

The Book of Revelation: “The Nature of the Beasts”

Revelation 13

A Call for Patient Endurance and Faith (vv. 1-10)

- Revelation 13 continues the drama of Revelation 12.
 - In Revelation 12, the dragon (Satan) is making war against the saints.
 - In Revelation 13, Satan is deploying beasts for the sake of destruction and deception.
- The 1st beast represents any state, government, or power that objects to God’s glory, opposes God’s rule, or oppresses God’s people.
 - The first readers would have (rightly) identified Rome as the beast.
 - But this beast is not limited to one place or time.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:18)

- What we read in Revelation 13 can’t be contained in the past easily and it can’t be relegated to the future only.
- The image in v. 3 evokes the ultimate and continual battle between the Devil and God’s people.

One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. (Rev 13:3)

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen 3:15)

- Any state that...
 - Punishes people who seek to obey Jesus and confess truth is the beast.
 - Compels disobedience is the beast.
 - Blasphemes God, assumes the powers of God, or demands the worship due to God alone is the beast.
 - Oppresses God’s people who are simply seeking to be faithful to him is the beast.
- Note well:
 - The Bible is entirely up-front about the cost of following Jesus.
 - The Bible is entirely freeing when it comes to following Jesus.
 - You are not called to eradicate the beast (God will do that).

- You are called to patient endurance and faith.
 - God's great concern is not that we change the empire.
 - God's great concern is that we not be changed by the empire.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18)

A Call for Wisdom (vv. 11-18)

- The presence of a second beast rounds out the picture of an unholy trinity.
 - Revelation 12-13 pictures a counterfeit God.
 - A dragon who mimics the sovereignty and rule of the Father.
 - A sea beast who mimics the kingship and glory of the Lamb.
 - A land beast who mimics the prophetic powers and ministry of the Spirit.
 - Little wonder, then, that final beast majors in deception. (v. 14)
- The second beast looks docile (like a lamb) but speaks like a dragon. (v. 11)
 - Notice the subtle and coercive language throughout the passage.
 - Notice the stark and coercive tactics at the end of the passage.
 - The mark of the beast is not bound to a physical image or identifier.
 - It's on the head (what you believe) or the hand (what you do).
 - It's a matter of allegiance.
 - It's the price you're willing to pay; the compromise you're willing to make.
- All of this calls for wisdom:
 - Wisdom about where you may be deceived.
 - Wisdom about where all of this is headed.
 - The number—666—is the number of a fallen humanity, not the number of God.
 - The number—666—is the number of judgment for the unholy trinity *and for all those who worship them*.

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)