

Rev. 13:11-18, The Beast from the Earth
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Overview

1. The second of the two beasts. Parallelism between the two sections shows the following structure:

	Beast from the Sea	Beast from the Earth
a) Vision	13:1-8	13:11-17
b) Call for Understanding	13:9	13:18
c) Vengeance on Persecutor	13:10a	14:6-12, 14-20
d) Triumph of the Saints	13:10b	14:1-5, 13

2. In this study, concentrate on the Vision and the Call for Understanding.

A. 11, Vision: His Appearance

1. "From the earth." Daniel sees four beasts, all coming both from the sea and from the earth. John sees one beast that combines them coming from the sea, and then distinguishes the beast from the earth as something different.
2. Ch. 12 pictures the battle between the Dragon and the Lamb; here is a beast who seems to bring them together in peace!
 - a) "Lamb" 26x in Rev; 25x = LJC.
 - b) "Dragon" always in Rev. of Satan.
 - c) Compare
 - 1) Matt. 7:15, false prophets who are wolves in sheeps' clothing.
 - 2) 2 Cor. 11:13-15, false teachers concealing themselves as apostles of Christ

B. 12-17, Vision: His Action

Note repetition of *poiei* (12a "exercise," 12b "cause", 13 "do," 16 "cause"); he is the active agent of the first beast. The successive statements of what he does become more and more concrete and specific.

1. 12a, Summary: Exercises the authority of the first beast. That beast was characterized by the authority that he was given (vv. 2,5,7, the last two times translated "power"). This one has no authority of his own, but promotes the first beast.

2. 12b, Worship. This is the ultimate objective toward which he exerts this authority, the presentation of the first beast as God, cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4. Having identified the first beast as human government, we are warned here of fascism, the elevation of the State to a position of deity, as in communism. This tendency is growing even in the US: having denied its citizens God as a moral reference point, the government can present only itself as the authority.

The next two activities are means to this end, one for the gullible, the other for the skeptical.

3. 13-14, Signs, as mechanisms to stimulate the worship of the Beast from the Sea by those who can be impressed by such things. Two main signs described:
 - a) 13b, Fire coming down from heaven, cf. Elijah on Mt. Carmel.
 - b) 14-15, A speaking idol, the image of the Beast. This may be the Abomination of Desolation, erected in the temple (Matt. 24:15). Note that it is the idol who causes non-worshippers to be slain--probably, it commands this.
 - c) "had power" 14, 15 is literally "it was given to him," just as with the first beast, 5, 7 (2x each). John wants us to remember that his ability to work miracles, while real, is by permission from God, not an independent authority.
4. 16, Mark of the Beast, a practical mechanism to implement the idol's command and enforce worship, even by those who will not be fooled by the miracles. Everyone is required to give evidence of adherence to the common religion in order to work.

C. **Vision: Synthesis**

The first beast, in receiving worship, takes the role of a god. The second beast, in promoting his worship, becomes his functionary, a priest or a prophet.

1. In fact, he is called "the false prophet" elsewhere in Revelation, giving the Satanic Trinity. For all of them together, see
 - a) 16:13, the joint source of unclean spirits.
 - b) 20:10, together in the lake of fire (19:20 puts the two beasts there first).
 - c) These "trio" passages are valuable because they identify the second beast, the beast from the earth, as the "false prophet," a religious figure.
2. Other examples of religious figure subservient to political power:
 - a) Exod. 7:11,12, Pharaoh's magicians
 - b) 1 Kings 22:6,7, Ahab's court prophets
 - c) Dan. 2:2, Nebuchadnezzar's wise men
 - d) Acts 13:6,7, BarJesus associated with Sergius Paulus
3. *Application:* Beware when you see a religious authority sponsored by and supporting secular government. John wrote this while the

Roman emperors were being deified by their priests. It perfectly reflects the church-states of most of the "Christian" era, and will come into prominence again during the Great Tribulation.

4. Query: is this distinction between the two beasts made elsewhere? Bullinger sees it in 2 Thess. 2, between the "man of sin" (v.4, = beast from the Sea, who seeks worship) and "the lawless one" (v.8, = beast from the earth, who works wonders).

D. 18, Call for Understanding

1. Highly obscure. Most promising alternatives:

- a) "Caesar Nero," spelled in Hebrew letters in a non-standard way. Both the language and the variation from standard spelling are a stretch.
- b) In the Sibylline oracles, '888' is the number of Christ, each digit being one more than perfection. '666' might be a symbolic indication of defect from perfection. But the Sibylline reference is probably dependent on this one.
- c) "lateinos" ("Latin"). The history of the Roman Catholic institution clearly fits this picture of religion as the handmaid of government, and Rome may well be central in this position in the future. But the picture is broader than RC.

2. Better: will be obvious to those who need the information. By the test of this riddle, none of us qualifies as "wise."