

LESSON 2

THE TWO BEASTS

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (13:1–6)

The primary purpose of Revelation 13 is to introduce two creatures. Both are allies of the dragon, who was clearly identified in 12:9 as Satan. Verses 1 through 10 of chapter 13 tell about the first of those agents: the sea beast. Verses 11 through 18 describe the second agent: the land beast. In the rest of the book, the sea beast is referred to simply as “the beast” while his partner, the land beast, is called “the false prophet” (see 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

1. How were the characteristics of the dragon transferred onto the beast?
2. How is the beast a patchwork composite of four beasts depicted in a vision of the prophet Daniel (Dan. 7:2–27)?
3. In Daniel 7, why was the bear beast said to have been “raised up on one side” (Dan. 7:5), and why did the leopard beast have four heads?
4. What would first-century readers have thought of when they read about the beast that incorporated the qualities of the four beasts seen by Daniel?
5. By what three principal avenues does the devil try to destroy Christians?
6. What might be behind the imagery of 13:3?
7. What clues in this text let Christians know that, whatever happens, God is in control?

WAR WITH THE SAINTS (13:7–10)

The beast was like a giant boulder tumbling down a mountainside, flattening everything in its path. He seemed invincible.

8. What does the phrase “from the foundation of the world” seem to modify in verse 7?

9. How do various translations lead one to interpret verse 10?
10. What evidence suggests that one or both of the sayings in verse 10 should probably be applied to those who were oppressing Christians?

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH (13:11–18)

Even as the dragon welcomed the sea beast, something was fighting its way to the surface of the earth, something strong and powerful. When the creature finally burst into sight, he looked surprisingly harmless, even innocent.

11. If the first beast was labeled “anti-Christian political power,” what could the second beast be labeled?
12. Who was this beast in John’s day?
13. What evidence leads us to the conclusion that the false prophet was claiming power in verse 13 that he did not possess?
14. What evidence suggests that the “mark” of the beast is the counterpart of the “seal” of God from Revelation 7?
15. According to some, what real-life events might have prompted the symbol of being unable to buy or sell without “the mark” (13:17)?
16. What suggestions have been made regarding the significance of the number 666?
17. What is *gematria*, and how have some used it to explain the mark of the beast?
18. What problems are there with the deduction that the number 666 stands for the name “Nero”?
19. What two clues does the context give that the purpose of verse 18 was to encourage Christians?
20. What conclusion should be reached regarding the cryptic number 666?