

## **Sermon 42: Revelation 13:1-10: The First Beast**

### **OUTLINE**

Description of the beast

Action of the beast

### **INTRODUCTION**

If you played cricket for the national team one of the things that the coach would do is look at each of your opponents and show you their strengths and their weaknesses. One of the great difficulties is when there is a player who is unknown who is debuting. There have been many instances when a new fast or spin bowler has come in and taken several wickets. This is usually because the team were not prepared and did not know what to expect. Chinaman bowler Paul Adams for South Africa had this effect and was able to take many wickets. God is a good coach who shows us our opposition that we might know our enemies. We have been told in chapter 12 so far that the devil is waging war against the church, now God illuminates us as to how this looks. We are introduced to the two beasts, we turn our attention now to the first one.

#### **Description of the beast**

The scene unfolds something like a movie. You can imagine a beast slowly emerging out of the sea and the first thing to come into view is the horns, then its heads, 'And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.' We must remember the notion of counterfeiting in Revelation and that the first beast is meant to be a mockery of Christ. Just as the Father has the exact representation of Himself in the Son the dragon has created a false son. Therefore we see similarities between the dragon and the beast with regards to heads and horns. The only difference that the dragon has a crown for every head but the beast has a crown for every horn. We are meant to connect this beast with Daniel's beast because it also utters blasphemy/ great things v7, 11, 20; as well as wages war on the saints, v21.

Next we see its body rising up out of the water, v2, 'And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.' The beast here reminds us of all four of the beasts from Daniel 7. The beasts in Daniel represent kingdoms this beast is obviously meant to convey governmental power as well. We see that the kingdom which the devil promised to Jesus if He worshipped him was given to the beast. The effect of the beast is to cause the world to wonder v4, 'And they 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?"' Now John is talking about something that begins soon after the ascension and is coming to pass in his day. He is talking about the Roman Empire. But he is also talking about spiritual realities lie behind all ungodly powers and span the entire

church age. The devil has been behind all of these powers and Rome as well. They are his tool to persecute the godly seed, and now the mother of the Man-Child, the Church.

Now the word 'antichrist' does not appear in the book of Revelation, it only appears in John's writings, and Paul talks about the man of lawlessness. However, we would understand the beast to be the church age long expression of antichristian oppression that will finally culminate in an individual antichrist. John talks about many antichrists having already come in the first century, 1 John 2:18, '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. We see in v5 that the authority of the beast lasts for 42 months, a time period we see begins after the ascension 12:7, and ends with the beast overcoming the two witnesses followed by the Second Coming 11:7-19. We understand the beast of 11:7 to be the final expression of the antichrist. We understand the beast, this first beast to be the expression of the devil's use of governmental power to oppress God's people by rallying the nations and abusing authority to harass the church. This has had many expressions as Communism, Nazism, Fascism, Islam, etc., in John's day it was the Roman Empire.

We also see that the beast has a head which appears to have been resurrected v3, this is part of what caused the world to wonder. It is a counterfeit resurrection. Many associate the wounded head and its recovery to Nero. Read Johnson p192-193.

### **Action of the beast**

We have seen that the beast was originally the dominant world power of Rome, but its actions against the church are the actions that God is seeking to draw our attention to. We see in verse 5-7 that the beast utters haughty and blasphemous words, it was given authority over nations, and to wage war against the saints. Verse warns us that all those whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world, that they will be deceived and go after the beast. Domitian, the emperor at the time of John's writing was one of the Emperor who uttered blasphemy proclaiming himself to be god and saviour, and expecting official recognition as such. He ruled the Roman Empire that ruled the then known world, and he waged war against the church. Stalin who was an atheist, who conquered the surrounding countries, killed 20 million of his own people and tried to wipe out Christianity, would be a good modern day embodiment of the same beast in different dress. We await the time when the man of lawlessness will set himself up as God in the church and perform false miracles before the end comes.

Verse 8 is a very important verse, 'and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.' This verse is translated slightly different from older translations such as the KJV which reads, 'And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth.' Most modern translators think that 'from before the foundation of the earth' qualifies the writing in the lamb's book not the slaying of the lamb. If our translation is correct, then God is reminding us that those who are saved have an assurance that they have been set

apart by God, that their eternal destiny is not determined by the shifting sands of empires but by God's predetermined counsel.

The revealing of this beast comes with an admonition, v9-10, 'If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive,  
to captivity he goes;  
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,  
with the sword must he be slain.  
Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.'

With the introduction of the beast there is the warning of coming persecution and the call to endure it. No promise of being kept from the trouble just the call to endurance and faith. Faith is the key for the endurance. If we walk by faith, if we keep our eyes on our hope, if we trust in what God's word says not how things appear, then we can endure no matter what comes.