylon, the bear, referring to Medo-Persia, and the leopard, referring to the Alexandrian Empire. The fourth empire gathers all these elements and characteristics in itself and is far more dreadful in its power and blasphemy than the preceding empires."³⁹³ Thus the Revived Roman Empire takes on all these features from these other empires. "The leopard was a metaphor for ancient Greece, alluding to the Greek's swiftness and agility as their military moved forward in conquest, particularly under Alexander the Great (cf. Daniel 7:6)."³⁹⁴ The leopard was commonly found in Israel.

His feet were like [those] of a bear: "The bear was a metaphor for the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, depicting that kingdom's ferocious strength, combined with its great stability (cf. Daniel 7:5)."³⁹⁵ The bear, which was indeed found in Israel was very powerful and had the capability of crushing its prey at will since it had extreme strength in its feet and claws.

His mouth like the mouth of a lion: "The lion was a metaphor for the ancient Babylonian Empire, referring to the Babylonian's fierce all-consuming power as they extended their domain (cf. Daniel 7:4)."³⁹⁶ "The phrase *mouth of a lion* indicates a mouth of great capacity, one which has a large extent of opening. In this idea are the formidable teeth, which the lion's mouth exhibits."³⁹⁷ Such lions were common in the Jordan Valley and the Judean hills. The three animals thus combined by the writer symbolize swiftness and ferocity in springing upon prey, tenacity in holding it and dragging it away, and a ravenous appetite for devouring, with extraordinary powers adapted to satisfy it."³⁹⁸ Thus this beast in Revelation 13 combines the features of all the qualities of Israel's former oppressors.

The dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority: The last description of the beast is bound up in this last phrase of verse 2, which reveals that the Antichrist receives his power and authority from the dragon (Satan). We are told by John that it is the dragon, who is behind the rise of Antichrist. It is the dragon who gives the Antichrist his power. The term *power* (*dunamis*) simply means "strength, ability to accomplish anything, or power". The term *throne* (*thronos*) here refers to regal power such as civil or military dominion. Authority here is referring to the Antichrist's world dominance and authority during the Tribulation. This verse likely resumes the narrative of verse 1. John sees the dragon standing on the seashore, then the beast rises up out of the Mediterranean peoples and is given power and authority from the dragon, Satan. Simply put the beast will be energized by the dragon. He will be but a pawn in the hand of Satan.

***The Affliction of the Beast:* (vs. 3)**

Verse 3 is a difficult passage to interpret. There seem to be a variety of interpretations. 1) Some see this head being slain as the Roman Empire, which has seemingly been put to death, but in the last days will be revived. The difficulty with this view is that the terminology seems to be speaking of an individual and that the terminology used seems to be speaking of an apparent or literal death. Also the idea of a Revived Roman Empire is not suitable enough for the world to be in amazement and worship the beast.

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2) Other views include seeing some historical figure being raised to life such as Nero, Judas Iscariot, or Hitler. These are also unsatisfactory especially since dead unbelievers will not be raised until the Great White Throne Judgment. 3) The only real option is that this future beast, the Antichrist is the head that is apparently killed and healed. In this view the head would be representative of the entire beast. The terminology seems to be strong. *Slain, (esphagmenon)*, suggests a violent death. Further the term *fatal wound (plaga)* is suggestive of having had a deadly blow. In fact the whole first part of verse 3 could be literally rendered, "*And (I saw) one of his heads as it had been slain into death, and his plague of death has been healed.*" In verse 12 the phrase *plague of death* is repeated, only it is translated *fatal wound*. In verse 14 we are told that this plague is by the sword. For all practical purposes it appears that the Antichrist is indeed given a death-blow and killed, but is healed and brought back to life. The only real difficulty in carrying it this far is the term *as (hos)*. This term is often used as a comparative particle in which case it would suggest the appearance of death. However this term could just as easily be understood as a temporal particle and could be translated *after or when*. In this case it would indeed be suggestive of a literal death and some sort of a healing/resurrection. In either case it seems apparent that the world understands the Antichrist to be dead and are amazed, when he has been healed. In fact this seems to lead directly into the worship given to the beast in verse 4. Whatever the case it is apparent that the dragon and the beast are closely counterfeiting the death and resurrection of Christ. The question that is left to answer is whether Satan has the power to restore a dead person to life? It seems that it would be impossible to determine for sure whether Satan could be allowed this kind of power. It seems that the best conclusion is the conclusion made by Dr. Robert Thomas in his commentary, "Whether the beast performs this marvelous feat through deception or through power permitted by God, it still brings him into the limelight as never before."³⁹⁹

The Adoration of the Beast: (vs. 4)

After his apparent death the world will be in utter amazement that this individual (the Antichrist) will be healed and returned to life. This amazement and wonder will evolve into worship. "The final form of apostasy is not simply the worship of some pagan deity but the worship of Satan himself."⁴⁰⁰ "Worship of the dragon (explicitly mentioned only here in Revelation), who empowers the beast is one and the same with worship of the beast. Both will be associated with image worship (13:14-15), which like all idolatry, is devil worship (cf. 1 Cor. 10:19-21). Revelation mentions worship of the beast several other times (cf. 13:8, 12; 14:9, 11; 20:4) and worship of his image several times (cf. 13:15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20)."⁴⁰¹ "The beast is Satan's substitute for Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and to him the world as a whole flocks to give homage, indicated in the questions "Who is like the beast? Who is able to wage war with him?"⁴⁰² "The incomparability of the beast is what provokes people to worship him."⁴⁰³ Obviously the understood answer to these questions in the minds of the people is no one.

The Arrogance of the Beast: (vv. 5-6)

"Most world dictators have proven to be persuasive speakers, able to motivate the masses to their political ideology. The Antichrist will be no exception."⁴⁰⁴ He will obviously be able to mesmerize the entire world by his speaking ability. However, "the evil character of the world ruler of that day is shown in his boasting and blasphemy. A similar description of the same character is given in Daniel 7:8, 11, 25."⁴⁰⁵

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According to verse 5 not only was he arrogant in speaking blasphemies, but he was given authority to operate for 42 months. This time period is of course 3 ½ years and will coincide with the last half of the tribulation period. Evidently sometime around the middle of the tribulation the Antichrist will either, be killed and raised from the dead or will fake his death and resurrection. This healing of an apparent deadly wound will amaze the world so that they will begin to follow after the beast. It will be at this time that he will break his covenant with the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:27), go in and defile the temple, proclaim himself to be God, and set an image of himself up in the temple (2 Thessalonians 2:4). From that point on he will gain world dominance and oppress both Israel and believers.

Verse 6 goes on to amplify the blasphemous speech of the beast as mentioned in verse 5a. "Verse 6 lists three ways in which the beast will blaspheme God:

He will blaspheme God's name by casting direct aspersion on His person.

He will blaspheme His Tabernacle by speaking against His dwelling place.

He will blaspheme those who dwell (tabernacle) in heaven—the saints and the angelic host who, along with Michael the archangel, will cast Satan out of heaven (12:7-9, 12)."⁴⁰⁶

It is important to note that the phrase *that is* does not exist in the Greek manuscripts. In fact there exists two readings of this verse. The alternate reading would include the Greek *kai* (*and*). Thus the translation would read as the NKJV and the NIV. "*Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.*" The NASB would conclude that there are just two objects of the Antichrist's blasphemy, while the other major versions (I believe appropriately) see three.

The Aggression of the Beast: (vv. 7-8)

The universal dominion of the beast: (vs. 7)

First of all the Antichrist will be given power "*to make war with the saints and to over come them.*" "Acting as Satan's tool, the beast is able to wage war against the saints throughout the entire globe and to overcome them (cf. Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:10; Rev. 7:9-17). Many believers in Christ among both Jews and Gentiles will perish as martyrs during this awful time of trial."⁴⁰⁷ Second we see the universal power of Antichrist as it becomes worldwide by the middle of the Tribulation. The phrase *every tribe and people and tongue and nation* is an emphatic way of expressing the entire world. The point being made is that the authority of Antichrist has finally become worldwide. Antichrist has taken control of the world. As previously mentioned in verse 5 this power will last for the entire last half (42 months/ 3 ½ years) of the Tribulation.

The universal worship of the beast: (vs. 8)

Not only will Antichrist receive worldwide power, but he also will receive worldwide worship. *All who dwell on the earth* is qualified by the following statement *whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life*. So that *all who dwell on the earth* does not include believers in Christ. This book of life includes only the names of those who are elect of God. Those who worship the beast and take the mark of the beast do not have their names written in the book of life.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

According to God's eternal, electing purpose before creation, the death of Christ seals the redemption of the elect forever (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27,28). Antichrist can never take away the salvation of the elect. The eternal registry of the elect will never be altered, nor will the saved in the Antichrist's day worship him."⁴⁰⁸ It is likely because of their refusal to worship Antichrist that he goes after the saints to make war with them and overcome them.

The Appropriate Response of the Saints: (vv. 9-10)

Verses 9 and 10 offer a challenge to the Tribulation saints. In this challenge the Tribulation saints are being warned of impending persecution by the beast. They are being urged to submit to divine providence. The phrase "*If anyone has an ear, let him hear*" is a frequent expression in the gospels (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35). There is also great similarity with the conclusion of each of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3. However the phrase "*unto the churches*" is omitted here. Some take this as evidence of the previously raptured church saints.

There exist a number of variations on the original reading of the text. The best understanding is likely, "*If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he departs. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, [it is necessary for] him to be killed by the sword.*" This rendering of the original Greek text leads to the above interpretation of this verse. It does not see a use of force by the saints, but simply stresses the inevitability of persecution and death for the faithful.

"This interpretation agrees with the invitation of verse 9. It also fits with the reference to endurance in verse 10. It invites the faithful to recognize that the actions of this false christ have been decreed by God. This meaning also coincides with the emphasis on divine providence in the Jeremiah passages to which John alludes in verse 10 (Jer. 15:2; 43:11). The emphasis in the immediate context on the victory of the beast over the saints leaves little room for any other meaning except an encouragement to accept this as the sovereign will of God."⁴⁰⁹

The conclusion of verse 10 offers two personal qualities needed to sustain believers in the midst of this persecution.

Endurance (*hupomone*): This term literally means "to remain under." It pictures an endurance with things or circumstances or trials. It is a brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world. "It denotes patience in trying circumstances. It does not denote a grim, fatalistic resignation, but a courageous acceptance of hardship, suffering, and loss."⁴¹⁰

Faith (*pistis*): Here in Revelation 13 this term likely takes on the nuance of *faithfulness* or *fidelity* rather than the connotation of faith. It speaks of an undying dedication and faithfulness to the Lord in the midst of persecution from the beast.

These two qualities of endurance and faithfulness will be necessary for those who must endure this terrible time of persecution and death.