

Rev. 13:1-10, The Beast from the Sea
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Overview

1. 12:17-14:20 is the third phase of the dragon's war against the woman. During the 3.5 years of the GT, on earth after his exclusion from heaven.
2. Focuses on two beasts who echo the vision of Dan. 7
 - a) 13:1-10, from the Sea
 - b) 13:11-14:20, from the Earth
3. Common features to both sections

	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	14:6-11, 14-20
d) Triumph of the Saints	13:10b	14:1-5, 12-13

A. 12:17, Preface

Relates this phase of the war to those that have gone before.

1. The dragon's wrath is intensified by the frustration of his efforts against Messiah (1-6), the heavenly angels (7-12), and Israel (13-16).
2. Sequence: he turns away to make war with the rest of her seed (the true gentile believers, in contrast with protected Israel).

B. 1-8, Vision of the Beast from the Sea

1. Its antecedents: the features in 2a and the origin from the sea in 1a recall the beasts of Dan. 7, and encourage us to look there for further understanding. As we have seen so often before, John is allowed to see visions that others have seen before him.
2. Its description
 - a) 1a, origin: from the sea.
 - 1) In ANE mythology, the primeval sea must be conquered in order to yield life. Often personified as an enemy to be slain. The Bible reflects this imagery.
 - a> Conquest over the sea in Gen. 1
 - b> Isa. 27:1, the sea dragon as God's enemy.
 - c> Rev. 21:1, no sea in new creation
 - 2) How does this relate to the earthly origin of the second

beast in v.11?

- a> Two great monsters of Jewish mythology, one from the sea (Leviathan), the other from the desert (Behemoth)?
- b> Empire (sea) vs. local authority (earth)?
- c> Perhaps both are just incidental aspects of the vision. The beasts have to appear from somewhere; reflecting Daniel's vision, we have one from each.

3) cf. 17:8; 11:7. Also said to come out of the bottomless pit. Perhaps the various origins are not meant to be exclusive, but (as in Dan 7:3, 17), inclusive: these beastly powers come

- a> from the abyss (origin: demonic),
- b> AND from the sea (character: chaos, confusion, death; note the striving winds in Dan. 7),
- c> AND from the earth (mechanism: implemented in earthly government).

Modern man sees only the earth. Pagans in the ANE could realize that behind human society, and continually struggling with it, were forces of chaos. The Bible shows a personal devil behind all that.

b) 1b, heads and horns. See 17:10-12 for interpretation. Each is chiastically linked with a characteristic:

1) Ten horns: ten concurrent kings ruling with the beast. They wear crowns, *diadhmata*, the royal crown, first encountered on the head of the dragon (12:3), and only in 19:12 on the Lord Jesus. His people typically wear the *stefanos*, the victor's wreath, 2:10; 3:11; 4:4,10; 12:1.

Application: Satan seeks high positions from which he can do mighty works. God's people perform mighty works through his strength, and eventually win high positions.

2) Seven heads: seven sequential kingdoms, of which Rome is #6. (Also, the ANE sea dragon had seven heads.) Although this beast appears only at the Great Tribulation, we recognize from its heads that its motivating power is the same as that behind earthly government in every age.

The heads bear "names of blasphemy." Worldly government always has usurped God's place over his people.

3) Summary: the beast represents the final culmination of human government.

3. Its activities

Alternation between endowments (2b, 5, 7) and resulting activities (3-4, 6, 8). Note that the giver of the endowments shifts after the first, and that in every case the authority granted unto the beast has a defined scope.

The action in the first and last cases is to receive worship; in

the center, to blaspheme. Those who speak against God do so to elevate themselves.

a) 2b, Endowments

- 1) Compare and contrast the three things that the devil is said to give to the beast (study hint: pay special attention to series of conjuncts).
 - a> Power: physical strength; intrinsic capability of the individual.
 - b> Throne: social position; what we are with respect to those who are otherwise our peers.
 - c> Authority: freedom, permission to act, with respect to higher powers outside our sphere. It is "great authority," but unlike that entrusted to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:18), not "all authority."
- 2) Contrast Rom. 13:1-2, where the word "power" is the same as that here translated "authority." How can the final manifestation of human government be Satanic when God is the one who gives all authority?
- 3) Resolution: Luke 4:6. Satan's ability to give this power is only secondary, derived from God. He gives the beast in Rev. 13 what he offered the Lord Jesus in Luke 4, but the Lord preferred "all authority" (Mt 28:18) to "great a."

b) 3-4, Action: Receives Worship

- 1) The cause of this worship: his healed wound. Cf. 17:8--the beast, one of the seven (17:11), is a resurrection of the seventh. Since the heads are successive kingdoms, must refer to a restored kingdom. If 6 is Rome, 7th must be the church-state of the last two millennia, which has just in the last century become defunct through the spread of rational humanism; are we looking for a revival of the great RC empire?
- 2) The resulting worship. People are impressed by his recovery.

c) 5, Endowments

The passive "was given" throughout Rev'n appears to apply to what God permits to his enemies. Note the explicit extents that are defined. As with Job, Satan can do only what God gives him permission to do. Cf. Jesus to Pilate, John 19:11. In this case, he is enabled to blaspheme, but for a limited period of time, the 42 months that make up the Great Tribulation. In Dan. 7:8, 20, the "little horn" (of whom this is another view) also speaks great things.

d) 6, Action: Blasphemy

- 1) "opened his mouth": began a prolonged discourse.
- 2) The targets of his blasphemy are twofold, acc. to the MT

- a> God
- b> His tabernacle, i.e., those that dwell in heaven. Could include the angels, and believers viewed as citizens of heaven (Eph. 2:6). Cf. Num. 16:24,27; Psa. 78:67 ("tab of Joseph" // "tribe of Ephraim"); Isa. 16:5; Amos 9:11, where those who live with someone are identified as their "tabernacle," similar to the expression "the house of XXX."
- c> Compare John 15:18-21. Satan's wrath is against us because we are the Lord's.

e) 7, Endowments

Again, passive voice, tracing the beast's authority back to the Lord. Again, restricted in scope: against the gentile believers ("every tribe, and people and tongue and nation," cf. the contrast in ch. 7), the Woman Israel being safe in the wilderness according to 12:17, "went away").

f) 8, Action: Worship universal among the non-elect.

C. 9, Call for Understanding

This call for attention, common in the gospels, was a regular mark of the letters to the churches. We must not be lulled into a false sense of security or of Satan's weakness. His Beast will have great authority, and for a limited time will enjoy great power even over the saints of God. If we know that God has purposed this, and that even the beast's power is ultimately regulated by him, we will be better prepared to face it.

D. 10a, Vengeance on Persecutors

The one who places the ultimate limits on the Beast's authority also lays down the rule by which his abuse of God's people will ultimately be judged.

Textual note: There are numerous textual alternatives at this point, suggesting an understanding along the lines of Jer 15:2, 43:11: let believers resign themselves to the persecution that is to come their way. This resignation is then explained (10b) as the manifestation of their patience and faith. In favor of the received reading:

1. But compare the parallelism with the second beast, where judgment on the oppressor is clearly in view.
2. 10b is closely parallel to 14:12, which there follows vengeance, not submission.
3. Parallel of 2 Thess. 1, where the rest of the saints is coupled with the destruction of the wicked.

E. 10b, Triumph of the Saints

Compare 14:11,12; 2 Thes. 1. This is the spirit of the imprecatory psalms. Moderns of a liberal bent find this desire for vengeance intolerable, but the Bible teaches that the judgment of the wicked is as much a part of God's righteous plan as the salvation of the righteous, and as much worthy of our praise and adoration.