

Revelation Chapter 13

Revelation chapter 13 is one of the most important chapters in our bible when it comes to the interpretation of future events. It describes the characteristics and activities of two beasts, the first from verses 1 to 10; the second from verses 11 to 18.

We must emphasise immediately that the chapter describes events which we as part of the Church of God will never experience directly for it deals with events which will take place during the Tribulation or the last seven years prior to the Lord's return in glory to earth. Christians will not be partakers of this tribulation, but rather we will be spectators of it, for we will by then be in heaven with the Lord Jesus. How can we be so certain about this fact? We place our assurance on three sections of 1st Thessalonians. In chapter 1, verse 10, we read that the Lord Jesus is our deliverer "away from" the wrath to come. In this verse, we wait for God's Son "out of" heaven, God has raised Him "out of" the dead, but He has delivered us "away from wrath". Had it said that He delivered us "out of" wrath, it would mean that we would first have been involved in that wrath before He delivers out of it. In I Thess 5, we read in verse 9 that "God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ". God has not made us an appointment with wrath, but rather we have been given salvation. Finally, I Thess 5 speaks of 2 very distinct groups of people. In verses 3 and 7, we read of "they" and "them". Sudden destruction will come upon "them" and "they" shall not escape. These are the people who will suffer during the Tribulation. In contrast to "them" in this section, Paul writes, "But ye brethren are not in darkness". The other verses in this section speak of "ye", "we", and "us" ie we as Christians will not pass through the experiences of the Tribulation.

Revelation 13 is therefore not about us, but the ministry is surely still for us. A knowledge of future events should dispel from us any doubts, fears, or anxieties that we might otherwise have. It should also affect the way we live in the world. Enoch is a beautiful example of such a man. He had three revelations from God, all of which changed his life. The first had to do with the flood. "Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah". The name Methuselah means, "when he dies, it shall come, "it" referring to the flood. I believe that up until this son was born, Enoch was just moving on like all the others of his day, but when God gave him this revelation, it changed his whole life. He began to walk with God, to take sides with God in spite of the world around him. He then had a further revelation about the day of the Lord, a day which is still ahead of us today. This caused him to preach to the men of his generation as recorded by Jude. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints". Finally he had a revelation regarding his own rapture. Hebrews 11 tells us that by faith he was translated that he should not see death. It was by faith for one day God said to him that he would not die – that one day, He would come for him and take him to heaven. How did this affect him? "Before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God". How good it would be for us if it could be said of us before we leave this world that we "pleased

God". So revelations about future events, even those events that will not directly affect us, should influence how we preach and how we live.

So what about Revelation chapter 13? It is a sad end for this poor old world in which we live. This is the world which has rejected God and His Christ, yet which in this day to come will accept a false God and a false Christ. In verse 1, we read of John's vision. "I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns." Let us pick out four words from this verse – the sea, the beast, the heads, and the horns.

The sea always speaks of that which is wild and restless, unpredictable, uncontrollable. The beast arises from the sea. We find therefore an immediate point of comparison with the four great beasts of Daniel chapter 7:3. "And four great beasts came up from the sea". I believe the sea refers us to the Gentile nations, as contrasted with the settled state of Israel in the land.

What then do we make of the word "beast". The word occurs throughout this book but it is not always the same word in the Greek. In chapters 4 and 5, we read of the four beasts that surround the throne of God. This word is that used for a domesticated animal such as a sheep or a goat. It is used also for the sacrifices. Hebrews 13 speaks of "The bodies of those beasts are burned without the camp". In contrast to this, we have the beasts of chapter 13. This is the word for a wild beast, like the wild beasts with whom the Lord spent those 40 days in the wilderness during His temptation by the devil.

The beast of verse 1 is described as having seven heads and ten horns. What is represented by these heads and horns? Before we answer this question, we should note the similarity between the beast and the dragon of chapter 12:3, who is described as "having seven heads and ten horns". The beast is the Dragon's superman. So, what is meant by the heads and the horns? Scripture is best at interpreting itself and in Revelation 17:9, we read, "The seven heads are seven mountains". Mountains in the Bible are often used as symbols of kingdoms. Isaiah says that the "mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established upon the tops of the mountains". The beast therefore has seven kingdoms. It also has 10 horns, and in Rev 17:12 we read, "The 10 horns which thou sawest are 10 kings". The same interpretation of the horns being kings is also given us in Daniel chapter 7. "The 10 horns are 10 kings". So we have 7 kingdoms and 10 kings. Why the difference between the numbers 7 and 10? We find the answer again in Daniel chapter 7. In verse 8, we read of a little horn, before whom were three of the horns plucked up by the roots. Three of the kingdoms are therefore overcome by the little horn. The 10 become 7 because the beast takes away the power of 3 of the kings.

We can begin to see the similarity between the beast of Revelation 13, and the 4th beast of Daniel's vision in chapter 7. The beast is a confederacy of 10 kingdoms, and these are kingdoms from amongst the Gentiles. We can see a comparison also with the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2. Daniel describes the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and clay. There is clearly a degeneration as we go down the form of the image. The king of Babylon is described as the head of gold. This is the beginning of what is called "the times of the Gentiles", when the nation of Israel came under the domination of the

Gentiles. Even today, although they are an independent nation, they live under constant pressure from their neighbours and are on constant alert. In Daniel chapter 2, a great deal of attention is paid to the toes, partly of iron, and partly of clay. The toes again would speak of a confederacy of ten states. The confederacy of ten states is its strength, but the diversity of the ten is also its weakness. We see this today in the Common Market – nations have joined together to produce strength but national identities and ambitions are its very weakness. I am not suggesting that the EU is the beast. In 2008, it consisted of 27 states, and is due to increase even further. Perhaps it has become too big. It is only conjecture but could it be that the EU will collapse in a day to come to be replaced by a confederacy of only 10. Thus the beast of Rev 13 is a confederacy of 10 Gentile nations.

In verse 2, the beast is described further as like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion". These 3 animals depict three of the first 4 beasts of Daniel's vision in chapter 7, though they are seen in a different order. The first beast in Daniel is a lion – depicting the ferocity of the empire of Babylon. The second beast, Media-Persia, is like a bear with its crushing strength, and the third beast is like a leopard, depicting the rapid conquests of Greece under Alexander the Great. The beast of Revelation 13 has the features of all 3 of the beasts of Daniel 7.

Where does the beast of Revelation 13 get his strength? Verse 2 ends with, "And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat (throne), and great authority. The devil therefore gives to this beast, what was offered and refused when the Lord Jesus stood on a high mountain with the devil. "All this will I give Thee, if Thou wilt worship me". The beast of Rev 13 sells his soul to the devil and hence he gets what the Lord refused.

John continues in verse 3, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed". It is hard to be specific in such cases for no doubt many of the things we read of in this book will become more obvious to the people of that generation. But can we say that one of the kingdoms of the confederacy will seem to have all but disappeared when it will have a remarkable come back, that will cause all the world to wonder. Some of course see in this the revival of the Roman empire, but my difficulty in this view is that Rome was never a confederacy but a military dictatorship. We cannot go further than the scripture allows in this matter.

Verse 4 continues, "They worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast, and they worshipped the beast". Today the worship of Satan is rare, but it will obviously increase greatly in last days. Men will also worship the beast. This worship is re-stated in verse 12 and again in verse 15. Worship becomes compulsory: refusal leads to death. We can see a type of the beast in Daniel chapter 6, in the person of Darius the Mede. The decree goes out that no-one was to offer a petition to any god or man, save to the king himself. For thirty days, Darius was to take the place of God. Disobedience was to mean certain death for who could survive a night in a den of lions. We know the story of course, and because of his faithfulness to his God, Daniel refuses to obey the decree yet is kept by an angel from the mouths of the lions. In Revelation 13, those who refuse to bow will be exposed to a similar fate yet God will preserve a remnant of His people.

We perhaps have noticed that as we reach the end of verse 4, we are moving away from the beast being a group of 10 nations, to the beast being a man who controls the 10 nations - the kingdom becomes the man; the man becomes the kingdom. This has been true in recent history with Hitler's Germany in the thirties and forties. The man becomes all powerful. We can therefore identify our man with the little horn of Daniel chapter 7 who arises from the fourth beast. As an object of worship, we can also see that our beast is the Man of sin in II Thess 2. He sits "in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God". It is important for us to link these titles together and to identify the players involved. It would be difficult for us to follow the plot of a book or a play if we could not first identify the principal characters involved.

The world will never have seen such a man before. "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Verse 5 continues, "There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things". This latter phrase is also used of the little horn in Daniel 7:8. History has shown that men with the gift of great oratory are able to sway the masses in their direction. The last world dictator will be no exception. Verse 5 concludes, "Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" ie three and a half years. We are therefore speaking of the second half of the final period of seven years prior to our Lord's return.

This man, although assuming the place of God, is marked by blasphemy. Everything that is divine is blasphemed by him (verse 6). In verse 7, he is given not just great oratory but also great power. It was given unto him to make war with the saints". Again we refer back to Daniel 7:25 where we read that he "shall wear out the saints of the most High". These saints are not Christians of our age but rather the saints of God on earth during the Tribulation. The power of the beast is also seen to be universal in its extent - "Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations"

Who shall worship the beast? "All that dwell upon the earth". The word for "dwell" here is derived from the word for a house. It is used often in a moral sense for those who are settled down in this world and are comfortable with its state. We find it used, for example, in Revelation chapter 11 when God's two witnesses are slain. "They that dwell upon earth shall rejoice and send gifts to one another". Worldy men shall rejoice when God's witnesses are slain. We contrast these men with the Lord Jesus in John chapter 1. There it is said of Him that "He tabernacled amongst us", or as some would put it, He pitched His tent amongst us. He was a pilgrim in this world and had no where to lay down His head. The other thing that marked those who worship the beast is that their names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. These men are not saved. In Revelation 20, the book of life is seen as the final adjudicator in the eternal destiny of men. While men will experience degrees of punishment according to their works, they are cast into the lake of fire if their names are not found written in the book of life. How wonderful that our names are written in this book. In Philippians 4:3, Paul speaks of "other my fellow labourers, whose names are written in the book of life". Our salvation is secure. In Luke chapter 10, the Lord told His disciples, "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven". Not only are our names in the book, but also our hands are in divine hands. One hand is held by the Lord Jesus - "none shall pluck them

from my hand"; while the other is in the Father's hand, and the Lord Jesus adds, "And My Father is greater than I".

There is a difficulty, however, in verse 8, for it speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world". I Peter on the other hand, tells us of the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world. Why the difference? An alternative rendering of Revelation 13:8 could be, "Written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb".

Verse 9 is surely a word of warning for all generations. "If any man have an ear, let him hear". In other words, "Take note. This is what will happen to those who abandon God".

A further warning is given in verse 10. "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword". The beast, and all who follow him, will one day fall into the hands of a righteous God – words of warning for the unsaved, yet words of comfort for all the saints.

From verse 11 to the end of the chapter, we now begin to look at the second beast in the chapter. He comes, not out of the sea like the first beast, but out of the earth. If the sea represented the Gentile nations, then would not the earth represent that which is settled i.e. the land of Israel. We believe this second beast to be a Jew, as we shall reinforce later. "He had two horns like a lamb". Throughout the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus is referred to as the Lamb. He is the true lamb of God. We read now in Revelation of the false lamb, the impersonator of the Lord Jesus. This second beast as we shall see is the Antichrist. He is not only opposed to Christ, he is an impersonator of the true Christ. He is Satan's counterfeit Messiah. So he looks like a lamb, but "he spake as a dragon". The first beast of this chapter looked like the Dragon, the second beast spoke like the Dragon.

The Antichrist has of course many features which make him like the Lord Jesus. Verse 12 says of him, "He exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him". The second beast has no power of his own – he derives all his power from the first beast. In this respect at least he is like the Lord Jesus who said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do". The Antichrist also does not seek worship for himself but rather directs all men to worship the first beast. He is therefore like the Lord Jesus in this respect also. In John chapter 4, the Lord said to the Samaritan woman, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him". In John chapter 17, the Lord sums up His own life, "I have glorified Thee on the earth". He sought not His own glory, but the glory of the Father who sent Him. So, the second beast will cause all men to worship the first beast.

In verse 13, the Antichrist is also a great miracle worker. "He doeth great wonders". This is no less than what a Jew would expect. When the Lord was here on earth, even those who did not believe on Him began to ask the question, "When the Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man doeth". Hence the Antichrist will also be a great miracle worker. This would therefore identify our second beast with the Wicked one of II Thessalonians 2:8. "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying

wonders". Where else do we find the second beast – he is surely the False Prophet of the book of Revelation. He is therefore the false Christ, the false Prophet, and as we shall soon see, the false king of Israel in last days. He is able even to reproduce the miracle of Elijah who brought down fire from heaven against the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. The Antichrist does likewise. Verse 14 therefore consolidates our thoughts regarding this man. But verses 14 and 15 introduce the idea of the image of the beast. This takes us back to Daniel chapter 2, where Nebuchadnezzar created a great image to resemble the one which he saw in his dream. He too commanded all his people to worship the image on penalty of death. Their refusal to obey led to the three young companions of Daniel being cast into the burning fiery furnace. We cannot begin to guess what this image will be like in the last days, especially an image that speaks, but it will no doubt become clear to those who will live through the experience.

Verses 16 to 18 now deal with the mark of the beast and the number of the beast. In verse 16 we read, "He causeth all to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads". Many have wondered what this might be – to be more specific would only lead to assumptions that we could not substantiate. Suffice it to say, it is the mark of ownership on the part of the beast, of submission on the part of men. Earlier in the book, we read of the people of God who have His name upon their foreheads. Ezekiel chapter 9 also speaks of those who receive the mark and who therefore are preserved from divine judgement. The second beast puts the mark of the beast upon his people. The purpose of the mark is further explained in verse 13 – "That no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast, or the number of his name". It is a commercial dictatorship. If men have to obey to eat, then they will be prepared to do so. In 2008, we have heard stories of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe who has offered food to those who will vote for him in the election. Perhaps in the Tribulation, this coercion will gain ground. And what can we say about the number of the beast? – 666. We need go no further with this than what the word of God says – it is the number of a man. Adam was created on the 6th day, and 6 is generally assumed to be man's number. 666 is a threefold repetition of the number 6 – it is man at his most arrogant defiant self, standing against God, seeking to usurp the place of God. The words of Psalm 2 will be fulfilled in these last days. Men will say about divine Persons, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us". The Psalmist also wrote, "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing". The Tribulation is man's last great rebellion before the Son of man returns in glory.

Where else do we find this second beast, the Antichrist, the False Prophet, the Wicked one? I believe we see him also in Daniel chapter 11 – a man often described as "the wilful king". Verse 36 says, "The king shall do according to his will". To be an impersonator of the true Christ, the beast will have to take his place as the king of the Jews, and in Daniel chapter 11, he does just that. Outwardly, he is like the Lord Jesus as he assumes all his titles, but he is a wilful king. The Lord Jesus said, "I came not to do mine own will, but to do the will of Him that sent Me". The Lord was the obedient servant, but this man in Daniel will do according to his own will. Whereas the Lord humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, the king of Daniel 11 will "exalt himself, and

magnify himself above every god". In this respect, he is like his master Lucifer, who said within himself in Isaiah 14, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the Most High". Instead of speaking for God, as the Lord Jesus did, he shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. He will seem to prosper, until the end comes.

The man is obviously a Jew, for the Jews could not accept him as Messiah unless he were one of the. That this is the case, we read in Daniel 11: 37, "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers". He has rejected the God of Israel, but he worships another god whom his fathers knew not. This as we have seen is the first beast of Revelation 13 – "He causeth that all men should worship the beast".

But the king will not have it all his own way. In verse 40 we read, "At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him". He shall find himself squashed between two kings who will war against each other and use Israel as their battleground. These two kings have only one thing in common, and that is their hatred towards Israel. Israel will come under such pressure that they will seek to find a protector. This takes us back to Daniel 9:27. "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week". The "he" in this verse is the first beast again of Revelation 13 – the head of the Gentile confederacy. He will confirm a covenant with the Antichrist and with the nation of Israel. The covenant is made for two reasons – to safeguard the temple worship of the Jews, and to protect them against the king of the north in particular. He breaks his covenant in regards to the worship, and he is unable to keep his covenant in regard to the king of the north.

We read of this covenant in Isaiah 28. The nation says in verse 15, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we in agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us". The "overflowing scourge" in this verse is the king of the north.

The covenant, however, will not protect them, as God replies in verse 18, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it". In this way, the dragon's two men will seek to join themselves together, but the covenant will not stand". God keeps His covenants, and they are fulfilled, but the covenant with death will not protect Israel. The beast will break the other reason for the covenant – "He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease". It is then that the beast will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is god". This is the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by the Lord in Matthew 24, and it is the signal for the faithful ones to flee Judaea, for the Great Tribulation is about to start.

What will be the final end of the two beasts of Revelation 13? Their final doom is spoken of in Revelation 19:19-20. A great battle develops around Jerusalem. The Lord spoke of it in Luke 21:20 – "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies". The city is under siege and is about to fall completely when the Lord comes in power and glory. Revelation 19:20 tells us, "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone". God does not wait

till the Great White Throne to judge these two men. They are cast alive into the lake of fire – and they are still there one thousand years later. There is no such thing as annihilation after death.

So ends the life and times of the dragon's two men – the two beasts of Revelation chapter 13. It makes one wonder, if all this is prophesied in the Bible, why will the devil and these two men consider it worthwhile to do what they will do? I suppose the answer is that the devil reads the bible but doesn't believe it. These two men also will perhaps know the bible but will seek to overcome what it says. Their efforts will be futile.