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The Two Beasts

By Bryan Hodge

Revelation 12 closed with the dragon (Satan) making war against the woman (faithful Israel) and the rest of her offspring (Christians including the Gentiles). Revelation 13 introduces two agents of the dragon in this war. Two beasts (agents of the dragon) make things difficult for Christians. Let's identify them.

The Beast from the Sea (Revelation 13:1-10)

This beast is described as being like a leopard, with feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion (Rev. 13:2). This imagery is from Daniel 7. It is the language of nations. Let's notice:

Daniel 2:31-44	Daniel 7	Revelation 13
<u>Image</u>	<u>Four beasts</u>	<u>Beast</u>
1. Head –gold (Babylon)	Lion	Lion
2. Chest/Arms-silver (Persia)	Bear	Bear
3. Belly/Thigh-Bronze (Greece)	Leopard	Leopard
4. Legs/Feet-Iron/Clay (Rome)	Iron beast with 10 horns	Sea beast with 10 horns

I believe that Rome is primarily in view. Notice: (1) The beast has seven heads (13:1). The Seven heads represent seven mountains (17:9). Rome was built on seven hills: Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, Quirinal, and Capitoline. (2) The beast is pictured rising up out of the sea (13:1). John Kackelman remarks, "In John's day the Romans had access to Asia Minor only by sea" (Studies in Revelation, p. 74).

The beast appeared to receive a deadly wound, but it was healed (Rev. 13:3). Wayne Jackson comments, "It is a matter of historical record that the pagan Roman empire, in the mid-fifth century A.D., was invaded by a number of Barbarian tribes from the north... it is believed by many that Rome's death-stroke was 'healed' by the growing amalgamation between the empire and the corrupt church of that day" (Revelation, p. 78). James Coffman writes, "that death stroke was healed. It did not mean the end of the Roman persecution of God's people" (Commentary on Revelation, p. 296).

The Beast of The Earth (Revelation 13:11-18)

This beast had the appearance of a lamb, but spoke like a dragon (13:11). Observe this: while Revelation 12 – 13 mentions the dragon, the sea beast, and the earth beast – later, this book speaks of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13 cf. 19:20; 20:10). The reference is to false or corrupt religion.

Some believe that this refers to “Emperor Worship”. (1) The beast came from the earth. Emperor worship sprang from Asia Minor soil. Smyrna built temples to Tiberius and Hadrian. Pergamum built temples to Augustus, Trajan, Severus. One source writes, “How prevalent was the imperial cult in Asia Minor? Of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2 -3, five had imperial priests and altars (all but Philadelphia and Laodicea) and six had imperial temples (all but Thyatira)” (readingacts.wordpress.com/the-roman-cult-of-emperor-worship). (2) This beast caused the earth to worship the first beast (13:12).

Others think this second beast refers to the Roman church (1) James Coffman comments, “When the mortal wound occurred (476 A.D.) the emperor cult had already been out of business for generations, their temples closed their sacrifices severely prohibited, their whole pagan religion outlawed and proscribed by the Roman senate under the leadership of Theodosius... Neither... emperor cult, nor... pagan priesthood... could have been instrumental in the healing of the mortal wound, nor the reincarnation of the beast” (p. 313-314). He understood this beast to be the overgrown Roman church. (2) One may also connect “great signs” (13:13) with “all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:1-12).

Don't miss the great point. Persecution would come from two powerful sources: Government, and false religion.