

INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 13

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1 THE THEME

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUMENTS OF SATAN EMPLOYED IN HIS WAR AGAINST CHRISTIANS

2 THE STRUCTURE

Revelation chapter 12 views the whole New Testament period from the perspective of the struggle between Christ and Satan.

Revelation chapter 13 views the whole New Testament period from the perspective of the struggle between the Christians and Satan's antichristian allies: the antichristian governments and antichristian knowledge (sciences and religions).

3 THE CONTENTS

Revelation chapter 13 describes the conflict between Christians and Satan's allies, namely, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth. Satan makes war against Christ (12:1-10), the Church (12:13-16) and individual Christians (12:11-12,17) especially by employing the governments of the nations in the world (13:1-10) and the false religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences in the world (13:11-18) as his instruments. The life of Christians is made extremely difficult during the days of the final antichrist.

a. The beast out of the sea

Identification. The beast out of the sea represents Satan's *antichristian governments and its oppressions and persecutions*, especially in the great world empires with their kings that follow one another throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, symbolised by 42 months (13:5,7). His coming from 'the sea' indicates that such governments arise out of the nations of the world that rage and roar (cf. 17:15; Psalm 65:7; Isaiah 17:12).

The beast out of the sea is a composite of Daniel's beasts out of the sea, which refer to kingdoms or world empires and their governments (cf. Daniel 7:2-8,17,24; Isaiah 17:12). It represents, not any specific world empire, but all world empires taken together; described in terms of terrifying and destructive animals: like the leopard (Jeremiah 5:6, Habakkuk 1:8), the bear (Proverbs 17:12) and the lion (Isaiah 5:29; Hosea 5:14).

Its seven heads refer figuratively to more than actual historical kings. They represent the totality of the embodiments of the beast throughout history. Examples of such antichristian empires are the Old Babylonian Empire, the Egyptian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the New Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek-Seleucid Empire and the Roman Empire. The blasphemous names on the heads represent the God-dishonouring claims of these antichristian empires.

The head that had received a fatal wound and was healed (13:3,12,14) probably represents the 'mystery' that the beast always seems to rise again after it has been destroyed, up to its final embodiment in the final antichristian empire and the final antichrist (cf. 17:7-11).

The ten horns with diadems represent the mighty rulers of the world in all areas of life, with their arrogant claims to authority (cf. Psalm 2:1-3; Isaiah 14:3-20; Ezekiel 28:1-19; Daniel 7:24; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 17:12).

Influence. The beast out of the sea blasphemes God and his name, that is, his essential nature as it is revealed in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. He blasphemes God's tent, that is, God's people on earth. And he blasphemes God's people dwelling in heaven (13:6). He oppresses the inhabitants of the world and persecutes the Christians in the world (13:7). All non-Christians worship the beast, that is, adhere to him and are subject to him (13:8).

b. The beast out of the earth

The beast out of the earth has its origin in the earth and comes forth from nature and human events. Its origin is not from heaven. It looks like a harmless lamb as if it is associated with the Lamb (Christ), but speaks like a dragon (Satan). He is the propaganda minister of the beast out of the sea and poisons people with his slogans. He performs miracles only for sensational purposes and sweeps people up into ecstatic frenzy.

Identification. The beast out of the earth represents Satan's *antichristian knowledge and its misleading*, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. His coming from the earth indicates that he lacks heavenly nature and significance (Philippians 3:19) and that he is not spiritual, but devilish (James 3:14-15).

The beast out of the earth represents all people and institutions, which advocate antichristian religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences, which persecute Christians throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, symbolised by the forty-two months of the reign of the beast out of the sea (13:5). The number 2 indicates witnessing or advocating (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16; Luke 10:1).

Influence. The beast out of the earth looks harmless like the Lamb (Jesus Christ), but in reality is very dangerous and speaks like the dragon (Satan) (13:11; cf. John 8:44)! It also exercises all the authority of Satan given to the antichristian empires and their governments in order to persuade people to worship the beast, that is, to give their total allegiance, devotion and dedication to worldly politics and its leaders (13:4,12). He forces the inhabitants of the earth to make a statue of the beast out of the sea and worship it and he forces them to receive the mark of the beast out of the sea on their right hands or foreheads as the requirement to participate in the social, agricultural and commercial life in the world.

c. The mark of the beast

The number 666 of the beast symbolizes the absolute failure of all Satan's antichristian politics, religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences to attain the goals and perfections of God *throughout the New Testament period*. It does not represent a particular historical person, but all beasts throughout the whole New Testament period. The number 6 is not the number 7 and never reaches the number 7. It forever fails to attain to perfection. It symbolises missing the mark and failure. It symbolises the absolute highest development of man and creation without attaining to the perfection of God or fellowship with God. It refers to the arrogantly claimed perfections of all the beasts (governments and their leaders), which always falls short of the genuine perfections of God. The beast out of the sea and all those who follow him will continually experience failure upon failure upon failure. Whoever glories in man instead of in God, will certainly fail (Psalm 108:12-13; 146:3; Isaiah 2:22; 30:1-5; Jeremiah 17:5-8)! While the beasts throughout history have always tried to be like God, they have always failed miserably! Compare the kings and kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon in the book of Isaiah and the kings and kingdoms in the book of Daniel.

d. The message of Revelation chapter 13

The message of Revelation chapter 13 is that God has delegated authority to the governments of the world (cf. Daniel 2:21; 4:25; 5:21; Romans 13:1-7). Yet the governments of the world often allow themselves to be used as instruments of Satan against Christ and his people. The governments in this world employ every kind of antichristian knowledge and misleading, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world, to enforce their dominion over people and to control people. Nevertheless, they will continually experience failure upon failure upon failure!

4 THE BACKGROUND

a. The beast in Daniel chapter 7

See supplement 7, the introduction to the book of Daniel.

b. The antichrist in the New Testament

There are many antichrists and there will be a final antichrist.

Throughout the whole New Testament period there will be many antichrists (1 John 2:18; 4:3). But there will also be the final antichrist just before Christ's second coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10).

Something and someone is holding the last antichrist back.

The final antichrist will be the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3). But before he comes there is 'something and 'someone' that holds him back, probably 'law and order' and 'the people who enforce law and order'. This is probably a reference to the governments that to more or lesser extent execute their God-given responsibility to rule righteously (Romans 13:1-7). When these have been removed out of the way, the man of lawlessness will appear (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8a).

The last antichrist will exalt himself above God.

This final antichrist will exalt himself above everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

'The temple' in the New Testament is the New Testament Church (John 2:19-22; cf. Ephesians 1:22b-23a; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:22). The final antichrist's coming will be in accordance with the work of Satan, displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

c. The beast in Revelation chapter 11,13 and 17

The beast in Revelation 11:7.

He represents the final antichristian government and the final antichrist (11:7; cf. 17:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The meaning of this picture is that just before Christ's second coming, the final antichrist will appear and all people that have rejected Christ will be handed over to him (cf. 20:7-9a).

The beast in Revelation 13:1-8.

He represents every one of Satan's *antichristian governments and its persecutions* that follow one another throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The words in Revelation 13:7 are the same as in Revelation 11:7 and thus is a reference to the final beast or antichrist just before Christ's second coming.

The beast in Revelation 17:7-11.

His seven heads represent seven kings or kingdoms (cf. Daniel 7:17) and thus all the empires of the world taken together. In one way or another, these empires have ruled in the past, rule in the present and will rule in the future over God's people. They oppress God's people, exile them, seek to destroy them and actually destroy them. They are "drunk with the blood of the saints" (cf. 17:6). They are world empires that oppose God and his people. In John's time already five of those empires have passed away and the sixth empire (the Roman Empire) was in power. The seventh empire is probably a collective title for all the antichristian governments between the fall of Rome and the final empire of the final antichrist just before Christ's second

coming, because the entire period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming is "but a little while" (17:10; cf. 42 months or 1260 days, 11:2-3; 12:6,14; 13:5). The eighth empire is a reference to the final manifestation of the beast, the final antichristian empire under the final antichrist towards the close of history.

Conclusion.

Satan's *antichristian governments and their persecutions* follow one another throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. Again and again this beast appears in a new embodiment. The forms change, but the essence remains the same throughout the whole New Testament period.