

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 13

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Part II

A. Introduction:

These chapters distinctively expose the true nature of Satan and his agents. It is a good place to learn why Christ instructs us to wear spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-17), why it is important to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to love one another (1 John 4:7-15; lots of 'one anothers' in the scriptures), abide in Him (John 15:1-13), and to hide in Him (Colossians 3:1-4). It also exposes why he responded the way he did in Jude; "But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9; NASU)

You will remember that Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker (Rev. 6:2) and even "settled" the Arab-Israeli problem by making a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years (Dan. 9:27). This protection would permit the nation to rebuild the temple and reinstitute religious rituals (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 11:1). But in the middle of the seven-year period (the time we are studying now in Rev. 10–14) he will break that covenant, stop the ceremonies, and set up himself as a god in the temple (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thes. 2:1–12).^[1]

Two dreadful rulers enter the scene in chapter 13, one coming up **out of the sea** and the other coming up out of the earth. The **sea** here is undoubtedly "a symbol of the agitated surface of unregenerate humanity, and especially of the seething caldron of national and social life out of which the great historical movements of the world arise"

(Swete). The first beast, whose horns and diadems represent power, is energized by Satan (v. 2). It is almost unbelievable that the whole earth will worship both the dragon and the beast (vv. 3, 4). There will be much religion on earth, but it will be godless and blasphemous. This first beast is against God (vv. 5, 6); he is satanically energized (v. 2); he is militarily supreme (v. 4); he possesses worldwide power (v. 7); and he persecutes the saints of God (v. 7). Who would deny that the stage of world history is rapidly being set by tendencies that will ultimately lead to the rule and adoration of such a monster? All who do not belong to the Lamb of God will worship the beast.^[2]

The second beast (13:11–18) functions to witness to the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:4). He is referred to as the “false prophet” (19:20). This would serve as a warning against false prophets to the original readers of John’s revelation, just as it is for believers today. When God’s purposes are finished through the beast, he will be judged (20:10). The assurance that God will punish evildoers sustains the faith of the persecuted. The number representing the beast is identified as “666” (13:18). Many have sought to identify the Antichrist on the basis of this number. Still, such attempts will be futile until the Tribulation begins.^[3]

B. An Expository Review of the Chapter:

1. A Overview:

a) The false religious system, which was supported in this way, imitated the divine Trinity. Satan seeks to take the place of God the Father; the first beast assumes the place of Jesus Christ, the Son, the King of kings; and the second beast, the false

prophet, has a role similar to the Holy Spirit, who causes Christians to worship God.
This is Satan's final attempt to substitute a false religion for true faith in Christ.^[4]

b) People sometimes overlook the fact that, while God can do supernatural things, Satan, within certain limitations, can also perform miracles, and he used this power to the full in this situation to induce people to worship Satan's substitute for Christ.
Accordingly, the second beast deceived the inhabitants of the earth.^[5]

C. An Exposition of the Dragon and the Beast:

1. The Dragon:

a) That the dragon had diadems on his head (12:3), and the beast now has them on his horns, shows that the dragon has the ultimate rule and mandates his will through the beast. That the sea beast of 13:1–2 arises from the watery, dark home of the dragon shows it to be of the same devilish nature and on the devil's side (see 12:3 for OT references depicting the sea dragon's home as the watery abyss).^[6]

b) As with the dragon's horns and heads, so here, the number of seven heads and ten horns emphasizes the completeness of oppressive power and its worldwide effect. This understanding is supported further by the oppressive power represented by the demons' heads in 9:17–19 and the crowns on the afflicting demons' heads in 9:7.^[7]

2. The Beast out of the Sea:

a) The "sea" (θάλασσα) is synonymous with the "abyss" (ἄβυσσος), which is the spiritual storehouse of evil, where wicked spirits are confined under God's sovereignty (see on 9:1). Yet that dark realm of evil encompasses unbelieving people, so that the beast may also be seen as having its earthly origin from

the mass of unregenerate humanity. Similarly, 17:15 says that the multitudes of reprobate humanity are what is represented by “the many waters” on which the whore sits, in association with the beast.^[8]

b) The ten horns represent ten kingdoms (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12). It appears that “the beast” will head a “United States of Europe,” a revived Roman Empire, before taking over as world dictator. All nations will no doubt admire and thank him for the “peace” he has achieved, little realizing the sorrow and destruction he will bring to the world.^[9]

c) In addition, the “ten diadems” on the “ten horns” are a reference to Daniel’s fourth beast, whose “ten horns” are interpreted as “ten kings” (Dan. 7:24). Likewise, the “blasphemous names” are connected with the blaspheming figure of Dan. 7:8ff., who is also associated with the fourth kingdom (cf. Rev. 13:5–6). Part of the textual tradition in Rev. 13:1 (syr Σ [see Hoskier, *Text of Apocalypse*, 333]) adds that the beast rising from the sea had “teeth,” which reflects scribal interpretation further identifying the beast with Daniel’s fourth kingdom.^[10]

· The “ten diadems” on the beast’s horns confirm that the reference is to an earthly king or kings (see likewise on 12:3). Horns are typically metaphorical of power (e.g., *1 En.* 90:6–18, 37–39; Rev. 5:6).^[11]

d) The “blasphemies” written on the beast’s heads represent his blasphemous claims to earthly, divine kingship, in feeble imitation of Christ’s true kingship (contrast 13:1 with 17:3, 13:7–13 with 1:5, and 17:14 with 19:12–16). The epitome of blasphemy is to attribute deity to someone who is not God. This the Roman imperial cult did, as did the local cults of Asia Minor. Temples were dedicated to Rome and Augustus in Asia Minor, and coins bore the emperors’ divine names. Domitian purportedly asked to be called “our Lord and our God” (Suetonius, *Domitian* 13).^[12]

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