

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA IN REVELATION 13

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THE REFERENCE TO THE BEAST that comes up out of the sea is found in a parenthetical section of Revelation that reveals aspects of Satan's activity in the Tribulation (Rev. 12:1–13:18). In this section John saw a red dragon, Satan, at war with Michael the archangel in heaven (12:3–7). Michael and his angels will conquer Satan, and Satan will be thrust out of heaven to earth (vv. 7–12). Realizing that his time will be short, Satan will strike out furiously against Israel in persecution (vv. 13–17). Then Satan will use the beast in his assault (13:1–10). The monster will emerge out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. He will receive power from the dragon, will overawe the worldlings, blaspheme against God, make war with the saints, and overcome them (v. 7). Everyone on earth whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life will worship him (v. 8). Who is this sea monster? What is the object and nature of his overcoming? When will the overcoming take place?

IDENTITY OF THE BEAST

Is the beast out of the sea a man or an empire? The answer is both.¹ (a) The beast is a man because his number is that of a man (Rev. 13:18).² Also the use of the masculine pronoun *aujtovn* (v.

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¹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 154; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 197–98.

² The mark could be the literal number 666, put on people in the Tribulation period. Or it could also be a symbolic number, pointing up the fact that the beast is only a man, short of the perfection of Christ. (According to the Greek numbering scheme Christ's name, *jIhsou'*, is represented by $\iota=10$, $h=8$, $s=200$, $o=70$, $u=400$, $\prime=200$, which add up to 888.) See William W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar* (Boston: Ginn, 1930), 93. For Hebrew numerology see Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius'*

8) to refer to the neuter *qhrivon* (vv. 1–2, 4) indicates that he is a human being. In addition, parallels between the beast and the Lamb indicate that he is a person: both have followers on whose foreheads are inscribed their names (vv. 16–17; 14:1), both are conquerors (5:5; 13:7), and both receive worship (5:8; 13:4). (b) At the same time the beast is an empire over which the man reigns. This fact is demonstrated by the symbolism of the beasts of Daniel 7.

Who then is this man and over what empire will he rule? He is the “little horn” (the Antichrist)³ of Daniel 7, as indicated by several lines of correspondence between the two figures. Both will have a worldwide kingdom (Dan. 7:7, 23; Rev. 13:8); both will speak blasphemies against God (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25; Rev. 13:5);⁴ both will have victory over the saints for forty-two months (Dan.

Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautsch and A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 30.

Many, however, take the view that the number 666 represents man’s falling short of perfection (George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 187; Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 174; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 210). No Greek article appears before the word “man,” so one could render the statement, “it is the number of man.” As sinful man, the beast falls short of the number seven, and certainly short of Jesus’ number, 888. God created man on the sixth day (Gen. 1:27), and man was allowed six days for work (Exod. 20:9). The perfect Man, by contrast, is seen in Revelation 14:1. Christ will judge everyone (vv. 14–20).

³ Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1959), 99; Hanns Lilje, *Das Letzte Buch der Bibel* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1955), 183; Carl A. Auberlen, *Der Prophet Daniel und die Offenbarung Johannis* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1856), 304; Charles Brüttsch, *Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1970), 2:108; and John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 960.

⁴ In Revelation 13:5–6, the beast “opens his mouth in blasphemies against God.” How will he do this? By proud words in which he will claim to be God (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4). He will blaspheme God’s name—by claiming the name himself and so dishonoring that name—and he will blaspheme God’s tabernacle. The word “and” does not follow “tabernacle” in the better Greek manuscripts of Revelation 13:6; so the clause that follows “tabernacle” explains what the tabernacle is (cf. 7:15, God tabernacles over them, or spreads His tabernacle over them).

There are several views on the identity of “those who dwell in heaven.” First, they are church-age believers who will be in heaven after the pretribulational rapture (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Chicago: Moody, 1968], 466). Second, the phrase refers to all believers in heaven, that is, both Old Testament and church-age saints (Philip E. Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 148). Third, the phrase refers to angels (J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, IVP New Testament Commentary [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997], 159). Fourth, “those who dwell in heaven” means all who are in heaven, both angels and saints. This view seems preferable. They are a “tabernacle” for the Lord just as the church forms a “temple,” a dwelling place today on earth (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:3–9). Revelation 7:15 and 13:6 anticipate a heavenly tabernacle that pertains to those who have their residence in heaven. Thus by blaspheming God’s tabernacle, the beast is blaspheming both saints and angels who dwell in heaven.

7:25; Rev. 12:14; 13:5); both will be destroyed by Christ at the Second Advent (Dan. 7:11, 26; Rev. 17:14; 19:20); and immediately after their destruction the kingdom will be given to God's saints (Dan. 7:22, 27; Rev. 20:4–6).

Moreover, since the word *qhrivon* ("beast," "wild animal") is always used elsewhere in the Apocalypse with reference to the Antichrist (11:7; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3; 19:20; 20:10),⁵ it is consistent to identify the *qhrivon* in 13:1 as Antichrist. In addition *nikavv* ("to overcome") is used three times in Revelation with reference to the enemy of God's people (6:2; 11:7; 13:7). Since other occurrences of the term are related directly to the coming Antichrist (6:2; 11:7),⁶ the same may be true in 13:7. Because *ejdovqh avwtv* ("it was given to him") in the Apocalypse normally speaks of divine permission given to the Antichrist (6:2) and his cohorts (6:4, 8; 9:1, 3) to carry out their wicked mission, it is possible that John was using the same expression here (13:5, 7) for the same purpose. Also, since John often developed sets of contrasts in Revelation,⁷ it is valid to conclude that the parallels between the beast and Christ (as noted above) are also intended to point up contrasts.

Besides being the Antichrist, the beast is also the empire over which he reigns, namely, the latter-day development of the Roman Empire. This conclusion is deduced from the following two steps of consideration.

Step one: The beast of Revelation 13:1–7 is the same as the fourth empire in Daniel. They both will come out of the sea (Dan. 7:3; Rev. 13:1),⁸ both will have ten horns (Dan. 7:7, 20; Rev. 13:1),

⁵ All references to the "beast" in Revelation are singular in number (except 6:8). The usage of *qhrivwn th' " gh' "* in 6:8 is plural and refers to animals in general.

⁶ For discussions on the use of *nikavv* in Revelation 6:2 and 11:7 see Daniel K. Wong, "The First Horseman of Revelation 6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (April–June 1996): 212–26; and idem, "The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (July–September 1997): 344–54.

⁷ Examples include the woman of 12:1–2 (representing Israel) and the woman of 17:3–4 (representing enemies of God); the stars of 1:20 (representing good messengers); and the stars of 12:4 (representing wicked messengers); the sinful city of Babylon (chaps. 17–18) and the holy city of God (chaps. 21–22); and the white-horse rider of 6:2 (representing the Antichrist) and the white-horse rider of 19:11 (representing Christ). Cf. Wong, "The First Horseman of Revelation 6," 222–25.

⁸ This could mean that the figure comes out of the area around the Mediterranean Sea, which the Scriptures sometimes call "the great sea" (Dan. 7:2; cf. Num. 34:6–7; Josh. 1:4; 9:1; 15:11–12, 47; 23:4; Ezek. 47:12–15, 19, 20; 48:28). Or the "sea" may be a figure for the Gentiles as a whole, with their restlessness outside the will of God (as in Isa. 57:20–21; Rev. 17:15). Interestingly Babylon, in attacking Judah, is said to have had a voice like the roaring of the sea (Jer. 6:23). Babylon's conqueror, in turn, will roar like the sea (50:42; 51:42). In view of these facts the beast will, pre-

and both will be succeeded by the kingdom of Christ (Dan. 7:11, 26, 27; Rev. 17:14; 19:20; 20:4–6). Further, the symbolism of the lion, the bear, and the leopard (Dan. 7:4–6) is evident in the beast in Revelation 13:2. It is as though this beast, like the fourth beast of Daniel 7, recapitulated, in some sense, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires.

Step two: The fourth empire in Daniel 2 and 7 is Rome, not Greece,⁹ and the ten-kingdom form of the empire as described in Daniel 2:41; 7:7; Revelation 13:1; 17:12–14 is a latter-day development of Rome in the future Tribulation period. This understanding is supported by seven factors.¹⁰

First, “iron” (Dan. 2:40) distinctively characterized the Roman Empire and would be a poor choice to characterize the Greek Empire. Greek soldiery was marked by bronze armor and weapons. During the gradual transition to Roman ways, iron swords and breastplates took the place of bronze.¹¹ Also Roman poets wrote of bronze weapons as obsolete and belonging to former times.¹²

Second, the length of the Roman kingdom argues for its iron-

sumably, be a Gentile.

⁹ A number of higher critics, oriented to liberal beliefs, have argued that the fourth kingdom is Greece. Some reasons for this view are as follows. (1) The Sibylline Oracles (ca. 140 B.C.) identify the fourth empire as the Greek Empire in iii. 388–400 (R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1929], 167–68). Charles argues that this is the correct interpretation, but he says that later the Roman view became popular with some in Palestine after Rome’s historical rise to world control had become obvious (ibid., 170). (2) Josephus (ca. A.D. 94) referred to Antiochus Epiphanes as causing Jews to suffer, “according to Daniel’s vision” (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.7). His reference is probably to Daniel 8 (R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: Clark, 1971], 169). However, this does not at all prove that Josephus believed Antiochus Epiphanes was in the fourth empire, for Josephus followed this immediately with a statement that Daniel also wrote concerning Rome as the destroyer of his people. Josephus differentiated between the third empire, out of which Antiochus Epiphanes came, and the fourth empire (Flavius Josephus, *Josephus: Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960], 227). (3) Fourth Ezra 12:10–12 (A.D. 80–120), while interpreting the fourth kingdom as the Roman Empire, also comments that this is not the interpretation that the angel conveyed to Daniel (Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 169). However, it is significant that 4 Ezra recognizes the fourth empire as the Roman Empire, though 4 Ezra is mistaken in saying that the angel interpreted the fourth empire as Greece.

¹⁰ The author is indebted to James E. Rosscup for his insights on Daniel chapters 2 and 7 as they pertain to the following section.

¹¹ Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (London: S.P.C.K., 1923), 31.

¹² See Titus Lucretius, *De Rerum* 5.1285–87; and Publius Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.734; 7.743.

like strength. Babylon lasted seventy years, Medo-Persia about 200 years, Greece about 270, and Rome about 500 years before it fell in A.D. 476.

Third, the fourth kingdom is viewed as still existent when the stone (Christ) smites it (Dan. 2:44–45). Greece could not meet this requirement, for it had been succeeded by Rome when Christ appeared. No kingdom is said to supersede the fourth kingdom before the stone strikes. Since Rome superseded Greece, Greece is plainly not the fourth empire.

Fourth, the unique characterization of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:7) is fitting for Rome. Rome was different from the earlier kingdoms. It consolidated many territories wider in extent and thus is more difficult to describe by comparison with recognizable animals.

Fifth, the critics' argument is based on a denial of the supernatural predictive element in Daniel and an attempt to explain most of the book as history up to and including Maccabean times. This explains why they go to such lengths to make the fourth empire Greece.

Sixth, from the standpoint of history the identification of the fourth empire as Rome can be traced to early times: Josephus (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 11:7); 4 Ezra 12:10–12 in A.D. 80–120; the Assumption of Moses, chapters 8–9 in A.D. 7–30; 2 Baruch 39:3–4 before A.D. 70; and later Jewish writings cited in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10.394.¹³

Seventh, the problem in identifying the fourth kingdom as Rome can be resolved. Some argue that Rome was not destroyed (i.e., the "Stone" did not smite Rome and destroy it) before or at the coming of Christ. The kingdom continued until A.D. 476.¹⁴ Therefore the fourth kingdom could not be Rome. This reasoning, however, is subjective. It has been answered by conservative scholars in two ways.

One conservative answer is given by amillennialist Edward J. Young, who denies that the messianic kingdom must follow the

¹³ Other early sources that interpreted the fourth empire as Rome are listed by Lome D. Stairs, "A Study of the Interpretation of the Prophecies of Daniel during the Ante-Nicene Period" (Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1957); David A. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 734–35; and Gregory Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 684–85.

¹⁴ Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1850), 188–89; and H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1959), 85–91, 93.

destruction of the four empires.¹⁵ Using Daniel 2:44 as a key, he claims that the millennial kingdom began “in the days of these kings,” meaning, while these four empires, conceived as one unit of Gentile dominion, were still in existence. Young views the millennial kingdom as running concurrently with the Gentile dominions during the present age and as having certain victories in the spread of God’s Word throughout the world. But the final catastrophic replacement of the Gentile power will come at the Second Advent.

Young reasons that the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8) exists at the same time as the saints who are already in the kingdom. In his system “the saints who receive the kingdom” (v. 18) do so at Christ’s first advent. However, this is misleading in that he understands the “saints of the kingdom” as being already in the kingdom while the “little horn” (Antichrist) is making war against them. The warfare then ends, Young believes, with the saints possessing the kingdom eternally. He says this eternal aspect is simply an extension of the kingdom they already have had since the First Advent.

Young suggests that Daniel did not say in Daniel 2 that Nebuchadnezzar’s image had specifically ten toes (vv. 41–42).¹⁶ However, if the same four aspects of Gentile dominion are in both chapters 2 and 7, and the ten horns on the fourth beast in chapter 7 represent ten kings, why would there not be ten toes (i.e., kings) in chapter 2, since a person normally has ten toes?

Young argues that the image was struck on the feet, not on the toes (2:34). And, he says, since legs and feet are taken together (v. 33), and the blow is to the feet, the blow would fall, if dispensationalists are correct, when the kingdom was divided into eastern and western empires.¹⁷

However, the stone will strike the image at the feet, or the latter stage of its existence (v. 34), not on the upper legs, and thus not in A.D. 476 when the empire was divided into two parts. Also in verses 41–43 the feet and toes are referred to together, not, as Young says, the legs and feet. And in verse 33 the legs are of iron but the feet are iron and clay, which clearly suggests a difference.

Young says “in the days of these kings” cannot mean in the

¹⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 289.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78, 160.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

days of the toes, because the toes are never called kings.¹⁸ However, as already stated, the ten horns in Daniel 7:24 are “kings” and the image of chapter 2 depicts the same four phases of Gentile dominion as the four beasts in chapter 7, with the same terminal point. So since there will be ten kings in the final stage in chapter 7, it is reasonable to have ten in the final stage in chapter 2. Also ten kings will take part in the final stage of Gentile dominion in Revelation 13:1–2 and 17:10–12 before Christ’s kingdom catastrophically destroys the Gentile armies (19:11–20). Since Revelation 13:1 seems to have the same Gentile system in view as Daniel 7, and Daniel 7 the same as Daniel 2, this contradicts Young’s view.

Since the empires form a continuing system (Dan. 2:35, “like one,” or “at the same time,” each being amalgamated into the next empire but surviving in a sense within it), one can still say the dispensational view is better. For “in the days of these kings,” meaning in the final days or the last phase (the stage when the toes appear, or when the ten horns and the eleventh horn, the “little horn,” appear, just before the Second Advent), then the God of heaven will set up the final kingdom.

Young also argues that since the kingdom is eternal, this cannot refer to a millennium.¹⁹ But he seems inconsistent here, for he himself has the kingdom existing two thousand years since the First Advent, without feeling that this initial temporal period is in contradiction to eternity. Why, then, should the premillennial idea of a thousand-year phase of the kingdom be in contradiction to the fact that it is eternal?

Another reply to objections concerning Rome as the fourth kingdom is that of premillennialists, most of whom²⁰ (including the present writer) believe that proper exegesis demands that the catastrophic destruction of the fourth world power must occur before the millennial kingdom begins. They insist that this destruction of the fourth empire (i.e., Rome) is yet future, beyond the church age. It will follow the Second Advent, not the First Advent.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Philip R. Newell, *Daniel, The Man Greatly Beloved and His Prophecies* (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 42–43; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 72–74, 162; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 199; John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 92, 96, 103–05; Robert D. Culver, “Daniel,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 790–91; and Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 99–102, 200–203; and many others.

And so the millennial kingdom is not partially existent today.

So, even though Rome fell in A.D. 476, the fourth empire (pictured as a beast in Daniel 7) must be regarded as yet in existence in some sense from 476 forward to the Second Advent. Even Young, an amillennialist, acknowledges this. “It cannot be doubted that modern Europe may in a very legitimate sense have arisen from Rome.”²¹ Rome, in its final development at the end of the present age, will be destroyed and pass out of existence as a world power.

Why do premillennialists say that the smiting Stone is yet future? Four responses may be given in answer to this question.

First, the other three kingdoms, as seen in Daniel 2, were exclusive kingdoms. That is, Babylon alone ruled until it was conquered by Medo-Persia, and so on. So it is out of harmony with the clear-cut successive nature of the kingdoms to posit, as Young does, that the fifth or millennial kingdom is now coexisting with the fourth or Roman kingdom for two thousand years.

Second, New Testament passages about the millennial kingdom place it in the future beyond the present age (Luke 19:12; 21:31; Acts 1:6–7).

Third, the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7 obviously represent the same successive world powers. However, chapter 7 adds important details about a “little horn” (a world ruler)²² that emerges out of the fourth empire in the final stage of its development. The fifth kingdom (messianic) will not come into existence until after this last stage of the fourth kingdom is destroyed (Dan. 7:25–27; cf. Rev. 17:14; 19:19–20).

Fourth, the rule of the fifth kingdom appears to be as truly political in nature as the four preceding kingdoms, as suggested by the verbs “rule” (Dan. 2:38–39) and “break . . . in pieces” (v. 40). The words used for the fifth kingdom’s subjugation of the fourth kingdom are the same as those used for the fourth kingdom’s subjugation of the third kingdom. The word for “break in pieces” in verse 40 (used of the fourth kingdom conquering the third kingdom) is also the word used in verses 34–35 and 44–45 of the Stone subduing the fourth kingdom. This was sudden and catastrophic, not gradual (over a two-thousand-year period).

Thus it seems evident that the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7 is the Roman Empire and that the beast from the sea in Revelation 13 is not only the same as that empire, but also, more specifi-

²¹ Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 149.

²² Even in the New Testament his coming is yet future (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; Rev. 6:2; 11:7; 13:1–10).

cally, is a latter-day development of that empire at the end of the present age.

How do the descriptions of the beast in Revelation 13 fit into the picture? Five points may be given in answer to this question. First, the beast has seven heads (v. 1). As explained by the angel in 17:9–11, these heads represent seven mountains on which the harlot woman sits (mountains are symbols of looming kingdoms)²³ and seven kings (referring to seven empires with their leaders conceived of as one in each case for the sake of representative simplicity).²⁴ The seven heads, then, are probably seven kingdoms or empires through the centuries (viz., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Roman sphere in its particular expression in John's day, and the reemerging Roman Empire of Daniel 2 and 7 in its resurging development during the Tribulation).²⁵ In view of this the beast from the sea is the system of the centuries from which the latter-day development of the Roman Empire comes, and of which Antichrist and his kingdom is the embodiment.

Second, the beast has ten horns (Rev. 13:1). These are the ten of Daniel 7:8, identified as kings in Daniel 7:24 (cf. Rev. 17:3, 7, 12). As has been shown elsewhere,²⁶ they refer to the kings of nations making up the federation under the Antichrist during the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 17:10–11). The ten crowns (13:1) of the beast represent the kingship and despotic power that these leaders will possess.

Third, the beast in Revelation 13:2 is depicted as a leopard (signifying speed), a bear (signifying striking power), and a lion (signifying strength to subdue). As noted earlier, these are reminiscent of the three distinct animals representing Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece in Daniel 7. That the beast embodies all three of these animals probably points to the fact that as the consummate world power, it will possess all the characteristics and dominion of the three combined.

Fourth, Revelation 13:3 records that one of the heads of the beast will receive a fatal wound and the wound will be healed. The point of this seems to be that it (the Roman Empire) will make a

²³ For further discussion of Revelation 17 see Daniel K. K. Wong, "The Johannine Concept of the Overcomer" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1995), 99–109.

²⁴ In Daniel 2 Babylon is thought of as under the kingship of one man, Nebuchadnezzar, who is identified as the head of gold.

²⁵ See further discussion in Wong, "The Johannine Concept of the Overcomer," 99–109.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

comeback. It manifests itself in great power as in its earlier expression. An empire depicted as a “slain” beast is fitting in view of Daniel 7:11–12. Daniel saw beasts (empires), and the fourth beast (the Roman sphere) was not slain until the end (v. 11). It is as if it were slain when it lost its unified dominion in A.D. 476. A similar picture of a whole kingdom being viewed as dead and its national entity broken up, later to come out of “death” in restoration, appears in Ezekiel 37:1–14. The “healing,” then, of the head of the beast, speaks of the Roman Empire, which fell in A.D. 476; the empire has a latter-day emergence, form, or development.²⁷

Fifth, the beast will open “his mouth in blasphemies against God” (Rev. 13:6; cf. vv. 1, 5), and will receive power from Satan (vv. 5, 7b) and worship from unbelievers (vv. 4, 8). These descriptions correspond with that of the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9–10 (cf. Dan. 11:36).

Thus it is seen that the descriptions of the beast fit well with the above interpretation and also confirm and enrich it.

THE OBJECT, TIME, AND NATURE OF THE BEAST’S OVERCOMING

THE OBJECT OF THE OVERCOMING

The object of the beast’s overcoming is the “saints” (Rev. 13:7). These will be Tribulation saints and not believers of the church age,²⁸ for several reasons. First, the seventy weeks are determined for “your people” (i.e., the Jews; Dan. 9:24; cf. Jer. 30:3, 7; Dan. 12:1), not the church. Also the church is not in the sixty-nine weeks and therefore not in the seventieth week. The absence of any mention of the Great Tribulation for the church in any of the church epistles further suggests that the church will not be in the Tribulation.

²⁷ Some have seen in the healing of the wound a reference to the Nero redivivus belief of the first century (e.g., Henry Buis, *The Book of Revelation* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976], 74; Jurgen Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* [Zurich: Theologischer, 1984], 136–37; and Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary [London: Caxton, n. d.], 57). It is doubtful, however, that John would have used a false rumor as a basis for this. The facts of history also fail to support this consideration (Paul Minear, “The Wounded Beast,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 37 [1953]: 93–101). For further discussion see Wong, “The Johannine Concept of the Overcomer,” 99–109.

²⁸ Those who see the “saints” as believers in the present age include William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 147–51; Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 193–94; and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 383–85.

Second, the “saints” in Revelation 6–18 are never called “the churches” or “the church” of a certain area, as in Revelation 2 and 3. If the church is present on earth in the Tribulation, why does this difference exist between Revelation 2–3 and 6–18?

Third, those who are on earth include the 144,000 (14:1–5; 7:4–8), the woman (12:1–2, 5–6, 13–17), and people from all nations (7:9–12). These and the saints in Revelation 13:7 agree with the presence of Israelites and Gentiles in Matthew 24–25. However, they differ from the church of the present age in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11–22; 3:6).

Fourth, the promise that the church will be kept “out from” (evk) “the hour of testing” which is about to come on the whole world (Rev. 3:10),²⁹ and, as noted earlier, the total absence of any reference to the church on earth in chapters 4–18 imply that the church will have been removed from the judgment scene.

Fifth, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 refers to the rapture of the church into heaven. If the rapture is posttribulational and the church is to turn right around in the air and come back to earth immediately, what is the point of the rapture?

Sixth, 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8 predicts that the rapture of the church must occur before the appearance of the Antichrist,³⁰ and in Revelation 13:1–10 (cf. 6:2; 11:7) he will have appeared. This negates the possibility that the church is in view in Revelation 13:7, for it will have already been raptured.

THE TIMING OF THE OVERCOMING

The beast’s overcoming will take place after the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel in the middle of the seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). This is suggested by the forty-two months mentioned in Revelation 13:5 (cf. 12:14), a reference to the last half of the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:1; Matt. 24:15–25; Rev. 11:2–3).

THE NATURE OF THE OVERCOMING

The beast’s overcoming the saints will be limited and temporal, for he will be allowed to operate in power for only forty-two months

²⁹ The purpose of the Tribulation is to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity (cf. Isa. 13:9–11; 26:21; Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:2, 8) and to punish fallen angelic beings and earthly rulers (Isa. 24:21) but not the church. For further discussion on Revelation 3:10 see Daniel K. K. Wong, “The Pillar and the Throne in Revelation 3:12, 21,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (July–September 1999): 302–4.

³⁰ The removal of the restrainer (2 Thess. 2:6–8), the Holy Spirit, suggests a pre-tribulational rapture.

(Rev. 13:5).³¹ Further, though authority to persecute and overcome the saints will be given him by Satan (vv. 2, 4), it will be given him ultimately by God (v. 7a) because Satan cannot touch saints unless God permits it.³² The beast's overcoming of the saints is also physical. This means martyrdom for many (v. 15; 20:4)³³ (as was already seen in 6:11; possibly 7:9–12; and even the two witnesses in 11:7). The beast's overcoming of the saints, however, does not contradict the overall overcomer concept because, though saints are overcome in the sense that their lives are physically snuffed out (Matt. 10:28; Rev. 2:10), they are overcomers in the spiritual sense. They are like the two witnesses whom the beast will eventually overcome (11:7), or like Stephen (Acts 7), James (Acts 12), or Antipas (Rev. 2:13). Victory will await them (2:10; cf. 14:13; 15:2).

SUMMARY

In light of scriptural evidence it is clear that the beast from the sea in Revelation 13 is both a latter-day development of the Roman Empire and the Antichrist who will head it up. This consummate world power and its leader will emerge from an anti-God system of the centuries and are the embodiment of it. The object of the beast's overcoming is the Tribulation saints who will take their stand for the Lord and will refuse to worship his image. The time of his overcoming is the last half of the Tribulation, and the nature of it is temporal, limited, and physical, and thus does not contradict the overall Christian overcomer concept (1 John 2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7; cf. John 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14).

³¹ But he could make his rise to power before that (cf. Rev. 6:2).

³² Cf. Job 1. According to John 19:11 Pilate had no authority over Jesus unless it was given him from above (cf. Rev. 9:1, given by God; see also 20:1).

³³ Here is the killing of those who do not consent to worship the image of the beast (Rev. 13:15). The situation is analogous to Nebuchadnezzar erecting a great statue and compelling people to worship it (Dan. 3). The killing could be carried out by mercenaries of the beast's powerful empire in different parts of the earth. The killing can be the intent, but carried out on a scale that is less than absolute. At least they go after as many as they can. Not all the saved will be put to death. The 144,000 may not be put to death, having been sealed not to be harmed physically (the 144,000 are not said to die as the two witnesses of chapter 11 are). The Jews who flee into the wilderness will be preserved and nourished by God (Rev. 12). Also the two witnesses will withstand the beast's power until the closing times of the Tribulation, when he will overcome them (11:7). Also other Scriptures show that both saved and unsaved people will be on earth at Christ's coming, thus necessitating a separation at that time (Matt. 13:24–25).