

Growth Hour Study

2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13; Rev. 5 Man of sin, Man who saves Sept. 13, 2020

ENGAGE

- This week we focus on the man of lawlessness. This individual is known as the Beast, the Antichrist, the man of sin, the Son of Perdition in contrast to the Son of God, the Man who saves.
- I will also introduce the key to understanding the book of Revelation with known Jewish writing tools. Daniel gives the keys to identifying aspects and dynamics regarding the man of lawlessness.
- I will be looking at Daniel and Revelation regarding the image and typology of beasts in apocalyptic literature.
- Review notes from last week regarding the man of sin. It is a long section in the growth notes to gain understanding of the Thessalonians portion of the study.
- I will be closing with the contrast of the beast from the sea out of Rev. 13 and the lamb of God in Rev. 5

EXAMINE

The Beast from the Sea —Revelation 13:1-18

Judgment of the Beasts (Revelation 12-20)

The leopard-like beast with ten horns and seven heads serves the dragon. He blasphemes against God and heaven, and leads the whole world into evil. He makes war against the saints (Revelation 13:1-10).

There are three beasts in Revelation, the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet.

1 The Nature of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-2

...from the sea: An angel had announced, "Woe to the inhabitants of earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you..." (Revelation 12:12). So now, in this vision, a beast arises from the sea. This will be followed by another vision in which a beast arises from the earth.

...heads, horns, crowns: The Beast has heads, horns, and crowns just like the Dragon because the Dragon's authority is given to, and exercised through, the Beast and his image (Revelation 12:3;

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13:1-8). These heads, horns, and crowns are signs of political authority, military might, and financial dominion —the trappings of a world superpower.

...*leopard, bear, lion*: The form of the beast resembles a mixture of leopard, bear, and lion. These are creatures swift, strong, and feared. They represent "power, throne, and authority" (Revelation 13:2). The vision is portraying a powerful kingdom encompassing several nations. In John's time this was the Roman Empire, but it was not the first such empire and it certainly was not the last. The beast still lives.

2 The Blasphemy of the Beast

Revelation 13:3-6

...*blasphemous name*: All the beasts heads have this blasphemous name, signifying total corruption of this empire. It is a completely antichristian kingdom, taking on the attributes of Satan's kingdom in material form. This evil kingdom sets up its own false religion. Its king is worshipped as God incarnate when only Jesus Christ has the right to be so regarded and worshipped (2Thessalonians 2:7-12).

...*deadly wound healed*: The beast exhibits a deadly wound in one head, and then shows it healed. Consequently the world at large marvels at this "miracle" and at the beast's mighty power. But it's all a deception and a lie. Worse, it's a parody of the death and resurrection of Christ (Revelation 13:14). Yet people applaud the beast's blasphemies..

...*42 months*: (Revelation 13:5). This is the three-and-a-half symbol, 42 months being three and a half years. We have discussed this symbol in the overview of [times in Revelation](#) . The tribulations inflicted by this beast are severe, but temporary, and their time is set. The beast will not overcome the saints forever.

3 The Battle Against the Beast

Revelation 13:7

...*to make war*: The Dragon (not God) granted great authority to the beast (see Revelation 13:2). The Beast was given power "to make war with the saints and overcome them" (Revelation 13:7, cf Revelation 12:17). This war is the spiritual battle between good and evil of which Paul speaks (Ephesians 6:10-17). It's a war in which all Christians participate, fighting the good fight of faith.

...*overcome them*: Christians will suffer persecution and even martyrdom; it is in this sense that the beast will "overcome them" (Revelation 13:7). However this war will be won by the holy people of Christ, not by Satan, and the tables will be turned. "If anyone takes captive, to captivity

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he will go. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." (Revelation 13:10). The beast and his minions may imprison and kill the holy ones, but in the end he will be imprisoned and killed.

Exploring Revelation 5:1-14 - "The Lion is the Lamb"

The fifth chapter of Revelation is my favorite chapter in the book and I believe it is the key to understanding the entire message of John's Apocalypse (if not the entire message of the New Testament). I am convinced that this chapter is the heart of the gospel.

In chapter four, John the Revelator was invited to enter into the open door to get a glimpse of the throne room of heaven. At the center of God's reign John found a worship service going on. The entire church embodied in the twenty-four elders and the entire creation embodied in the four living creatures were bowing before the throne. All of creation finds its light, its life, and its purpose in the One seated on the throne.

The voice from heaven promised John that he would get to see what must take place (4:1). In chapter five the revealing of the divine plan begins.

5:1 Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one seated on the throne. It had writing on the front and the back, and it was sealed with seven seals.

Inside the throne room John's eye caught the scroll that was in the right hand of the One seated there. It was sealed with seven seals. In the ancient world scrolls were used by officials and dignitaries to contain their decrees. Wax seals imprinted with the ring or insignia of the ruler were used to ensure that the scroll truly declared the will of the scroll's author and that no one had altered the text in any way.

This scroll has precedence in Scripture. Once again, Ezekiel serves as a backdrop for Revelation. In Ezekiel chapter two a book of lament was written with words printed on both sides. It was given to the prophet and he was commanded not only to share its contents, but also to eat the scroll itself.

The scroll in the hand of the One seated on the throne is almost certainly intended to be the written course of history. It is the decree of God that when opened will assure that his will is done "on earth as it is in heaven."

The great theologian Jacques Ellul describes it this way, "It is the book of the secrets and of the meaning of human history, both accomplished, assured, but incomprehensible, illegible, which on the other hand is disclosed as a succession of time, which is in fact to fill all time. This book contains then the secret of the history of humanity; but this secret is inevitably the disclosure of a

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the profound forces of this history and, much more, of the action of God in the history of [humankind].”

5:2-3 I saw a powerful angel, who proclaimed in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or look inside it.

A mighty angel stepped forward and called for someone to be found worthy to open the seals on the scroll and unroll its contents. The challenge was given to the entire creation. Someone must be found in heaven, on earth, or under the earth worthy to open the scroll. To be worthy to open the scroll is to be worthy of mediating its contents to the world. This one who can open the scroll is the one who will be the instrument through whom the purposes of God written on the scroll will come to be.

But there is no person or creature in all of God’s creation found worthy to open the scroll. God’s purposes will remain sealed and therefore not enacted in his creation.

5:4 So I began to weep and weep, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look inside it.

Tears are the appropriate response for the Revelator. Unless the seals are broken and the scroll of God’s purposes unrolled, the divine redemptive scheme cannot take place.

Joseph Mangina beautifully describes the significance of John’s tears when he writes, “On hearing this, John begins to weep... Here he has a representative function: he typifies the reader, the church, and all humanity; he is ‘man.’ The question raised by the angel, we might say, is the human question. John’s weeping reminds us of the tears of other biblical figures, such as Rachel, who ‘refuses to be comforted’ for her lost children; Jesus weeping over Jerusalem or at Lazarus’s tomb... Tears not only mark the loss sustained by the self as the beloved is torn from us, but can serve as a form of protest in a world where death so often has the upper hand... John’s tears are his part in that travail and ‘groaning of creation’ of which Paul writes in Romans 8.”

The world is beyond ready for redemption. And if no one is found worthy to open the scroll of God’s redemptive purposes then things will never be set right in the creation.

5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, “Don’t weep. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has emerged victorious so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

The voice of one of the elders interrupted the Revelator’s tears. There is one who is found worthy: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. This statement, which merges together

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two familiar Messianic images, is connected to both Genesis and Isaiah. When Jacob blessed his sons from his deathbed, he compared Judah to a lion. Judah is the strong and powerful tribe, destined to rule (Gen. 49:8-10). The Root of David is likely drawn from the familiar hopes of Isaiah 11 that a shoot would emerge from the stump of Jesse and give new life to Israel.

5:6 Then, in between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb, standing as if it has been slain. It has seven horns and seven eyes, which are God's seven spirits, sent out into the whole earth. He came forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on the throne.

What John heard was a lion, but what he saw was a lamb! Eugene Boring calls this “the most mind-wrenching ‘rebirth of images’ in literature.” The reader is set up to see an image of power and might – a lion. But what the reader discovers instead is the Lamb that was slain.

I believe that this is the most powerful message the Scripture has to offer: the Lion is the Lamb. At the center of redemption is not an image of power, but an image of self-giving, sacrificial love.

Mangina powerfully describes it this way, “What John hears is a Lion, what he sees is a Lamb. What he hears is strength, what he sees is weakness. What he hears is a conqueror, what he sees is the quintessential victim – the Lamb. The Lamb is not just destined for sacrifice, moreover, but has actually been slaughtered. If what John hears is life, what he sees is death. And yet not so, because the Lamb is standing, so that the slaughter is the mark of his victory; he has passed through death and now stands somehow beyond it.”

I think it is important to recognize as Revelation continues that the Lion is not temporarily the Lamb. The Lion is eternally the Lamb. At the end of the book, when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, it is the Lamb that will be the light of the city.

This is the subversion of our imaginations that makes apocalyptic literature like Revelation necessary. I don't think that any of us at the level of our imaginations truly believes (or is able to conceive) that the vulnerability of the Lamb can be the source of victory. Conquest always goes to the strong. It always, always, always goes to the strong! But here is the inversion of the kingdom. This is the flipping of our imaginations. Self-giving love is the center of God's redemptive work and it is the source of his victory.

In so many ways how one not only interprets Revelation but also how one understands the Gospel depends upon how this text is interpreted. If the Lion of Judah only appears to be the Lamb, but still remains a Lion, then grace and love are merely temporary aspects of God's self-revelation but they will be usurped in the end by the need for power to make things right. (“Might makes right.”) But if the point of the Revelation is that the Lion is eternally the Lamb,

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then love and grace are not virtues on the way to redemption, they are the very mode of redemption itself. Therefore, those in the early church who seemingly “lose” by living as reflections of love persecuted at the hands of those who live as instruments of power have actually “won” because they have understood and entered into the war of the Lamb.

THIS IS THE KEY: THE LION IS THE LAMB. “The ‘lion’ is really the lamb, representing the ultimate power of God. This is the meaning of John’s dramatic rebirth of images... Wherever the tradition says ‘lion,’ read ‘Lamb.’” – Eugene Boring

The Lamb is full of eyes and horns. It has been granted all wisdom and power.

5:8 When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each held a harp and gold bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The Christology of the early church affirms again and again that the Lamb not only serves God. The Lamb is God. The instruments played in worship of God in chapter four are now played for the Lamb in chapter five. The adoration paid to the One on the throne by the Church is now extended also to the Lamb. The prayers of the saints that fill the throne room with the aroma of praise now are extended even to the Lamb.

5:9-14 They took up a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slain, and by your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule on earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard the sound of many angels surrounding the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. They numbered in the millions – thousands upon thousands. They said in a loud voice, “Worthy is the slaughtered Lamb to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and might, and honor, glory, and blessing.”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea – I heard everything everywhere say, “Blessing, honor, glory, and power belong to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb forever and always.” Then the four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

This great chapter ends with three hymns to the Lamb.

The first is a “new song.” (A contemporary chorus if you will.) The living creatures and the elders prostrated themselves and sang about the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll. What is most remarkable about the first song is that its primary focus was on Christ’s work of calling

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into existence a community of faithful servants “from every tribe, language, people, and nation.” The new creation is breaking in through the Lamb and through the people that he has called, filled, and formed.

The second song was taken up by millions of angels. Christ is Lord of earth and Lord of heaven.

For one final time, worship was extended out and is picked up by “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea.” The honor due the Redeemer of the created world goes to the One on the throne and to the Lamb.

“Readers live during the time when the power of God and the powers opposed to God are still in conflict. Therefore, the question is whether they will join with those who sing praises to the Lamb, or whether they will refuse to do so, and later join in the laments of those who have sought their security elsewhere.” – Craig Koester

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a coming ([2 Thessalonians 2:1](#) and [2:9](#)).
- Both Jesus and the man of sin are revealed ([2 Thessalonians 1:7](#) and [2:3](#)).
- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a gospel ([2 Thessalonians 2:10-11](#)).
- Both Jesus and the man of sin say that they alone should be worshipped ([2 Thessalonians 2:4](#)).
- Both Jesus and the man of sin have support for their claims by miraculous works ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#)).

QUESTIONS

- Where does the first beast come from? The second beast? In light of 10:1-2, and our discussion of those verses, what can we say about the ability of these beasts to disrupt God’s plan?
- Consider the first beast. Look at Rev 12:3 and Genesis 3:14-15 as well as Daniel 7, especially verses 1-7, 17, 18, and 23-27. List the characteristics of this beast.
- What similarities are there between the beasts in Daniel 7 and this beast?
- What do the beasts in Daniel 7 represent?
- What, then, might this beast represent?
- Who worships the first beast? Why?
- What is the relationship between the beast and the dragon?
- What does this beast say? What does he do?

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- What impact does this have on the saints? How can you tell that God is in control, even now?
- Detail the characteristics of the second beast. What does it mean for the beast to look like a lamb, but to speak like a dragon?
- What other lambs appear in Revelation? Who does this lamb represent?
- Contrast what transpires in Heaven and what transpires on earth. What feelings or thoughts do you have in seeing the worship of the Lamb and the worship of the Beast?
- The beast requires its subjects to get a mark on their foreheads or right hands. Look again at Rev 7:2-3. What do people have to choose between? What are the only two options?
- What are the consequences of refusing the sign of the beast? What are the implications for us today?