

The Beast of Revelation

In comparing the references to the beast in the book of Revelation with Daniel 7, the following conclusions seem reasonable to a significant number of commentators.

A. Overview.

- The “beast” refers to the ungodly kingdom or authority that rules by God’s permission under satan’s power in opposing the people and kingdom of God.
- Though it has multiple heads or manifestations (i.e., kingdoms or empires that rule at various times in history) and multiple *horns* (multiple powers or rulers within a designated period), the kingdom of the beast is really only one.
- Only God’s kingdom will be universal and eternal. The beast has repeatedly sought worldwide dominion but will not attain it until just prior to Christ’s return, and then only for a short time.

B. The Historical Manifestation of the Beast.

1. Beastly dominion is often described in terms of savagery and cruelty: trampling, breaking in pieces, devouring flesh, shedding martyrs’ blood, etc., but then it’s authority always ends and is replaced by another.

2. The time of the beast’s rule.

a. The beast’s attempts at worldwide dominion are a continuing cycle throughout history, as one kingdom rises and then falls, and another rises in its place.

- Daniel, like John, and like us today, lived under the dominion of one of those kingdoms, but looking back, realized that no kingdom had been permanent, and in fact, none of them had yet ruled the whole earth.
- John refers to this continuing cycle when he says of past kings or kingdoms, “*five have fallen.*”

b. The entire span of the beast’s power on earth is expressed by several expressions which appear to have parallel meanings.

- time, times & half a time (Daniel 7:25, Rev. 12:14);
- forty-two months (Rev. 11:2, 13:5);
- 1260 days (Rev. 11:3, 12:6)

c. This temporary rule of the beast is described as being “given” to him by God for a limited time.

- Dan. 7:25: “Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.”
- Rev. 13:5: “He was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

C. **The Final Manifestation of the Beast. Both Daniel and John also saw a terrifying future kingdom.**

1. It would be a world-wide kingdom and, in this way, unlike all the others.

- Daniel saw it as the fourth and final beast, Dan. 7:23: “*Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.’*”
- John describes this final world-wide kingdom in several chapters beginning in ch. 11, especially 13 and 17.
- In Revelation ch. 13, John says of this king and kingdom, “*authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*”
- In Revelation ch. 17, John saw it as the seventh head of the beast, or the seventh kingdom who is yet to come, vv. 8-10.

2. Both Daniel and John saw this future manifestation of satan’s kingdom as having ten *horns*,

- The horn is a common biblical symbol representing power.
- The fact that there are ten refers to some division or shared authority within this worldwide empire. The number ten in Scripture is symbolic and refers to completeness in the sense of sufficient for the purpose.

3. Both Daniel and John saw one, perhaps one individual, set himself up above the others.

- Daniel sees him as one of the ten horns, having greater appearance than the others, coming up among and plucking up and subduing the others (Dan. 7:7-9,11,20-24; Rev. 17:10-11)
- John sees him as an eighth king (the number eight in Scripture is the number of new life.), who is both “*of the seven*,” (Re. 17:11), meaning his antichristian reign is like all previous ones, as well as *of the ten*, because his co-regents give their authority willingly to him (Rev. 17:13).

4. Both Daniel and John refer to this individual as powerful in his words — a counterfeit of Jesus Christ, the living Word.

- Dan. 7:25: He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
- Rev. 13:5: “He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.”

5. Both Daniel and John say he will persecute the people of God.

- Dan. 7:25: He ... Shall persecute the saints of the Most High ...
- Rev. 13:6-7: Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

6. According to both Daniel and John, he will rule only for a limited time:

- Daniel 7:12: "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.
- Dan. 7:25: “Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.”
- Rev. 13:5: “He was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

- Rev. 17:10: “And when he comes, he must continue for a short time”; Rev. 17:12: "The ten horns which you saw ... receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

7. Both Daniel and John say the beast will go to destruction:

- Dan. 7:11: "... I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.
- Dan. 7:26: ‘But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever.
- Rev. 17:8: "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.” Rev. 17:11: "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”

D. References to the “Beast” Under Different Names.

1. New Testament References in addition to those in Revelation:

- man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3);
- lawless one (2 Thess. 2:8);
- antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18).

2. Daniel’s prophecy of an abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:24-27; 11:21-32; 12:8-13; Mt. 24:15-30) *must* be understood as having multiple fulfillments:

- The most immediate fulfillment as almost all commentators agree, was Antiochus Epiphanes (215-164 BC), a Greek Seleucid king whose desecration of the Holy Place in the Temple ended the Temple sacrifices until the Temple could be re-claimed cleansed. This wicked act inspired the Maccabees, a family of priests, to revolt in righteous indignation, led by Judas Maccabeus.
- A later fulfillment was during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Roman general Titus. Mt. 24:15-16 suggests this application of Daniel’s prophecy. This ended the Temple sacrifices permanently.
- A future (spiritual) fulfillment by the lawless one would occur at the end of days according to Daniel 12, and confirmed by Mt. 24:29-31).