

# Revelation

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

*With Study Questions*

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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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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 13:2-4)?

## Introduction

As I sat in my study preparing yet another sermon on a portion of Revelation, I could help but muse upon the words of Voltaire (of whom I am not a fan). Though he predated Karl Marx by over a century, a statement Voltaire made was later assigned to Marx.

**Voltaire referred derisively to the breed of men who cannot run their own families and therefore retreat to their attics so that from there they can run the whole world. Marx seemed to fit this pattern.<sup>1</sup>**

I pray that neither I, nor any of us, fit such a pattern. The danger in studying a book like Revelation is that it is so very macrocosmic in its scope that our focus is entirely shifted to being world-changers, while we neglect to make our own beds. It is this type of vulnerability that is addressed by Paul as he addresses the qualification for elders.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Cleon Skousen, *The Naked Communist*. P. 14.

**...for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God (1 Timothy 3:5)?**

At the same time there is also a problem on other pole, especially in the current Reformed community. One of intentional extraction from being a culturally ameliorating force. As if there is no call in Scripture for Christians to make this world a better place. Such a venture is generally deemphasized. I have heard it routinely mocked.

The church, say these folks, is an institution where we rest our souls every Lord's Day and hear that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. To this, we must all give a hearty 'Amen!' Truly, the Gospel must be always front and center. As we've noted many times in our adventure through Revelation, apart from the blood of the Lamb it is a dead book, written for dead people in a dying world.

Yet Revelation (truly all of Scripture) does not merely contain the Gospel (and by the Gospel I am speaking of what God has done for us in the sending of His Son). It also contains the Law. There is very much a 'how should we then live' component to Scripture. Or to put it in biblical terms:

**I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).**

**Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).**

As an undergraduate I learned of the conflict between medical doctors and nutritionists. The nutritionists were critical of the medical field because all they did was treat illnesses once they arrived, rather than prevent them in the first place. Doctors were critical of the nutritionists because there was not enough granola in the world to get rid of that tumor.

Of course, they were both right. We should eat well, exercise regularly and see the doctor when we're sick. Revelation 13 is a chapter which instructs us how to interact within an intensely dark society. We will learn in this chapter that we should always approach that battle undergirded with the Gospel of grace. Yet these saints, through their perseverance, would not leave the world the same as they found it.

## Review

**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 (Revelation 13:1).**

Although “**the beast**” had been briefly alluded to in Revelation 11:7, we now enter a portion of Revelation where the beast becomes the predominant figure. In our last meeting we focused on verse one of chapter 13 where we learned a bit about this beast.

John saw the “**beast rising up out of the sea.**” From the standpoint of Asia Minor, which is where the Revelation was circulating, if you looked toward the sea, you would be looking toward Rome. For this, and many other reasons that will become apparent, it is reasonable to conclude that the beast is to be identified with the Roman Empire.

That it has “**seven heads**” means that it is hard to kill. That it has “**ten horns**” means that it is very powerful. That it has “**ten crowns**” on those horns (rather than on its head) means that it rules by power rather than wisdom. The crowns also indicate it is, what might be considered, a legitimate authority figure.

Finally, the “**blasphemous name**” on his heads reveals its intention of supplanting and utterly displacing the true God in terms of its rule. The Caesars, who would be the individual rulers of the beast, would not view themselves as public servants or ministers of God. Such a notion probably never crossed their minds. Conversely, the Caesars viewed themselves as worthy of divine worship.

Let us be cautioned, when we see people in positions of power, political or otherwise, assigning authority to themselves that rightly belongs to God alone, that they are moving themselves into a category of divinity. It is here where Revelation 13 helps us develop proper boundaries for Roman 13. Romans 13 speaks of how we should be deferential to human authority. Revelation 13 appears to say just the opposite. In this chapter there is a call to non-compliance that will cost many saints their lives.

In all of this, these saints should not enter into these trials (nor should we) thinking things are out of control, or that God has somehow abandoned His post. As Peter would write,

**Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you (1 Peter 4:12).**

The next words from the pen of John would have been awe-inspiring to his readers, as it should be to us as well.

**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 (Revelation 13:2).**

### Daniel's Prophecy

Why would such an ominous description of the enemy of all that is good, and intent on snuffing out the church, be awe-inspiring?

No doubt, it would have required those more skilled in the Old Testament (which John surely would have been) to help the novice, but John is referencing something written centuries before by Daniel. In reverse order of John, Daniel records his vision of these exact beasts: **"a lion...a bear...[and] a leopard"** (Daniel 7:4-7). Daniel has four beasts. John combines them as one aggregate beast.

We can easily grow discouraged when we observe the power, prosperity and influence of the wicked, especially when that includes the abuse and oppression of the vulnerable. When I witness how our young (and some older) people are swayed by current sexual<sup>2</sup>, economic, political and artistic trends, it can foster an indignation in my soul. But what John's readers needed to know, what we need to know is that it is God who **"removes kings and sets up kings"** (Daniel 2:21). Verse five will reveal the temporary nature of their trial.

We needn't spend a great deal of time excavating the symbolism of these beasts. Clearly, they describe swiftness, and power, and overwhelming intimidation. The **"dragon"** (the devil) is seeking to establish, by way of human potentate, that which rightly belongs to Christ and Christ alone- **"power, throne, authority."** With Christ, we call this a Great Commission, with the dragon it is the great insurrection or great infringement.

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<sup>2</sup> I recently overheard a mother trying to explain to her pre-teen daughter how a certain woman was born with a Y chromosome. Apparently, the daughter knew enough science to be confused. We seem to be working so hard to confuse our children.

But we must stop here for a moment to iron something out. For we have only spoken of three beasts, but in Daniel there is a fourth. And this fourth beast is presented as more powerful than all which precede it. Similar to what we read from John, it also has **“ten horns” (Daniel 7:7)**. The comparison should be obvious.

A recurring and predominant theme in Daniel is that of four kingdoms (Daniel 2 and 7) that precede the coming of Christ. It is almost universally agreed upon that these four kingdoms are Babylon, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks and Rome. It is during that fourth, and most powerful kingdom that the **“stone...cut without hands” (Daniel 2:34)** strikes the earthly kingdoms and becomes **“a great mountain and fills[ed] the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35)**.

It is also universally agreed that this **“stone”** is Christ. What is almost shocking is how an interpretation of this passage, in recent years, fails to recognize the obvious: Jesus is born during the Roman Empire and establishes His kingdom. A method of reading the Bible called Dispensationalism interprets the teaching of Daniel differently,

**At His return (Second Coming) He will subjugate all ... kingdoms to Himself, thus bringing them to an end (cf. Rev. 11:15; 19:11–20). Then He will rule forever in the Millennium and in the eternal state (Parenthesis mine).<sup>3</sup>**

Here is an example of a commitment to a system which forces the Bible to say things it simply doesn't say. There is nothing in Daniel 2, 7 or Revelation 13 which indicates any of these things are after the Second Coming.

So odd is this system of Bible interpretation, that instead of simply acknowledging the birth of Christ during the Roman Empire, a new and revived Roman Empire (often associated with the European Common Market) must somehow be created (since all of this is yet future). As Gary DeMar observes,

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<sup>3</sup> Pentecost, J. D. (1985). [Daniel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1336). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**According to Hal Lindsey, Dave Hunt, John F. Walvoord, and many others who write on prophecy, this “United States of Europe” constitutes a revived Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup>**

We can't hover here any longer, but appealing back to Daniel, this fourth beast is clearly Rome. We often lament that Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation. Yet (and I mention this since I am often accused of being novel in my approach to eschatology) we can pretty safely draw a conclusion on what Calvin, who is perhaps the most masterful exegete since the canon closed, thought.

As we have established, Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 are undeniably speaking of the same thing. Calvin's comment on the fourth beast in Daniel is,

**I have no doubt that in this vision the Prophet was shewn the figure of the Roman Empire.<sup>56</sup>**

I harp on this due to a general unhealthy disposition among Christians today that Christ has work yet to do; work He will complete at His Second Coming (let me restate that I do believe in a literal, physical Second Coming, which will be the day of judgment and the final resurrection). But...

...the stone has come and is currently becoming a mountain and filling the whole earth. And the record in Daniel of these dark and powerful kingdoms transitions to the ascension of Christ and the establishment of His own glorious kingdom. I have yet to understand how the following passage can be understood as the Second Coming (notice that the son of man is ascending, not descending):

**I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples,**

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<sup>4</sup> DeMar, Gary, *Last Days Madness*, p. 355.

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, J., & Myers, T. (2010). [Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel](#) (Vol. 2, p. 21). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>6</sup> ...all the earliest Christian writers on the apocalypse, from Irenaeus down to Victorinus of Pettau and Commodian in the fourth, and Andreas in the fifth, and St. Beatus in the eighth century, connect Nero, or some Roman emperor, with the Apocalyptic Beast. David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*. p. 351.

**nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13, 14).**

The King has come and has ascended to the right hand of the Father. His kingdom has been established. The millennial reign of Christ has begun! I think it not a stretch to conclude that when we read of **“all peoples, nations, and languages...serv[ing] him”** that this will produce good in this world!

Let us move on.

**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. <sup>4</sup>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 13:3, 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 do know those immutable "**words**" of Christ, contained in Scripture, we won't be able to distinguish between God and the devil.

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, thought 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. Are there dangers in thinking too globally or too domestically? Explain (pages 2, 3)?
2. What message should always be up front and center in the church? Is this the only message or is there more (page 3)?
3. 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 3, 4)?
4. Why would John's reference to Daniel's prophecy be encouraging to the churches in Asia Minor-or us, for that matter (page 5)?
5. Who are the four beasts in Daniel? Discuss the merits or weaknesses of the system called 'Dispensationalism' in their approach to these beasts (pages 6, 7).
6. 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 8, 9)?
7. What is a significant identifying feature of true faith (page 9)?

