

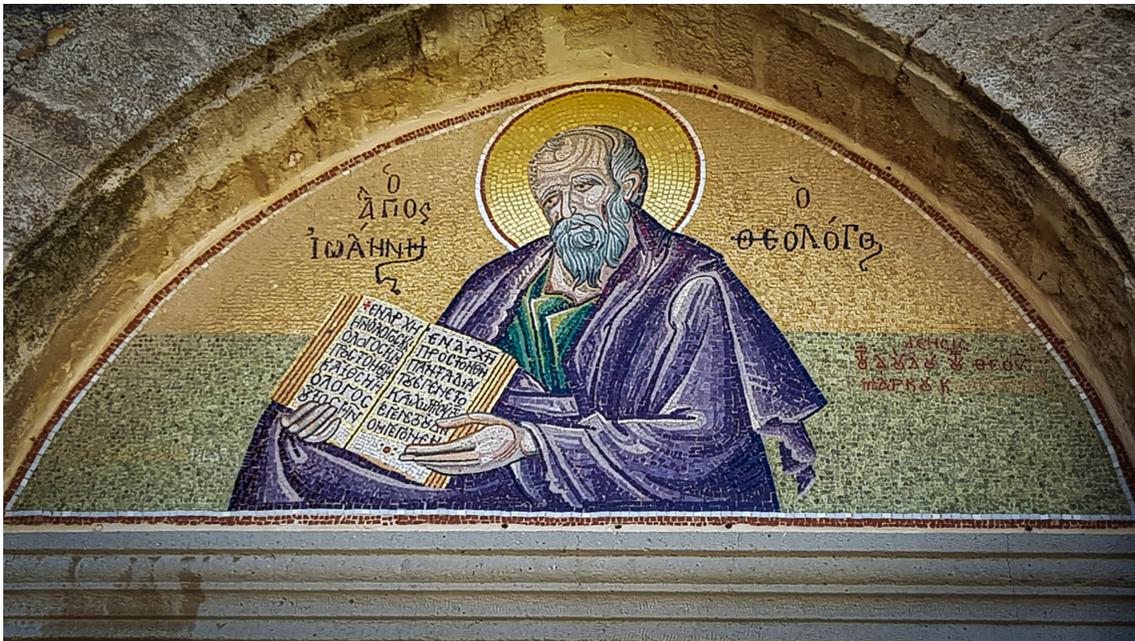
PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

24 JANUARY 2021

THE UNHOLY TRINITY

REVELATION 13:1-18



Recap

Heaven (4:1–5:14)

Earth: the opening of the first six seals describe a *panoramic view of human history* in the judgments of God upon the world during the time between Jesus' ascending to heaven and returning to earth (6:1–17)

*Second Coming (6:12–17)

Heaven: pause of this history before the seventh seal is opened and shows God's sealing his people for salvation (7:1–8:4)

*Second Coming (8:5)

Earth: the sounding of the first six trumpets, which again describe a *panoramic view of human history* by announcing the judgments of God upon the world and upon the unbelieving in the world (8:6–9:21)

Chapters 10–11 pauses this history again.

When the seventh trumpet sounds **there would be no more delay** of God's vindication of his martyred church and **the mystery of God would be fulfilled** (10:6–7).

Like Ezekiel, John eats the scroll of the Lord's will for human history, but it's bitter in his stomach (10:9) as he was to **prophesy** of judgment on **many peoples and nations and languages and kings** (10:11). More importantly, it's bitter as while the church is sealed from God's eternal wrath (ch. 7) it experiences the wrath of Satanically-inspired nations.

*Second Coming (11:19).

Chapters 12–14 act like a pair of night vision binoculars as we look at the people & institutions that make up our world with a glimpse of clarity.

Chap. 12 showed the reality behind Jesus' life & ours as his church. The Dragon (Satan) couldn't hinder the Son's bringing salvation to the world so the Dragon turned its attention to the Son's mother (the church). It couldn't hinder her so it wars against the sons and daughters of the church—you and I.

Notice where the dragon was standing: “*on the sand of the sea*” (12:17).

Chap. 13: to that seashore we look with our night vision binoculars to see two more beasts—an unholy Trinity.

Our Theme. Revelation 13 continues what we saw in chapter 12: a behind-the-curtain glimpse at our world to explain the age-old spiritual struggle between the seed of the woman & the seed of the serpent that culminates in the Devil & Christ.

I. The Sea Beast (vv. 1–8)

I.1. A beast rising *out of the sea* (v. 1)

I.1.1. Old Testament: The **sea** is chaotic and thus symbolic of the chaos of the world of the ungodly. E.g., “Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it!” (Ps. 98:7)

I.2. *A beast rising out of the sea* (v. 1)

I.2.1. Extra credit: you might remember this beast back in 11:7. The church was symbolized as two witnesses but “the beast that rises from the bottomless pit [to] make war on them and conquer them and kill them.”

I.2.2. Who is this beast? Remember: chapter 12 described in visionary terms that King Jesus is now “absent” as he ascended to heaven. So the Dragon (Satan) causes a **beast** to come out of the **sea** of chaos that is unbelief to claim kingship over the earth. This beast is a *mimic* of the Dragon; like a son that reflects his father. As the father (Dragon) had seven heads and ten horns (12:3) so his son (Beast from the sea) has **ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns** (v. 1).

I.2.2.1. Seven/ten denote fullness. This son has the fullness of his father’s power: **And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority** (v. 2).

I.2.2.2. Horns/heads/diadems = power

I.2.3. Who is this beast? Old Testament “fourth beast” of Daniel 7.

I.2.3.1. Daniel foresaw four successive kingdoms persecuting the people of God: 1) Babylonians (symbolized like a lion with eagles’ wings), 2) Medes & Persians (symbolized like

a bear), 3) Greeks (symbolized like a leopard), 4) Romans (symbolized not like any mere animal but worse, having iron teeth and ten horns)

- 1.2.3.2. The **beast** of Rev. 13 is one beast with *all* these qualities: ***like a leopard...like a bear...like a lion*** (v. 2).
 - Early Christians: Roman Empire
 - Church history: every kingdom of the world that persecutes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.
- 1.2.3.3. The **beast** has authority for **forty-two months** (v. 5) = symbolic of church history until Christ returns
- 1.2.4. Who is this **beast**? This son of the Dragon is also a mimic of the Son of God.
 - 1.2.4.1. The lamb “as if slain” (5:6) v. **one of the beast’s heads that seemed to have a mortal wound** (v. 3)
 - ESV is a poor translation
 - Same Greek word and tense as 5:6: “as if slain” (v. 3).
 - 1.2.4.2. Jesus “came to life” (2:8) v. the Beast’s slain head **was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast** (v. 3); the other beast proclaimed that this head “came to life” (v. 14).
 - 1.2.4.3. The church worships Christ v. the whole earth **worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”** (v. 4)
- 1.2.5. If the Dragon = Satan then who is this **beast**? It’s the dragon using earthly authority & power that leads **every tribe and people and language and nation...all who dwell on earth...everyone whose name has not been written...in the book of life** for the purpose of **mak[ing] war on the saints and to conquer them** (vv. 7, 8).
- 1.2.6. Obj.: “But doesn’t the Holy Spirit say civil government is a servant of God in Romans 13?” Yes, but note that in just several decades since Paul’s statement and John’s vision, the Emperor and Empire that was benign towards Christianity had become a beast!

2. The Earth Beast (vv. 11–17)

2.1. Then I saw **another beast *rising out of the earth***. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon (v. 11)

2.1.1. What does it look like? **Like a** [harmless] **lamb**.

2.1.1.1. It looks like Christ, the lamb of God, with its two horns, but in reality, it's anti-Christ (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:4; 2 John 7).

2.1.2. What does it sound like? **Like a** [harmful] **dragon**.

2.1.2.1. While the sea beast used overt power; this earth beast uses covert persuasion. Later in Revelation, the earth beast is called the “false prophet” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

2.2. **It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed** (v. 12)

2.2.1. For our brothers & sisters hearing this in the 1st century, the sea beast was the Roman Emperor/Empire & the earth beast was the worship of Emperor/Empire.

2.2.2. What role does the earth beast have? It points the world to the sea beast.

2.2.2.1. Theological Point: If the Dragon is the father of the sea beast, what role does the earth beast play? He's like the Spirit. They're an **unholy Trinity**?

2.2.3. Note his works like the Spirit's in what follows: **It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people** (v. 13). This false prophet does the same signs that God's true prophet Elijah did. In other words, just as the priests of Pharaoh performed false signs mimicking Moses, so these do for the purpose of leading the world astray in idolatry: **and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived** (v. 14).

2.2.4. What of those who wouldn't bow their knees to Baal or Pharaoh? **And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain** (v. 15).

2.2.5. There's no freedom of religion with Satan & his two beasts: **Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name** (vv. 16–17).

2.2.5.1. This **mark** signifies ownership. This mark is on the **forehead** and **right hand**, signifying complete ownership of thoughts and deeds.

3. Conclusion: The Spirit's Call to Us (vv. 9–10, 18)

- 3.1.1. Let me conclude with the Spirit's call to us in the world while we await the world to come. We're called to hear his voice (v. 9).
- 3.1.2. We're called to **the endurance and faith of the saints** (v. 10).
- 3.1.3. We are called to be wise, understanding that all the things around us are the institutions of fallen man apart from God (v. 18). Put on your Scriptural night vision binoculars to see behind what you only see dimly!
- 3.1.4. While the world is under the sway of the unholy Trinity of Dragon, sea beast, and earth beast, we're called to be faithful to the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 3.1.5. Be aware of the Devil's power through politics. Be aware of the Devil's subtleties through ideology, philosophy, and theology on social media, on the media of talk radio, and through every other means.