

Enter the Beast

Text: Revelation 13.1–10

Theme: All who follow Christ will suffer at the hands of Satan and this world's order

Introduction — legend or rumor circulated shortly after Nero committed suicide

- many said he was not dead, but that he'd fled to Parthia, far to east, in Persia
- then, one day, he would lead the Parthian host against Rome
- to lend a measure of credence to this legend, three imposters arose
- claimed to be Nero and tried to take power, in AD 69, one year after death
- then again in AD 80 and also in AD 89

Nero was a horrible, horrible person

- he killed his own mother
- killed the Apostle Paul
- then, when Rome was burning, he blamed Christians, which started a time of persecution
- Nero was referred to as a beast of a man
- so you have the reality of Nero, then the legend he died, would return, and rule the world
- throw on top of all this that Nero was worshiped as a god

It would be easy to see how churches of John's day could identify beast of Rev 13 w/ a man

- 2 Thessalonians 2.8 says that a *"lawless one will be revealed"*
- Jesus warned, in Mark 13, that *"false christs and false prophets [would] arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect"*
- Jesus said these things some 60 years prior to John's Revelation
- and we need to be ready to hear what Jesus & John are saying to us
- "...be on guard, for I have told you all things before hand."
- Satan, the red dragon of Rev 12, is powerful
- he is a deceiver, an accuser of the brothers in Christ
- our great need today is to be able to know the real Jesus from all the artificial ones out there
- Satan wants to put forward all the counterfeits he can to lead many astray

What we also see, in this Rev 13, is this:

- if you follow Christ Jesus, if you stand for His name, if you have His seal upon you...
- then you will suffer
- 2 Timothy 3.12 says, *"All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"*
- are you ready? Are you in Christ Jesus? Do you desire to obey Him only?
- then know that Satan and all that he has will come after you...and us as a church
- the more we preach the truth of the gospel, the more he will hate us
- Rev 13 is to serve as a warning to keep from being deceived
- Rev 13 is also to help the Christian to stand strong against the devil & his fakes
- do this, and you will be saved

Just to recap, for those who are new to us today

- going through last book of Bible: Revelation of Jesus Christ
- ch 1: see resurrected and glorified Christ
- ch 2 & 3: hear Christ speak to His churches, saying "Overcome"
- ch 4 & 5: tell us how to overcome—look to God and His Christ, the Lamb slain for you
- ch 6 has the Lamb of God opening scroll of God's history since Christ's ascension
- ch 7 revealed how God's people are kept safe from His wrath of judgment in scrolls

- ch 8 gives a brief interlude and then seven trumpets of judgment sound forth
- ch 9 continues trumpets, which actually run parallel to seals of scroll
- ch 10 & 11 reveal how the church will suffer, but still give strong witness to Jesus Christ
- end of ch 11, vv. 15–19, are the central pivot point of entire book: Christ comes, God rules
- flowing from that, similar thing as ch 11 made known in ch 12
- by His death, resurrection, and ascension Christ defeats the dragon—satan
- he no longer has a leg to stand on, but he knows his time is short
- so, he makes war on the woman and her seed: the church and all Christians

Ch 13 show what is going to happen in a terrible & vicious manner

- church will be persecuted as to nearly be wiped out
- reminded again of Jesus' words in Mark 13: *"for in those days there will be such tribulation, as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created, until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days"*
- as we walk thru first half of ch 13, need to see the warning to us
- but must also see the victory Christ has won for us in order to stand firm

So, let's consider what John sees and says about this beast

I. WHO IS THIS BEAST? VV. 1–4

- v. 1: *"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea"*
- back to the Old Testament we go to understand what John is seeing here

1. Daniel vision

- Daniel 7.3: *"and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another"*
- first, remember that "sea" for Israelites was place of evil, death, and chaos
- so, it makes perfect sense that this beast of Satan would arise from sea
- the beast John is given to see parallels that of Daniel

2. what a monster

- *"ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads"*
- remember first sighting of dragon in 12.3: *"a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems"*
- the dragon is the one summing this beast: Satan calls forth his main agent of evil
- and consider how monstrously false all this is
- Satan is putting himself in place of God and this beast in place of Christ, as we'll see
- that's what all these blasphemous names are all about: mocking the One, true God

3. More Old Testament

- v. 2: *"the beast I saw was like a leopard: its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth"*
- Daniel, in ch 7, sees separate beasts which look like these; John sees them combined
- Daniel told, 7.17: *"these four great beasts are four kings, who shall rise out of the earth"*

4. Jump ahead just a bit

- in Rev 17. 10, 12: beast, seven heads and ten horns interpreted as kings
- so Daniel's beasts, and John's beast represent kings—powers, authorities, and governments
- Satan is pursuing the woman—the church—and her seed—Christians—thru evil governors
- makes perfect sense when we see that Satan gives authority to beast & it is worshiped as well

5. A perverse reflection

- in Rev 4, saw four living creatures around God's throne
- they reflect the beauty, power, majesty, and character of God
- best Satan can come up with are perverse & twisted parodies of God
- his beasts reflect his true nature: evil, hatred of God and His people
- this beast will be brutal, bloodthirsty, devouring Christians in its path
- Satan cannot create anything; he can only make copies
- this he does in beast & second beast we'll see next Lord's Day

6. Be warned

- know this: no earthly government is going to bring in the kingdom of God
- obviously, not all earthly governments are as bad as possible
- but if not submitting to God, lordship of Jesus Christ, and His Word, then against him
- only God's king will bring in God's Kingdom
- as 1 Samuel 2.10 prophecies: *"The Lord... will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."*

7. Cheap imitations continue

- look at v. 3: *"One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast."*
- Satan sets up a messianic pretender
- this is nothing short of a scam of all scams: cheap knock-off of cross & resurrection of Jesus
- now you know why, perhaps, 2nd century church thought of Nero, from legends
- at least God's Messiah's death & resurrection accomplished something: our salvation!
- Satan's poor replica does absolutely nothing but bring further condemnation

8. Sad results of all this

- *"And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worship the beast, saying, Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"*
- are you not reminded of the sinfulness of man given in Romans 1.23
- they *"exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."*
- rather than serve Christ, they serve Satan's fake Christ
- and they steal language right from Scripture to justify their blasphemy
- Exodus 15.11: *"Who is like, you, O Lord, among the gods?"*
- Satan has nothing new to come up with; he must beg, borrow and steal from God

9. Ya gotta serve somebody

- as Bob Dylan sang, back in 1979:
 - *it may be the devil or it may be the Lord*
 - *but you're gonna have to serve somebody*
- to whom do you bow the knee: King Jesus? Or Satan and his fake savior?
- Word of God is your only sure guide to know the real from the false

Now that we know who this beast is...

II. WHAT DOES HE DO? VV. 5-8

- let's be reminded of what we saw in ch 12 last Sunday
- saw dragon that hoped to devour male child of the woman
- this is the seed that will ultimately destroy him

- when Satan fails to kill the Messiah, Jesus, he pursues the woman
- the woman is the church, the people of God
- she is given wings of an eagle: God's deliverance to a place of safety
- where is that? The wilderness...not heaven, as we get out of here in a secret rapture
- but to the place where God will keep us, nourish us, and deliver us
- ch 13 tells us how, in his anger and fury, he prepares for war against the church
- he summons up this horrifying beast from the sea
- this is a brutal, dictatorial government, or all governments, as the case may be
- he fakes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- and now the whole world worships this beast, thinking he is invincible
- Satan now has the earth-dwellers right where he wants them:
- set to help carry out his war on God's people

1. God's sovereignty over agents of evil

- don't be misled: dragon is Satan, beast is his chief instrument
- but God is sovereign over them both, v. 5
- *"And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months"*
- be clear on the wording here: this beast *"was given"* and *"was allowed"*
- by whom? By God the Almighty Himself
- Satan cannot do anything unless God allows it; remember book of Job: Satan is on a leash
- only God is the creator; Satan can only, at best, copy what God has made
- the haughty & blasphemous words could be the beast's claims to be God
- by laying claim to that which is only God's—His deliverer—he mocks God
- and the timing of all this—forty-two months—is set by God, not by the devil
- he knows his times is set by God and it is short, so he sets right out to destroy

2. Blaspheming God's dwelling

- v. 6: *"It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven."*
- yes, the beast seeks to attack God & Christ directly, as foolish as that is
- but he also attacks the people of God—you and me
- we have already seen several times that God dwells with His people
- we are His temple, being built into a holy temple for the praise of God & Jesus
- Satan seeks to tear us down, calling us all sorts of despicable things and names
- but remember: he is a liar, a deceiver and has no ground any longer to accuse you
- you are in Christ and Christ is in you! Stand firm

3. Real Christians

- this is what it means to be a true Christian: you are "in Christ"
- you are reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ
- the salvation God worked for you through the death & resurrection of Jesus is now yours
- to be a true Christian is to believe that Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God
- there are no other ways to be made right with God
- if there were other ways, other religions, then Jesus either didn't have to die or died in vain
- and this is what that old devil wants you to believe today
- he wants us as a church, to soften our gospel approach
- he wants us to be inclusive of everybody and every deviant thing they believe & live out
- he wants us to talk only about love, love, love, but not holiness and godliness and obedience

- we want to be a true church full of true Christians
- so it is the gospel we will preach.

4. From words to wounds

- v. 7: *“Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them”*
- this war is on the saints; the beast is out to conquer them—us
- back in 11.7, Satan’s war kills the two witnesses—the church
- this happens when the witnesses have *“finished their testimony”*
- could this be when the gospel has gone finally to all nations, Mark 13.10?
- if so, then the beast now attacks the church furiously all over the world
- this will indeed be a tribulation not seen before

5. Worldwide acclaim

- end of v. 7: *“And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation.”*
- again, note: this authority is given, not possessed by beast itself
- but this horrible reign of evil is to be contrasted with the glory of the millennium
- it may seem as if Satan and his beast reign now, but Christ will reign forever and ever
- over every tribe and people and language and nation—universal worship comes to beast
- deceived, blinded, given over to their own sinful depravity, world serves the beast
- all who dwell on earth—language to describe the unbeliever, ones who reject Christ
- this could not be more clear: *“whose name has NOT been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain”*
- God’s own children only worship Him in Spirit and in truth
- the unbelieving world, perhaps unwittingly, worships Satan

Given all this in seemingly horrific detail...

III. WHAT ARE WE TO DO? VV. 9–10

- John is told straight up:
 - *“If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.”*
 - there is no avoiding what God has predestined to happen to you
 - if God has determined that you are taken captive, imprisoned, it will happen
 - and you will then have opportunity to demonstrate that God means more to you than freedom
 - and if He has predestined you to die the death of a martyr for His name’s sake
 - then you will prove what we saw last week in ch 12.11
 - *“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death”*
 - this is why this is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints
- Satan is warring, even now, against the church of Jesus Christ—you and me
- he will imitate God in blasphemous ways
- and he will seek to put to death any who are not convinced by his deceit
- this revelation given before it happens is the call to you & me to endure, persevere and believe
- as the evil in this world gets worse
- as the darkness surrounds and and seeks to swallow us up
- will you still believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only deliverer?

Conclusion – You gotta serve somebody

- it may be the devil and that means you've been deceived, bought the lie, followed the world
- if you love this world, 1 John tells us that you cannot be a friend of God
- I sincerely hope this is none of you here today
- if it is, repent of all the ways you think, speak, and act that flow out of your selfish and beastly heart
- turn from following the world, your flesh and the devil
- look only to Jesus Christ, God's Savior

If you are in Christ, then you need to pray

- pray that you recognize the beasts and schemes of the evil one
- immerse yourself in this book, the Bible, so you will know & be able to test the spirits
- and then trust the Lamb
- recognize Him as Lord over all
- only the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—can meet your every need
- only God can keep you and help you stand