Who are the Two Beasts? March 27, 2022

*Revelation 13:1-18 Series: Understanding the Book of Revelation*

A man may wear Christ’s livery and do the devil’s drudgery – George Swinnock

Intro: Lotso, the despot in disguise

1. The first beast is a violent oppressor
2. It is a grotesque, vile enemy

v. 1 *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea…*

v. 2 *And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth.*

Daniel 7:3 *And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.*

1. It mockingly imitates Christ

v. 3 *One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed…*

v. 4 *And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”*

Matthew 11:27 *All things have been handed over to me by my Father*

Exodus 15:11 *Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?*

1. It is a violent oppressor of God’s people

v. 7 *Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.*

* Why do villains often present themselves as friends or allies?
* What examples can you think of when enemies of God have parodied God?
* Is it surprising that God’s people are told to expect violence and war against them? Why or why not?

1. The second beast is a powerful deceiver
2. It is a false prophet

v. 11 *Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth...*

v. 12 *It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.*

John 15:26 *the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*

1. It is a powerful imposter

v. 13 *It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people*

v. 15 *And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak…*

1. It is a convincing influencer

* vv. 16-17 *Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.*
* 2 Corinthians 11:14 *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*
* Does it surprise or concern you that the second beast will have such power to deceive? Why or why not?
* What are some examples of social trends or cultural preferences that push people away from God?
* What’s the closest you’ve gotten to experiencing something like these beasts?

1. Face the beasts with faith and discernment
2. God is control and has claimed His people

v. 5 *… it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.*

v. 7 *Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.*

v. 8 *and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.*

1. Face the beasts with endurance and faith!

* v. 10 *If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.* *Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

James 1:2-3 *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

1. Face the beasts with wisdom and discernment!

* v. 18 *This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.*
* 2 Thessalonians 2:3 *Let no one deceive you in any way.*
* Why should it provide comfort to know that God is control of the beasts’ actions?
* Why should God’s people be so accepting of persecution? What shapes the Christian perspective on suffering?
* How can you discern and differentiate the beasts’ claims, power, and influence from Christ’s?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Revelation 14:1-20

Notes