

What Is The ‘Beast’?

Charlie Burt

“The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth.” (Dan 7:23)

To understand the concept of the beast of chapter 13, we need to step away and see several principles espoused in scripture. It is vital to have a *macroscopic* understanding of the bible in order to understand the *microscopic* details, as they are somewhat difficult to grasp.

When we look at the beast, there is a mixture of concepts represented. This mixture is made up of spirits, men, kings, kingdoms, desires, and rebellion. Primarily, we see in the beast a kingdom, not a man. Not some kind of institution, but a kingdom. Different from a *nation*. When the bible speaks of nations, it refers to the different *cultures*, whereas a *kingdom* is a political entity that exerts its influence upon humanity.

From the very outset Israel had allowed herself to be polluted—religiously and politically contaminated—by surrounding nations. Through the prophets, God continually fought to keep this from happening. Although He knew Israel was going to lust after the nations around them, He fought her inclination to do so. The reason for this was because of His plan to bless all nations through Abraham’s seed. In God’s attitude, we can begin to understand the ministry of reconciliation, and the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18)

The “wicked and adulterous generation” (Luke 11:51) whom Jesus addressed was going to receive God’s wrath. These were the Jews. The Gentiles, however, were not innocent. They were the source of much of the Jews’ wrongdoing. Unlike the Jews, who had a direct revelation from God, the pagan nations had not been taught except by indirect means and through conscience. (Rom 2:14, 15) The Jew was culpable on a much higher level. (Rom 2:9) Just as there was an advantage in being a Jew, there was also a higher level of punishment reserved for those Jews who rejected the gospel.

OT prophecies concerning God’s wrath weave a thread through both the Jewish and Gentile nations. The same thread eventually embroiders a picture of a saved Israel composed of both Jew and Gentile. This is the church.

In Daniel’s vision, he sees a statue made up of four kingdoms (Daniel 2), which is stricken by a rock, which then grinds the statue to chaff and the wind carries it all away. This rock becomes a huge mountain that fills the whole earth. (Dan 2:35) The prophecy concerns Jesus Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. (Not the premillennial, thousand-year kingdom.)

These four kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—make up the end of human world-rule. There have been many *nations* since Rome, but there has never been another *kingdom* that ruled on a global scale.

Rome’s continued existence 300 years after Christ came cannot be used to argue against Daniel’s prophecy. The rock struck all four kingdoms *at once* and the wind scattered them *together*. When Christ came, ancient Babylon had long been destroyed and Rome was yet to fall. This once again shows how God sees Time. When we look at Daniel 2:35, these four kingdoms “became like the chaff of the

summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them.” This idea is seen also in the dragon of Revelation 12 losing his place in heaven. No place was found for him, except to be cast down. At God’s presence, heaven and earth “fled”—no place was found for them.

All of these eventually become those “outside” of the New Jerusalem in the new heavens and earth, ultimately winding up in the Lake of Fire. To be “outside” of the city is to be dead; separated by sin from the grace of God that He offers through Jesus Christ.

A central figure in all of these events is Satan, who is first introduced in Genesis as a simple serpent. The next time he shows up, he is seen “walking up and down in the earth.” (Job 1-2) Finally, in Revelation, this “serpent of old, the devil,” has been transformed into a seven-headed, ten-horned beast. He had come a long way, but how?

In the garden, there was but one law. But by the time of Jesus, generation upon generation of prophets had been teaching man about God. There were many laws, but to the astute pupil, only two. Jesus explains this through the example of David eating the consecrated bread *and* giving it to those with him. On the surface, it was bad enough that David ate the consecrated bread, but he also gave it to those with him. David knew, however, that bread was bread and the word of God was spirit.

The beast of chapter 13 is spirit. It is the *spirit* of a kingdom, an empire arising *out* of the Gentiles, but *within* Israel. Israel had existed as an empire at one time and sorely wished to do so again. It was even among the apostles’ hopes. (Acts 1:6) That is, until the Holy Spirit revealed the true nature of the Kingdom to them.

Jesus was sent to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8) Yet Jesus was killed. He then sent apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. They were also killed. Quoting Jesus:

“I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” (Matt 23:34-36)

Although the Gentiles were culpable in rebellion against God, *they were not in a covenant relationship with Him*. There were only those proselytes who had been converted to the Jewish faith. Thus, an insinuation of “every nation under the sun” had been taking place. Peoples, nations, tribes, tongues, and multitudes. This is what the Harlot sat upon. (Rev 17:15)

The question remains is this: How were these great kingdoms “ground up” and scattered to the winds by the Son of God? The answer lies in the times of ignorance coming to an end.

Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

Mankind’s childhood had come to an end. God was now holding all of humanity accountable for its actions. He was demanding that all repent, which included both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul speaks of “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), when Christ came into the world. Beginning then, the world was informed of a new relationship with God offered to mankind through Jesus Christ. The Jew was informed first, seen in Jesus’ preaching primarily to “the lost sheep of Israel,” and in the early part of Acts. The prophecies concerning Israel’s salvation via the promised Messiah had to be fulfilled first. In the Book of Acts, prophecies concerning the Gentiles began to be fulfilled where God began to pour out His spirit on all mankind. This can be easily understood if we see the New Jerusalem as the Second Covenant, not some physical city in heaven. It is not.

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal 4:24-26)

Many get derailed on this point, thinking the New Jerusalem is the church or our future state in Heaven, when in fact, it represents the New *Covenant*. A covenant always involves *people*, which is why sometimes we confuse the issue. The Jew was typified in Hagar, the first covenant. But all mankind was included in Sarah, the second covenant. This process concerned the “fullness of time” and “the end of the age.” The end of the age referred to the first heaven and earth, where the Jews were the only people in covenant relationship with God. The end of that age ushered in the beginning of a second covenant, where God arrived to a relationship with all mankind through faith in Jesus Christ.

In a very short span of time, we see John the Baptist and Jesus. Christ is then killed after only a 3½-year ministry and then resurrected. The church begins preaching the truth and shedding the light, revealing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Suddenly, we have wheat and tares growing together. Where did this “false” wheat come from? Satan. (Matt 13:39)

In this, we begin to see a progression from a singular commandment in the Garden to many words summed up in the apostles and prophets. Satan goes from a simple serpent to a seven-headed, ten-horned dragon. With one law to work with, the devil was only a serpent. From a heavenly perspective, however, we are told that this serpent eventually became a monster. It is the same process where a seed of false wheat blooms to become an entire field of weeds.

We see a false god, a false Christ. His follower was the beast—a sociopolitical kingdom. The supporter and mouthpiece of this kingdom was the false prophet. It preached to Israel. It preached *kingdom!* They preached *empire!* It preached a return to the glory days of David’s and Solomon’s kingdom. Throw off Rome and become a kingdom *again*. This was a strong delusion. It was a beast—a kingdom—that *had* been and was rising up to become again. It was a spirit of anti-christ, where the Jews fought the church in every city where Jesus was preached. It was an attempt to bring to life a *fifth* kingdom, but one that would eventually be destroyed in the Great Judgment.

Even though the beast resembles Daniel’s wild beasts, it is Jewish. The Jews had learned from the Gentiles, imitating them. This Jewish beast looked like the Gentile beasts of history. It looked like an empire that had seen better days.

When we move to the Harlot of chapter 17, we see that she doesn’t fight. She doesn’t strike anyone. She rides! She is carried. And the beast and ten kings hate her. The Jewish rulers; the elite; the nobles;

the rich merchants; the princes of Israel; the Pharisees; the Sadducees; all who sat in Moses' seat ruling in God's stead and talking of Israel as if she was their prize. Their place. Their nation. She feeds off of her subjects. She gets all the riches. She profits from the kingdom and its rulers, and shows all how to be like her. At one time she had been espoused to God, yet forsook Him for the nations could offer. Her subjects kill those she directs them to kill. She is responsible for as much blood as what the beast sheds.

The harlot (unfaithful Israel) sets a plan in motion to become a sovereign kingdom. This move is a lawless one, not of God. In this is revealed the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:7) and precipitates the rise of the beast. The sociopolitical entity eventually throws off her chains and destroys her. Then the kingdom and false prophet are thrown "alive" into the Lake of Fire. With the demise of the three—beast, false prophet and Harlot—comes the dragon's fall. All events are intertwined.

In Jeremiah, we see the Jews' dogged resistance in going to Babylon. Even though God wanted them in Babylon, they refused to go. (Jer 42:10-12) The Jews told Jesus they had never been slaves to anyone. Even though they were under Roman rule, they refused to admit it, earnestly looking for the coming Messiah. Prior to the Babylonian exile, Jew and Gentile co-existed peacefully, and the latter had opportunity to enjoy some of the benefits of the former. *After* the exile, this relationship changed. The Jew came to despise all non-Jewish people, relegating them to the stature of "dogs." Within this hate simmered a deep-seated desire to rule over the earth. This is why the beast is Jewish in nature: it represents their desire to maim and kill, and exhibited the same stiff-necked resistance to the Gospel they displayed in Jeremiah's time. *We won't be held captive. We're gonna do it our way.* The prophecies contained in the Law and the prophets concerning His people were being fulfilled.

God sent them this strong delusion. They acted upon it and freed themselves from the Romans for a short time; time enough for the ten kings to rise to power. They desired to throw off all rule and law, including God's law, Jerusalem's law, and Rome's law. They were lawless. The children of the Harlot burned her up and ate her flesh. All highly poetic language to describe Israel's rejection by and divorce from God.

A significant part of this picture is the pause in the war that Rome was waging against Israel. There was some order in Israel before this pause. The nation had prepared and had a plan of action up to this point. When Rome withdrew, the country descended into total chaos.

And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (Rev 16:19)

It was a time for repentance up to the seventh vial. After it is poured out, time had run out. The end of the first heaven and earth is declared. Rome renews its war on Israel and the beast and false prophet are caught alive in the vise of the Roman armies, the cities of the nations.

In the day of the Lord, the end of the first heaven and earth are announced. It was a point in time that neither Jesus nor the angels could name, when God would declare to the world that His relationship with man would no longer be through law and through Israel. He signaled this by the removal of the temple and all its trappings. It ultimately included Israel's removal as a nation.

The cities of the nations could be understood this way. Cities were those citadels of man's vain

imagining into which man put his trust. (Prov 18:11) These *cities* fell and God's *city* came down to fill the whole earth.

God had appointed a day "in Christ" whereby all mankind would be judged. In that day, the cities of the nations "fell." The idea is a common Old Testament one. It denotes the consummation of the kingdom of God and the absolute cessation of all attacks upon it. (Isa 2:12; 13:6,9; 34:8; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:14; Zech 14:1) It is a "day of visitation" (Isa 10:3), a day "of the wrath of Jehovah" (Ezek 7:19), the "great day of Jehovah." (Zeph 1:14)

It was a day neither Jesus nor the angels knew, when God would declare that the old heaven and earth were to be completely done away with. This can be thought of as that point in time when God no longer dealt with man in any way except but through His Son. He declared all of man's vain striving to be null and void. He was grinding all of mankind's kingdoms into chaff, where the wind carried them away. God spoke and it was so.

These nations, who had never been able to penetrate the Jewish world other than by becoming Jews themselves, suddenly see some of these Jews joining themselves to citizens of their nation, to citizens of all nations. Living among them as equals. Sharing and giving and taking them in as brothers and sisters. The news of these events would have been like a huge fire throughout the world. No one living in that time could have been ignorant of the story of salvation through Jesus Christ at the end of that generation. This is perhaps why Paul said the gospel *has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven*. (Col 1:23) Not *in the process* of being preached, but had *already* been preached throughout the world.

The old heavens and earth—God's prior covenant relationship with man—was rolled up like a scroll. That world "rolled up," never to be read again other than as recorded history. That relationship was never to repeat itself. No remembrance; former things passed away. A world frozen in the concrete of history.