

Revelation 13 – The Phantom Menace

A common theme throughout the New Testament is that in the last days evil will rear its ugly head with an escalation and embodiment of evil in one referred to as “the antichrist” (1 Jn. 2¹⁸), or “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2³). Here in Revelation 13 he is simply called “the beast”, probably because he speaks and behaves more beastly than humanly. The two beasts (one from “the sea” and “the land”) are like incarnations of the evil one in that they derive their power from him and adopts his ways. Yet evil is surprisingly deceptive. Without God’s wisdom to see it, and God’s power to resist it, people are liable to be intimidated & taken in by it.

Warm Up Question(s) – Choose one

- What is the most fearsome animal you have ever see or encountered? What made it intimidating?
- As a child, what costume best hid your identity?

Discovering the Word

- 1) **Read Revelation 13:1-10.** What is the beast from the sea like (v.2)? How does it compare or contrast to what Daniel saw (Dan. 7²⁻⁷)?
- 2) What is the source and extent of the beast’s power? How does he use his power?
- 3) Who would have been identified as the blasphemous beast by the first-century Christians?
- 4) How is the beast able to get people to follow him (v. 3), and worship the dragon (v.4)? Who is taken in by him and why?
- 5) Who is not taken in by the beast? Why?
- 6) How does Paul’s counsel regarding a Christian’s relationship to “the governing authorities” in Romans 13¹⁻⁵ compare or contrast to John’s counsel here & why? How are we to know when to “submit” and when to resist the state’s authority?
- 7) **Read Revelation 13:11-18.** How does this beast compare and contrast to the previous one (e.g. source, appearance, influence, power, authority, impact)? How does this beast gain such a large following?
- 8) If the first beast exercises political power, what authority does the second beast exercise? How are government and religion and economics connected (and mimicked) by these two beasts?
- 9) Since “seven” is the number of completeness in Revelation, what might “666” mean?¹
- 10) How can we discern false religions and governments today? What forms of faithfulness, patient endurance and resistance are needed?

¹ Many “solutions” have been put forward, but the best solution may be not the attempts at a literal calculation (using gematria) but a symbolic representation, a number which persistently falls short of God and his ways.