

The Revelation

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Revelation 13:1-18

Vss. 1-10

- So much of this chapter is written in code to protect the first readers of this book. The code would be known to John's church and draws heavily on the Old Testament.
- The dragon, as we saw in Ch. 12, was beaten at every turn. Yet he lives and here is determined to carry on the fight. First, he summons a great beast from the sea.
- The imagery is similar to a vision seen in Daniel 7. Here there are 4 beasts, each standing for a great empire: Babylon, Media, Persian, and Alexander's Greece. The beast in Rev. 13 is a combination of all 4 from Daniel.
- So we are to understand that Revelation's beast of the sea is Rome – an empire so evil it combines all the evil of the 4 mentioned in Daniel.
- The sea beast has 7 heads and 10 horns. Since the birth of Christ and Caesar Augustus to the time of John and Emperor Domitian, there had been seven Roman emperors. In between the 7 were 10 interim rulers, thus the 10 horns.
- The blasphemous names on the crowns and the spoken blasphemies were the names the emperors accorded themselves: God, Son of God, Savior of the World (Nero's favorite).
- There was a rumor about Nero after his death in 68 AD that he wasn't really dead, or that he had been resurrected. Either way, the most intolerable emperor of all was rumored to be living in Parthia and organizing the Parthians to invade and conquer the empire. So one head had a fatal wound that was appeared to be healed. This was Nero.
- Vs. 8 says that all the world will worship the beast. This is a direct reference to the cult of emperor worship that had been slowly growing

up around the throne for over 200 years. The first temple to the Spirit of Rome was built in Smyrna (Turkey) in 195 BC and the first temple built for the expressed worship of the emperor was built in Pergamum in 29 BC, both cities of the 7 Letters. Early on the emperors were not big fans of being deities but, in time it became clear that in such a vast and diverse empire there needed to be something that would be the fabric that held it all together: worship of a god emperor.

- In the 30 years between the death of Paul and Revelation the world had changed. Gone here are the admonishments to be good Roman citizens. In John's time to be a good citizen meant to make a sacrifice to Caesar and publicly declare that "Caesar is Lord." Once done, you would receive a certificate and your name noted in the town registry. To fail to do so carried a penalty of death and your citizenship revoked, leaving you with a sword forever hanging over your head.

Vss. 11-18

- The second beast comes up from the earth, the land. He has the appearance of a lamb, but the voice of the dragon/serpent.
- His job is to enforce the worship of the first beast. This beast is not the throne of the emperor but the empire's governmental system.
- Notice the voice of the serpent who speaks deception.
- The mark on the right hand and forehead is like the Jewish phylacteries, the little boxes of scripture the Jews would wear to demonstrate their piety.
- Verses 10 and 17 demonstrate the penalties for not worshipping the emperor.
- 666: the area code you don't want. Every ancient language had letters with a numerical equivalent. If anyone ever knew the name of 666, it has been lost. In Latin, the letters spelling out Nero add up to 666, and surely Nero would be a prime suspect, since it was believed he may yet live and return, but there is no way to be 100% sure. In Pompeii is a sweet piece of graffiti saying, "I love her whose number is 545."