

A Description of Two End-Time World Leaders Who Oppose God

Revelation 13:1-10

Revelation 13:1-10 - *"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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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?"*

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Background Notes

In Revelation 12 we saw that during the future Tribulation period, Satan and his fallen angels (who have access to heavenly realms now) will be defeated by Michael and the holy angels, and will be cast out of heavenly realms down to this earth. After he is cast down to earth, the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, will be the special focus of Satan's wrath. However, God will preserve and protect Israel from Satan's attempts to destroy her during the Great Tribulation. Satan will try to sweep Israel away with a flood, but God will remove the threat of the flood with an earthquake (Revelation 12:15-16). In his rage, Satan will turn his special attention toward the godly remnant of Jewish believers (Revelation 12:17).

In Revelation 13, Satan's primary strategy to thwart God's purpose and threaten God's people during the Great Tribulation will be to use two notorious end time leaders. These leaders are symbolized as two "beasts." The first beast will come "out of the sea," which probably represents the "sea of Gentile nations" (as the term "sea" so often does in Scripture).

The second beast comes out of the earth or land, and this may represent the Land of Israel. If so, this second beast will possibly be Jewish. This second beast is also known as the "false prophet," as we will see in Revelation 16, 19 and 20. Revelation 13 tells us that Satan will use these two notorious world leaders to oppose God for 42 months. These 42 months are the 3 ½ years, or 1260, days of the Great Tribulation. The time period of the Great Tribulation will begin when Satan and his fallen angels are cast down to earth from heavenly realms, and Satan realizes that he now only has a short

time (Revelation 12). Now let's look a little more closely at the description of the first beast that comes out in the sea in Revelation 13.

Doctrinal Points

1. The beast out of the sea represents the “revived Roman Empire.”

John's description of “the beast out of the sea” certainly reminds us of the four beasts that the prophet Daniel saw in his visions in Daniel 7, doesn't it? Listen to this description of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7 - *“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.”* We believe that the ten horns of Daniel's fourth beast correspond to the ten horns of the first beast in Revelation 13. They represent ten kings and their kingdoms, according to Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 represented four world empires of history – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. As we read on in Daniel 7, we see that the time period of the ten horns on the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) will be at the time of the end, because it is the future return of the Son of Man to set up His glorious kingdom that puts an end to this final stage of the Roman Empire. We believe this first beast of Revelation 13 that will come out of the restless sea of Gentile nations is the end-time final stage of the Roman Empire.

This final stage of the Roman Empire can be called the “revived Roman Empire.” It will initially consist of ten kingdoms with their leaders. The Bible doesn't reveal exactly which nations will comprise the ten kingdoms, and whether or not the present-day European Union will fit into the picture, or whether or not the United States will be one of the kingdoms, but it will be obvious then when this future time period arrives.

In Revelation 17, we have a further description of this beast from the sea, and this further description emphasizes that it will be a revival of the Roman Empire. Revelation 17:8 - *“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”*

Notice that the beast “was,” but “is not,” and yet “is.” The Roman beast that will come in the future is a **revival** of the Roman Empire. Revelation 17:9 says, *“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.”* Rome, as you know, is built on seven hills or mountains. Revelation 17:12 tells us that *“the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.”* We believe that all this is yet in the future. So, the beast out of the sea represents a revival of the Roman Empire.

Revelation 13:4 says that the beast will receive authority from Satan, the dragon, and verse 7 says that the beast will be allowed to make war with the saints -- and to overcome them. Verse 7 also indicates that the revived Roman Empire of the future will have supreme authority over every tribe, tongue and nation. The beast out of the sea represents the revived Roman Empire.

2. The beast out of the sea represents the End Time “666” leader.

The second half of Revelation 13 refers to the second beast coming up out of the earth, but the beast mentioned in the last verse refers back to the first beast out of the sea. Revelation 13:18 - *“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”* Now does the well-known number “666” refer to an individual or to the revived Roman Empire? We could answer “Both,” because a godless, satanically inspired individual will head up the godless Roman Empire in its final stages, but generally the number “666” is used in reference to the evil world leader.

In Daniel 7, in reference to the fourth beast of Rome with ten horns, Daniel saw another horn coming up among the ten horns. Daniel 7:8 - *“I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”* This little horn represents a notorious end time individual who will take over the leadership of the revived Roman Empire. We see from this verse that he will subdue three of the ten kings, and he will become the supreme authority. Revelation 17:12-13 tells us that all of these end time leaders of the revived Roman Empire will receive authority for one hour, ruling along with the beast. These leaders will be of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

In Revelation 13:3 we learn that the Roman beast will suffer some kind of fatal wound, but will be healed: *“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.”* Is this verse a general statement about the amazing revival of the ancient Roman Empire, or does it specifically refer to the notorious end-time leader of the revived Roman Empire? Verse 14 seems to indicate that it refers to the end-time leader, and that this mortal wound is more than just a political fall and recovery: *“the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.”* The sword implies a literal fatal wound that is healed. No wonder the whole earth will be amazed, and will follow the beast! In fact, verse 8 tells us that the whole world will worship the beast -- that is, everyone except the believers whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Verses 9-10 are a great encouragement for the believers at that time, and for us as well. God blesses and commends believers who persevere in the faith -- then and now. And those who persecute believers will not get away with it -- then or now! The beast out of the sea represents the end time 666 leader.

Practical Application

Don't try to figure out the number "666."

"666" is the number of the end time Roman beast out of the sea, and this number specifically describes its end time godless leader. Now exactly what does the number "666" mean? Who is this person, this godless leader? Is he alive today? Answer: We don't know -- so don't try to figure out the number "666"!

When I was in seminary, I did a research paper of the meaning of the number "666," and I was amazed to find out how many different views on this number have been suggested – everything from a literal meaning to a symbolic meaning to a cryptic numerical code! Using a variety of interpretational methods, just about any and every evil leader down through Church history has been labeled as "The Beast" -- from Nero to Stalin to Hitler, and even certain modern-day leaders!

One thing we can certainly say: the believers living during the future Tribulation period will know for sure who this evil leader is. But we can't be sure at the present time, so don't try to figure out the number "666."