



The Beast from the Sea

Rev 13:1-2 NIV) And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. (2) The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.



Sometimes these things do get confusing -- here's a hint on how to tell the players without a scorecard.

This is one reason why some scholars feel the seven crowns on the dragon are related to his perfection as a cherubim.



This section begins an important “parting of the ways” between the various theories, for it begins to involve the Roman Catholic Church. We need to carefully draw our symbols:

The Sea: clearly “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages”

(Rev 17:15 NIV) Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.

We miss a point here if we hold this beast to one location; in some sense, it is from all people.

The Ten Horns: By Daniel 7:24, we know that horns are kings. Since there are ten of them, we may identify them with the ten toes of Daniel's statue. This corresponds nicely to the identification which is made in Revelation 17 -- the beast is Rome. Rome was divided into two parts (Eastern empire, centered at Constantinople; Western, at Rome) and then later into ten kingdoms (a fact which escapes futurists, who often claim that this never happened). Futurists hold that these ten horns are yet to be fulfilled. Revelation 17 tells us these ten are “yet to receive power” (at least, from John's point of view).

In the 1970's, Lindsey and Smith both saw these ten horns as the Common Market (which had nine nations at the time, but one more -- Greece -- was expected to join). It now has more than ten, but this identification persists.

The **ten crowns** are symbols (as usual) of kings or kingdoms.

The Seven Heads: (recall that these are parallel to the seven heads on the dragon) are told to us in Revelation 17 as being seven kings. Recalling the first half of Daniel 8, we know that this could be individual kings, or it could be monarchies (remember all those passages with “King of the South” and “King of the North”?) This has been variously interpreted:

- Preterists, and some historicists, hold these to be a particular set of seven Roman emperors.
- Most historicists hold these to be the seven forms of government of Rome (kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, emperors and finally the Dukes of Ravenna, etc....) This matches well with Revelation 17:10, in which five (the first five) were, one now is, and another is to come.
- Some also hold (for reasons beyond me) that these are seven great nations of antiquity: Rome, Greece, Medo-Persia, Chaldea, Egypt and Assyria. This view, for the futurist, makes for a very nice Middle East war.

Revelation 17 also tells us that these seven heads are seven hills. This is a clear sign; all of antiquity would have recognized the city on seven hills: ROME. But which Rome? (or perhaps, Rome when?)

- Pagan Rome (preterist, and some poetic)
- Papal Rome (historicist)
- Revived Rome (futurist)

The Blasphemous Name likewise has three meanings:

- Pagan emperors, “Caesar is Lord”
- The Pope, who (for example) claimed exclusive right to forgive sin.
- The Antichrist to come.

The Order of the Beasts is interesting. Daniel, looking forward, saw the lion (Babylonia), bear (Medo-Persia), leopard (Greece) and the indescribable “beast” -- Rome. John, looking backward, sees the beast, carrying with it the characteristics of the others -- in exactly the reverse order. Poetically, it implies that Rome has all the fierceness of its predecessors.



How does a Christian, then, recognize the Beast? Elementary, my dear Watson (which, by the way, Holmes never said).

The Fatal Wound is the first clue. The wound is to one of the “heads” -- obviously, to a king or kingdom. Those who hold this Beast to be an individual man (largely futurists, some poetic) feel that this would be either an assassination attempt followed by a miraculous recovery or a fake resurrection. (Poetic types seem enamored of the *Nero redivivus* idea, that “another Nero” will show up. This seems a little strained).

The historicists, and some futurists (Talbot, McGee), taking the Beast as kingdom, not king, see a revived Roman Empire. Again, timing is everything. The pagan Roman Empire died. The historicist says it came back -- as the papacy. The futurist, as a future Roman empire.

Beast worship is next. Again, the papacy or a future empire would fit. But note well: Satan *wants* to be worshipped -- he wants to “be like God.” Even if that worship is not (immediately) to his name.

Blasphemy and slander come next. For the historicist, this is a touching point. Kindly remember that the claim is made that this beast is the papacy, particularly from 533 AD to 1793 AD. -- the time of the Pope’s temporal reign. In that time, the Pope claimed to control forgiveness of sin (blasphemy); placed Mary as nearly part of the Godhead (slandering his name); claimed to structure heaven with layers of angels, etc... (slandering his dwelling place) and determining who was -- and who was not -- a saint (slandering those who dwell there).

The 42 months are, as before, literal for the historicist. These would be the second half of the Tribulation, or the Great Tribulation. (Note that the 42 month period is pretty consistent in that). The historicist would see this as 1260 years, usually cited as above. Note one thing: if this view is correct, then the idea that the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are the seven ages of the church also shows up here. 533 AD is the reign of Justinian. It would be the church of Pergamum -- “where Satan’s throne is” (i.e., Rome).

In that time, the Beast makes war on the saints. For the historicist, this includes such things as the Inquisition. One author estimated that during this period the Catholic church executed over 50 million people for heresy. By such means was their control maintained. The authority over every tribe? Why does Brazil speak Portuguese? Because the Pope gave that land to Portugal by decree. For those 1260 years, the Pope was the predominant *political* figure in Western Europe.

To the futurist, this may serve as warning: this figure will exercise great political power.

Lessons: It should be clear that the identity of the beast is not certain to all, though each theory has its points. What must be learned is this: to each of us may come the choice of “worship” or suffering. We don’t think much of worship today; how often have we heard from the pulpit “it’s just a ritual.” It matters; it matters very much -- for the ritual on the outside may reflect the truth or falseness on the inside. And that very much matters to the Lamb’s book of life.

The warning here comes as a composite of two sources: Jeremiah 15:2 (where Jeremiah is warned of suffering to come) and Matthew 26:52 (where all who live by the sword, die by the sword). The weapon of the Christian is still patient endurance in the face of suffering.

The Beast from the earth

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. (12) He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. (13) And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in his view of men. (14) Because of these signs he was given power to do so on behalf of the first beast. He deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. (15) He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.



“From the earth” is a dividing point. The futurists insist that this can mean nothing other than Palestine. They insist that “earth”, when used symbolically, always means Palestine. Unfortunately, that view does not seem to be born out in Scripture. The best that can be said is that they may be right. Since in the futurist timetable this *must* be an individual person, that person must be born in Israel.

A much more consistent alternative is gained by looking at the contrast between “from the earth” and “from the sea.” We have seen that the sea represents the disordered, churning mass of humanity; the earth might then be taken for the orderly portion -- which in John’s time would be the Roman Empire.

Two horns are noted. Most commentators agree: this represents both spiritual and political power. Note that they are not crowned heads -- implying that the possessor is not a king, but does have this power.

The historicist now sees the Pope; the futurist the false prophet (of whom more in chapter 16). But there is a poetic point worth making here too: any church which does not truly follow Jesus Christ will, sooner or later, ally herself with the state or with Satan -- or with both.

“Like a lamb” certainly implies a counterfeit of Christ (hence the identification with the false prophet by the futurists). For the historicist, this is the claim of the Pope to speak for Christ.

Worship will be commanded by this beast. That follows!

Miracles also. For those who see in this the Papacy, there is little difficulty in seeing miraculous signs at the feast days of saints, appearances of the Virgin Mary, etc... This is little publicized in the United States, but major business in Catholic countries. Our Lady of Fatima to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the “miracles” of the Roman Catholic church would serve as a model if nothing else.

You can see the problem with the historicist theory quite clearly now. If all these things are false, then how are they done? Lindsey gives a clear answer: demons.

The Image again is a cause for debate. The word in the Greek is *eikon*, from which we get “icon.” Is this a literal image, in the literal millennial temple (paralleling Antiochus Epiphanes’ statue of Zeus), or is it more symbolic -- the veneration of the “Holy City”.

Mark of the Beast

Rev 13:16-17 NIV) He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead. [17] so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.



That the mark is intended to be something physical is recognized by all -- even most of the poetic scholars (who have some interesting ideas, largely around Roman Empire themes).

The futurists have advanced a large number of possibilities:

- Smith sees laser tattoos to match your credit cards (others have seen this as bar codes)
- Lindsey and others have seen implanted chips.
- I like J. Vernon McGee's idea myself. He doesn't know; he says that any explanation is a "gratuitous explanation."

For the historicist, it is quite simple: it is the sign of the cross on the forehead made by the Catholic church. The pressure is economic, and at the councils of Tours, Constance and Latera, the Catholic church forbade any Catholic to do business with anyone who is not a Catholic. These edicts are still in force (but ignored in America).

Some (Smith) feel the mark of the beast must be a form of the number 666 (next verse). This does not seem to be supported by the text itself.

It is interesting: the beast with two horns, political and spiritual power, resorts to economic blackmail to stay in power.

This calls for wisdom...

Rev 13:18 NIV) This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

Candidates for Antichrist		
Hitler	Antiochus	Reagan
Kissinger	Charlemagne	Saddam H.
Gorbachev	Napoleon	Mahatma
Nero	F.D. Roosevelt	Rev. Moon
John Paul II	Mussolini	Arafat
Bill Clinton	Franco	Farrakhan
Bill Gates	J.F. Kennedy	Karl Hapsburg
Solomon	King Juan Carlos	Mickey Mouse
		Bill Clinton

A few notes:

Hitler is supposed to get resurrected for the purpose.

Pope John Paul II is only one of *many* popes on the list.

Bill Clinton is based on his name at birth, Bill Blythe. His stepfather adopted him.

Bill Gates is, I suspect, somewhat tongue in cheeksomewhat.

Antiochus is the Antiochus Epiphanes of Daniel's vision.

I have no idea why Juan Carlos, King of Spain is on this list.

Reagan is on the list; his name was placed there by a bunch of Democrats -- take that for what it's worth.

Karl Hapsburg (I think I recall he's a dentist in Munich, Austria) is the legitimate Holy Roman Emperor, should that monarchy ever be restored.

Mickey Mouse was added by my kid's High School -- there's a reliable source of theology for you.

Barney!



- Barney = CUTE
PURPLE
DINOSAUR
- Replace "U" with
Latin "Y"
- Add up the Roman
numerals



(There is evidently some fuzziness in associating the number with the beast per the Greek).

The first thing to note is that, despite all mathematics, the number is highly symbolic. 6 is taken to be the number of man, for man was created on the sixth day; 6 is one less than seven, the number of perfection, the number of God.

McGee provides an easy solution: perhaps the number is hidden from us -- there is, after all, so much speculation that we may not know until the time comes.

To the historicist, the answer is "the Latin man." Take this phrase in Greek and add up the numeric equivalents, you get 666. Do it again in Latin -- different language, different numbering system -- and again you get 666. This corresponds well with the view that the papacy is the beast.

One last point: perhaps we shouldn't be so worried about the knowing the number of the beast -- as knowing the Lord Jesus Christ!