

Revelation

*Part Thirty-Seven
The Beast of the Sea
Part Two (Supplemental)
(Revelation 13:2-4)*

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org
www.branchofhope.org
6/12/2022*

Revelation

*Part Thirty-Seven
The Beast of the Sea
Part Two (Supplemental)
(Revelation 13:2-4)*

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him” (Revelation 13:1-4)?

Introduction/Review

With all the sensationalism surrounding end-times during the past fifty, or so, years, I find it difficult to persuade people that Revelation is not primarily about the end of the world. It certainly includes the final judgment, but John is not writing to these seven churches that they may simply muse upon what is going to happen thousands of years in the future.

Yet we have burgeoned, in the church, a two-pronged response to this book. One prong is almost a mad obsession. As if every last single global (or not so global) trend is a sign of the end of the world; especially if it involves the middle east. The other prong is exhausted indifference. The more popular system of eschatology (the study of end-times) is so complicated, and so many of the predictions have failed to pan out, that we’re done with it.

And yet Revelation is highly significant for every generation of the church, especially those finding themselves amid a hostile culture seeking to supplant the Triune God through a massive, antagonistic, and beastly government posing as the answer to our problems. It was not the first century, but the twentieth that had children’s toys, the doorways of nurseries,

orphanages, and schools, stamped with the slogan, "Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for my joyous childhood."

We are naïve to think this battle does not continue. Revelation was written to embolden those who felt the weight of this; especially in the turbulent period of history where we observed the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. Where the sway of the evil one would be dealt a crushing blow—a blow he would not take well. The unleashing of wickedness would be severe.

In anticipation of this, John is given a vision, which he shares with the church of the glorified Christ. Of all the beasts and monsters John saw in Revelation, there is only one that causes him to fall "**as dead**" (**Revelation 1:17**), and that is the vision of "**the Son of Man**" in His glory. Truly, the fear of God is beginning of wisdom.

In chapters two and three (which is the second portion of the three sections of Revelation—see 1:19) our Lord becomes very specific in terms of the heresies and immorality that are weaving their way into those churches. Here we see the repeated theme of the call to repentance and perseverance. Jude (likely the brother of Jesus) says it well regarding those who were creeping into and seeking to determine the church's direction.

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

In chapter four we are given heaven's-eye view of what actions will be taken by the glorified Christ who we saw in chapter one. From an earthly point of view, Rome and Jerusalem had their thumbs upon the struggling and wavering church. But from a heavenly point of view, Christ is very much on His throne, governing all things on behalf of His bride, the church. Paul puts it thus:

And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

This governing and preservation of His church is shown forth via a scroll which will reveal the judgment which will soon fall upon those seeking

to devour the church. These detractors, who are pawns of Satan, will most assuredly fail in their efforts to snuff out the church. Their kingdoms will come to an end, but as we read elsewhere, the kingdom of God will prevail. At His ascension, Jesus...

...was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:14).

Central to the message of this victory, without which there would be no victory, is Christ, the only One worthy to open this scroll of judgment. And why? It is a worship song in heaven:

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

The ransoming blood of Christ is central to Revelation, as it is to all of Scripture. The judgment of those seeking to destroy Christ's church, and the preservation of the bride, prevails in chapters six through eleven (the seals and trumpets). The main foe in these chapters is Jerusalem, which had become almost entirely governed by darkness.

In chapter twelve we see, almost parenthetically, how all this happened with a review of the birth and ascension of Christ along with the casting down of Satan. Yet in chapter thirteen we are introduced to another foe. This foe is Rome. This begins in chapter thirteen.

As detailed earlier, chapter thirteen presents the beast rising out of the sea, which would be Rome. "**Seven heads**" indicating generational resilience. "**Ten horns**" symbolic of great power. "**Ten crowns**" on those horns signifying it being a legitimate authority figure ruling by might rather than wisdom or love or any other attribute which might be considered virtuous.

Seeking to instill confidence in the hearts of his readers, that they might know that God had lost control of history or that "**the fiery trial**" (**1 Peter 4:12**) which they were about to endure, wasn't random, John now references a prophecy that had been made hundreds of years before in Daniel.

This beast was like a **“leopard...a bear, and...a lion.”** All of these images taken from seventh chapter of Daniel, symbolizing great, terrible and powerful nations which would precede the coming of Christ. The fourth beast in Daniel, being the worst of all is the current beast of Rome, which was an aggregate of all four. These horrible nations (especially Rome) were given their power, throne and authority from the devil. It was Satan’s effort of keeping what he accomplished through the fall.

The Great Commission, if evil had its way, would remain the great insurrection. But such would not be the case. The days of evil are numbered. This is one of the great promises in Revelation. Let us now finish our current thought.

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him” (Revelation 13:3, 4)?

An Unbeatable Foe?

I will not engage in too much speculation regarding the mortal wound on one of the heads. Some say it is appealing to a type of Christ-like resurrection of one of the Caesars. Others, more credibly I think, suggest it is speaking to the death of one Caesar followed by yet another in his place. It is not entirely clear.

What is clear is the result. Everybody was quite impressed with the beast’s ability to continue. And their admiration ascends to the point of worship. The beast appears unbeatable! **“Who is able to make war with him?”** But it goes beyond him being an unbeatable foe. His subjects become enthusiastic advocates!

I’ve never quite understood (at least existentially) a mob mentality. But it is a very real thing. Whether it’s a group of people attacking a single victim or crowd who decides that it is a good idea to begin breaking windows and setting things on fire, I kind of don’t get it. And I do pray that none of you will fall victim to this type of character flaw. But verses three and four are helping us understand how an entire culture is won over.

It was fascinating to watch speeches that Hitler would give to an enthralled crowd. Obviously, he was speaking in German, but when I finally

saw the translations, he wasn't saying anything all that profound. Yet his audience would be frenzied! How do you think you would do?

Perhaps you have seen an old photo wafting through the internet of a man standing in the midst of a crowd of people with their arms lifted in an enthusiastic Sieg Heil. The man's name was August Landmesser, and, for legitimate and heartbreaking reasons, he stood in the midst of these people with his arms crossed. He was making a statement; a statement which would shortly cost him his life. He simply wasn't going to join the crowd.

I've lived long enough now to see that it is not too difficult to get people, who lack a true substantial foundation for their convictions, to eventually Sieg Heil. Sometimes you need to cross your arms against the spirit of your age.

This last week, a gentleman at the rescue mission where I was preaching asked a penetrating question. "How do you know if it's God or the devil?" The answer seems obvious, but it is not obvious at all. Jesus said, **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"** (Matthew 24:35). Cultures, trends, personality figures, dynamic influencers come and go, but if we don't know those immutable **"words"** of Christ, contained in Scripture, we won't be able to distinguish between God and the devil or good and evil.

We will finish here and continue pursue more details regarding this beast of the sea and the battle therein, in another message. But it would be a mistake to neglect the call to perseverance that this portion of the chapter will lead to.

Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints (Revelation 13:10).

How do you know that your Christian faith is not merely part of a mob mentality or the enticing or intimidating influence of the culture in which you find yourself? We use terms like *once saved always saved* or *eternal security* to indicate that a true believer will never lose their salvation. And these terms may be technically accurate. But the biblical term has a different flavor to it. It's *the perseverance of the saints*.

A true believer will ever recognize the battle. A true believer will ever live a life, though checkered with failures and weakness, of perseverance. Of all the self-deprecating declarations put forth by the Apostle Paul, there was

one statement that was not. For it was not a statement of his own excellence, but of God's preservation of a true believer.

I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

Questions for Study

1. What are the two-pronged responses to Revelation? Where do you find yourself on this (pages 2, 3)?
2. What makes Revelation significant to any generation of the church (pages 2, 3)?
3. Review Revelation. What does each section signify or state (pages 3, 4)?
4. What message is central to Revelation? What message is central to all of Scripture and why (pages 4, 5)?
5. Give a brief review/description of the beast of Revelation 13:1. Who is this beast and what do we learn about it? In what ways do these dangers surface throughout history? Can you give examples of these types of things happening today (pages 4, 5)?
6. Why would John's reference to Daniel's prophecy be encouraging to the churches in Asia Minor-or us, for that matter (pages 4, 5)?
7. Who are the four beasts in Daniel? Discuss the merits or weaknesses of the system called 'Dispensationalism' in their approach to these beasts (pages 4, 5).
8. How do we see the culture won over by the beast in verses three and four? Can you apply this to modern culture, ethics and politics (pages 5, 6)?
9. What is a significant identifying feature of true faith (page 6)?

