

Revelation 13:1–8

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

From Person to Person — The Contrast with Chapter 12

Chapter 12 introduced some of the most wonderful persons in the book of Revelation: the man-child caught up to God and to His throne; the woman preserved in the wilderness with a place prepared of God; Michael and his angels. Chapter 13 introduces two persons who are both called beasts — and that designation tells us everything we need to know about their character. The story is not over in either chapter: chapter 12 ends with the dragon going to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed, without saying who wins. Chapter 13 does not resolve that either. But what it does is give us the instruments through which the dragon works in the last half of the week.

A Beast from the Sea — The Roman Prince

The beast rising from the sea is the head of the revived Roman Empire. The sea in Scripture's symbolic language speaks of the Gentile nations in commotion — political upheaval that brings new powers to the fore. Daniel 9 identifies this person as a prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem. Since it was the Romans who did that in AD 70, he is a Roman prince — the coming head of a revived Roman power.

His description — seven heads, ten horns, ten crowns on his horns — closely parallels the great red dragon of chapter 12, though the dragon had its crowns on its heads while this beast has them on its horns. The crowns on the horns indicate that the ten kings have actually been crowned at this point, and their power is in operation, not merely anticipatory as in the earlier stage. The beast appears in the character in which it will actually function in those last days.

The three animals in verse 2 — leopard, bear, lion — are not chosen at random. They correspond to the first three empires in Daniel 7: the first beast like a lion (Babylonian), the second like a bear (Medo-Persian), the third like a leopard (Greek). This last beast combines the character of all three predecessors. When the Lord comes to smash the image on its feet, He is dealing in principle with the entire tradition of Gentile governmental power that exalted man and displaced God — the Babylonian spirit, the Persian spirit, the Greek spirit, all present in their final form. It is all crushed together and blown away like chaff.

The Dragon Gave Him His Power — What the Beast Refused the Lord Accepted

Verse 2 ends with the most significant statement: *the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority*. When Satan came to the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if He would fall down and worship. The Lord refused. Everything the enemy offered

was spurned. The Lord will receive all things from the Father's hand, at the Father's time, as man — not from the enemy's hand by a shortcut that bypassed the cross.

The beast will not refuse. He accepts the power and throne and authority that Satan offers. And this shows the deep error in the principle that the end justifies the means — that a man with a good programme may acceptably receive power from any source, however evil, in order to carry it out. The early Christians, going out with the gospel, took nothing from the Gentiles. They could have done what appeared to be a greater work if only they had been willing to receive support from those whose God is the god of this world. They refused. The beast does not refuse. And that refusal or acceptance is the great dividing line.

The Heads, the Crowns, and the Name of Blasphemy

On the heads of the beast are names of blasphemy. The emperors of Rome took divine titles to themselves — they were worshipped as gods. To claim divine honours for a man is to take a name of blasphemy. This pattern of blasphemy marks the head of the revived empire from the first. And when the deadly wound is healed and the beast takes up his power directly from Satan, the blasphemy becomes open and total: his mouth speaks great things against God, against God's name, against His tabernacle, and against those who dwell in heaven — the saints who have been caught up. He knows they are there. One does not blaspheme what one does not believe in.

The Mortal Wound Healed — The Seventh and the Eighth

One of the heads receives a wound as of death, and the wound is healed. The whole earth wonders after the beast. This is not a medical marvel — it is the direct energising of the beast by Satan who has just been cast down from heaven. A collapse of the western power, symbolised by the convulsions of the sixth seal,

is followed by such a dramatic resurgence under satanic power that it appears like a dead man revived. The world wonders.

Revelation 17:11 speaks of the beast as being *of the seven* and yet an eighth. Seven is the fullness of the power committed to man in government; eight is the number of a new beginning, a resurrection. This beast is at once the culmination of the whole line of Gentile world power and something new — something that has never existed before, because no previous world ruler received his power and throne directly from Satan. That makes it genuinely new. It is why the whole earth wonders.

Satan Worship — What the World Is Coming To

Verse 4 states plainly that the worship of the dragon takes place openly. The worship of Satan, which has always been the hidden reality behind self-worship and godless ambition, comes into the open at this point. The fool has said in his heart there is no God — but that is not an intellectual position, it is a position of the will. The will refuses God, the heart refuses God, and then the intellect is employed to justify what the will has already decided. When that refusal is carried to its end, it arrives here: worship of the dragon, worship of the beast, the self that refused God finding an object of worship outside itself that is nonetheless the enemy of God. This is where the world is going. And the worship of the beast is accompanied by the claim that he is unique — *who is like the beast? who can make war with him?* Man's version of the divine: omnipotent, incomparable.

— Study ends —