

# SESSION 1

## The Two Beasts

REVELATION 13:1–18



### Welcome

Welcome to this study of the last half of the book of Revelation. In the last session of Book 1, we watched as Satan was cast down from heaven, and discovered the real source of his rage against mankind: he is angry with God. This week we will make the unpleasant acquaintance of two of Satan's servants, and we will watch as they perform their blasphemies against the kingdom of God.



### Ice-Breaker

15 Min.

#### CONNECT WITH YOUR GROUP

Be sure to read the introductory material in the front of this book prior to the first session. To help your group members get acquainted, have each person introduce him or herself and then take turns answering one or two of the Ice-Breaker questions.

Some people seem to have a real gift of charisma, and are able to charm their way into anyone's heart. Some people seem downright scary. But some of us have looked at the most frightening face of all—the face of Death. Take a few minutes to get to know one another with the following questions.

1. What is your favorite classic monster movie?
  - Creature from the Black Lagoon.*
  - Godzilla.*
  - King Kong.*
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Who have been the most charismatic leaders in your lifetime? What made those people such compelling leaders?
3. Is there someone you know who has had a near-death experience? What brought that person back to life?



# LEADER

Ask three members of the group, selected ahead of time, to read aloud the Scripture passage. Then discuss the questions that follow, dividing into subgroups of three to six as necessary. Be sure to save at least 15 minutes for the Caring Time.

### READ SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS

We have seen Satan, our ancient enemy, fall from heaven and land with great rage on earth. Today we will watch in horror as he brings in two henchmen to help with his wicked work, blaspheming against the kingdom of God. But we will not despair, for John will continue to assure us that God has all things completely under his power. Read the following passage from Revelation, then discuss the questions that follow.

## The Two Beasts

**Reader One:**

**13** And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. He had 10 horns and seven heads. On his horns were 10 diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. <sup>2</sup>The beast I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like a bear's, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. <sup>3</sup>One of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed. The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup>They worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast. And they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to wage war against him?"

**Reader Two:**

<sup>5</sup>A mouth was given to him to speak boasts and blasphemies. He was also given authority to act for 42 months. <sup>6</sup>He began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme His name and His dwelling—those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup>And he was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them. He was also given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. <sup>8</sup>All those who live on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name was not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slaughtered.

**Reader Three:**

<sup>9</sup>If anyone has an ear, he should listen:

<sup>10</sup>If anyone is destined for captivity,  
into captivity he goes.

If anyone is to be killed with a sword,  
with a sword he will be killed.

Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

**Reader One:**

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; he had two horns like a lamb, but he sounded like a dragon. <sup>12</sup>He exercises all the authority of the first beast on his behalf and compels the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast,

whose fatal wound was healed.<sup>13</sup>He also performs great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth before people.<sup>14</sup>He deceives those who live on the earth because of the signs that he is permitted to perform on behalf of the beast, telling those who live on the earth to make an image of the beast who had the sword wound yet lived.<sup>15</sup>He was permitted to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could both speak and cause whoever would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.<sup>16</sup>And he requires everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on his right hand or on his forehead,<sup>17</sup>so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark: the beast's name or the number of his name.

**Reader Two:**

<sup>18</sup>Here is wisdom: The one who has understanding must calculate the number of the beast, because it is the number of a man. His number is 666.

Revelation 13:1–18



### QUESTIONS FOR INTERACTION

## LEADER

Refer to the Summary and Study Notes at the end of this session as needed to help with any difficult passages or imagery. If 30 minutes is not enough time to answer all the following questions, conclude the Bible Study by answering questions 6 and 7.

1. What is it about the first beast that causes the world to worship it?
  - Charm.
  - Brute force.
  - Signs and wonders.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If the first beast exercises political power, what type of power does the second beast hold?
3. The dragon and the two beasts form a sort of unholy trinity. In what other ways do these evil entities imitate and mock the power of God?
4. The second beast had “two horns like a lamb, but he sounded like a dragon.” Why does he appear like a lamb? Why does he speak like a dragon?
5. Who are some real people or entities down through history who have appeared like a lamb but spoken like a dragon?
6. Who are some of the beasts or idols in your life that test your allegiance to Christ?
7. How do you know if your name is written in the “book of life” (v. 8)?



#### GOING DEEPER:

*If your group has time and/or wants a challenge, go on to this question.*

- 8.** Note the frequent use of the word “permitted” in this passage. All power, authority, and events come from God. Find the ways in which John subtly stresses this fact here.



## Caring Time

**15 Min.**

#### APPLY THE LESSON AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

**LEADER**

Take some extra time in this first session to go over the introductory material at the front of this book. At the close, pass around your books and have everyone sign the Group Directory in the front of this book.

The things of eternity are not to be taken lightly, especially since we only have one lifetime in which to prepare for it. The first and most important step is to ensure that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- 1.** Is your name written in the book of life?
- 2.** Are you struggling at present with something or someone who competes with your allegiance to Christ? How can this group help to strengthen your faithfulness to God?
- 3.** Take some extra time in prayer, focusing on the fact that God has absolute control over all things. Pray especially for those in the group who are suffering or struggling with “divided allegiance.”



## Next Week

This week, we met two dreadful beings who assist Satan in his business of blaspheming God. However, we were comforted with the knowledge that anyone who belongs to Jesus can never be harmed by these ferocious foes. In the coming week, consider if there are any things in your own life which may be causing you to have a divided allegiance. Next week we will witness further judgments against humanity, as God's cup of wrath begins to be poured out.



## Notes on Revelation 13:1–18

**SUMMARY:** John recounts the works of the two beasts: the one from the sea (13:1b–10) and the one from the earth (13:11–18). The second beast arises who is a servant to the first beast. His purpose is to cause people to worship the first beast. He is probably meant to represent organized religion. He is later called the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). With the coming of this beast, the evil trinity is complete. Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet oppose God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**13:1 *a beast.*** This is the Antichrist. The idea of the Antichrist is found throughout the Bible. The first mention is in Daniel 7, where he makes war against God's people. Jesus spoke of "the abomination that causes desolation" who will persecute God's people (Mark 13:14). Paul called this figure "the man of lawlessness" because he will oppose God (2 Thess. 2:3–4). He is inspired by Satan and he will seek to deceive people (2 Thess. 2:9–10). ***out of the sea.*** The sea was often considered to be a place of evil. ***10 horns and seven heads.*** Like the dragon, the beast has multiple heads and horns. There is a difference, however. The dragon has seven crowns on his heads, while the beast has 10 crowns on his horns. These 10 crowns represent 10 kings (17:12). ***on his heads were blasphemous names.*** The beast has taken to himself divine names. In verse 4 he is worshiped. This accords with Paul's description of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:4).

**13:2** This beast has all the attributes of the four beasts in Daniel 7. He is the embodiment of evil, in that his power is derived from Satan. In Daniel, these beasts represent four kingdoms which were hostile to God.

**13:3** The beast was slain by the sword but later revived (v. 14). This parallels the fate of the Lamb who was slain (5:6).

**13:4 *they worshiped the beast.*** Arrayed against God and the Messiah are the dragon (Satan) and beast (the Antichrist) in a kind of supernatural symmetry, continuing the parallelism begun in verse 3. They set themselves up as counterfeit deities. The aim of the beast is not just political power as the crowns suggest, but religious

power. He seeks to gain the allegiance of the people and so subvert them from worship of the true God.

**13:5** Thus the beast speaks as if he were God, in accord with Daniel 7:8,20,25. ***42 months.*** Once again the same number appears. This is the length of time of the great persecution.

**13:6 *blaspheme.*** Not only does the beast claim to possess that which belongs to God alone (Acts 12:20–25) he goes further and actually curses and reviles God. This is an overt act of mocking the Almighty.

**13:7** The beast turns his wrath against the people of God. This is a time of great persecution. This verse does not mean that the beast succeeded in turning the saints from allegiance to God to allegiance to himself; only that he was able to kill them. However, as it turns out, these martyrs have, in fact, won a great victory (15:2). ***permitted.*** The beast was allowed for this period of time to control the world.

**13:8** All are required to worship the beast. Those who belong to the Lamb will die as martyrs because of their refusal to worship. ***the book of life.*** The registry of all who have been saved by faith in the crucified Lamb.

**13:10 *the endurance and the faith.*** Retribution will come, but not immediately. They must wait for that day.

**13:11 *two horns like a lamb.*** The second beast is a parody of Christ: a beast pretending to be a lamb.

*sounded like a dragon.* His voice gave away his true identity (Matt. 7:15–16).

**13:14 permitted.** In 13:5–7, when speaking about the first beast, the passive “is permitted” is used four times in the Greek text, emphasizing that the first beast was a front for Satan; so too here the point is made that this second beast has no independent power. It also is controlled by Satan; ultimately, his “permission” comes only from God. *an image of the beast.* He had a statue made of the first beast and used his power to make it speak. There were stories in the ancient world about statues that could speak. The intention behind this pseudomiracle is to mimic the power of God to bring life.

**13:15 cause ... to be killed.** It is the statute that commands the death of those who will not worship it, in this battle between God and Satan.

**13:16** Satan continues to mimic God and his ways. Here he causes people to be sealed with the name of the beast, just as God’s people were sealed with God’s mark in 7:3. Now there are people sealed for God and those sealed for Satan. *mark.* Brands were put on animals. Some slaves were similarly marked with the name of their owner; certain religious devotees were tattooed. This term also referred to the imperial seal that was used on official documents and on coins.

**13:18 666.** Many attempts have been made to translate this number into a name. None really succeed, since all such translation is, in the end, guesswork. Some suggest that this is a symbol not a cryptogram, and that since 7 is the perfect number, each number in the mark falls short of such perfection. Satan and his kin try to mimic God but fall short.