

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation *Chapter 13*

February 4, 2025

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Overview

- Following chapter 12's war between the woman and the dragon, chapter 13 expands on that description of the dragon's activity to show that the devil wages war against Christians through two powerful creatures, "beasts," to whom it delegates authority (221).
- The dragon masterminds his war behind the scenes, and his agent the sea beast appears as his CEO (McIlraith, 121).



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Overview

- The dragon gives this beast full authority to continue to do all his work.
- This CEO has an assistant, the land beast, the false prophet.
- In a sense, the entire Apocalypse is a very political book as it demands that Christians give God and Christ their total allegiance and not any earthly ruler (McIlraith, 121).



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Sea Beast

- Chapter 12 ended with the dragon on the shore (Rev. 12:1). Now, we see the dragon summoning a beast out of the sea.
- The sea represents the ancient chaos that was the abode of Leviathan, the great serpent-dragon (222).
- The beast, with its ten horns and seven heads, closely resembles its master the dragon; the only difference is that the diadems are on its ten horns, rather than on its seven heads as is the case for the dragon (12:3) (222)
- **Key:** Those in league with the evil one imitate him.

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Sea Beast

- **Blasphemous names:** This beast is the only individual in the Bible that does not have a name, it only has a number. But if we were to associate a name with it, this would be “blasphemy.” As we read on, we will see that blasphemy is his very essence (McIlraith, 122).
- **The beast I saw:** Reminiscent of the beast described in Daniel 7:3-8. Daniel describes four beasts – a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fourth beast with iron teeth and ten horns – that represent four hostile empires, that would arise against Israel (223).

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Sea Beast

- The beast that John sees combines the traits of the previous beasts in Daniel's visions and epitomizes diabolical and human opposition to God and his people; it is the culmination of all evil empires of history (223).
- Like its predecessors, the beast wields political and military power. John presupposes a biblical worldview in which invisible spiritual powers influence earthly political events.



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Sea Beast

- **To it the dragon gave its own power:**
The beast has received the dragon's power, throne, and authority.
- The dragon's CEO has the dragon's power and authority to continue his war (McIlraith, 122).
- Alert readers will be struck by an odd parallel between the dragon's delegation of power and authority to the beast and that of God's delegation to Christ (223).



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Lamb and Sea Beast

Lamb	Beast
The Lamb receives authority from God	The beast receives authority from the dragon
Lamb was "slain" (5:6, 12)	Beast was "mortally wounded" (13:3)
The lamb is standing (Resurrection) (5:6)	The beast's mortal wound was healed (13:3)
Four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down and worship the Lamb (5:8)	All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, all whose names are not in book of life (13:8).
Those who follow the Lamb are marked with a seal (7:4)	People are forced to be given a stamped image on their right hands or foreheads (13:16)

Key: The beast parodies the Lamb. Evil presents itself as good (2 Cor. 11:14). Satan imitates because he cannot create. He attempts to deceive (224).

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Antichrist

- In Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, the beast represents the end-time adversary of God and his people.
- In Christian writings, it came to be referred as "the antichrist," although this term does not occur in Revelation (224).
- John and his readers discerned this adversary to be embodied in the Roman Empire, which was the dominant political, military, cultural, and economic power of their day, and in the person of the emperor himself (224-225).

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God's Allows

- **Who can compare with the beast:** Their cry imitates the cry of the Old Testament to God, "Who is like you?" (e.g., Ps. 86:8). There is an echo of Michael's name here. In Hebrew *Mi-ka-el* means "Who is like God?" (McIlraith, 123).
- **Given a mouth:** The dragon does not act against God. He has not forgotten the primeval lesson that showed him the futility of this, but he does speak against God. And now the beast has been given a mouth that blasphemes God (McIlraith, 123).
- **Given authority:** Everything that the beast does (under the influence of the dragon) is permitted to him by God (McIlraith, 123).

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God and the Beast

God allows the Beast	
(i).	a mouth to blaspheme
(ii).	permission to work for forty-two months (the same amount of time as the witnesses were given)
(iii).	permission to make war on the saints and to conquer them
(iv).	universal authority
Key	The fact that the saints know that all the beast's power is from God – that God and the Lamb have total control – encourages them to persevere (McIlraith, 122).

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The Beast Boasts

- **Proud boasts and blasphemies:** Probably refer to its claiming divine prerogatives and demanding worship (227).
- **Forty-two months:** The equivalent of three and half years, the temporary period of eschatological trial prophesied in Daniel. In this instance, it seems to refer to the Church's final trial (227).
- **Given authority to act:** A divine passive, indicates God is in control; for a limited time God allows evil to run its course (228).
- **Blasphemes against God:** The beast hurls insults against God and God's name. It also insults his dwelling and those who dwell in heaven. In short, it insults God and His Church.

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The Beast Attacks

- Besides insulting the Church, it is allowed to make war and conquer the "saints."
- We know that the saints are those conquering, the Wife of Jesus, the Bridegroom, who keep alive their nuptial bond of love with Jesus.
- This bond with Jesus is now being put to the ultimate test, as it has been through all the gulags of all the centuries (McIlraith, 124).



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The Beast Attacks

- The first beast represents the state that blasphemes God and puts itself in God's place demanding that all worship it and Satan.
- The creature places itself above God. It is a very old story but one whose history has not yet ended (McIlraith, 125).



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Remaining Faithful

- **Not written from the foundation of the world:** Not everyone worships the beast. The beast is only worshipped by the earth dwellers.
- This is a technical term the book used for idolaters. Those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb do not worship the beast (McIlraith, 125).
- **Whoever has ears:** Pay careful attention!
- **Anyone destined for captivity:** An illusion to Jer. 15:2 and 43:11. Tragedy is certain to befall Jerusalem because of their sins. Here, the faithful are called to remain faithful amid suffering.

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Permitting Evil

- Why does God allow the beast to wage war against the holy ones and to conquer them?
- God allows evil to flourish; he does not desire it. God's desire is for a world absolutely free of evil, namely, the new heavens and new earth that Revelation reveals he is about to establish (230).
- When God allows evil to run its course and manifest its true nature, the difference between good and evil, between worshipping God and worshipping anything else, becomes clear. This will help some people to make better choices and find salvation (230).

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Permitting Evil

- This manifestation of evil also makes the justice of God's judgment more obvious when he condemns those who choose the worship of idols and the evil doing that accompanies it (230).
- Regarding Christians, the consistent teaching of Scripture is that trials, although temporarily painful, make us better if we endure them with faith and hope (230).
- Finally, as noticed earlier, suffering in this world is strictly time-limited. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing, or pain" (21:4) (231).

17



Land Beast

- **Out of the earth:** While the beast from the sea is associated with political power, the second beast that comes up out of the earth is associated with religious deception and later is referred to as "the false prophet" (16:13; 19:20; 20:10) (231).
- Like the first beast, it is demonic in nature although it operates in human history through human institutions and individuals (231).



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Land Beast

- **Two horns like a lamb's:** With only two horns, the land beast seems relatively harmless. Indeed, it looks like the Lamb. This deception ends when it speaks – like the dragon (McIlraith, 126).
- **Key:** The devil can present himself as an “angel of light.” However, something always betrays him. As he passes by, something is always exposed – his tail beneath his robe.
- The land beast is a powerful servant because it has the sea beast's authority. It's first task is bring the whole earth – certainly all the earth dwellers – to worship the first beast (McIlraith, 127).

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Anti-Trinity

Anti-Trinity	
Father – source of the Trinity	Dragon – directs two beasts
Son – glorifies the father; mortally wounded and risen from the dead	First beast – two horns like the lamb's; receives authority from the dragon; wounded by the sword and revived (resurrection)
Holy Spirit – glorifies Christ; stirs the hearts of believers to worship Christ	Second beast (false prophet) - glorifies the first beast of antichrist; leads “earth dwellers” to worship the beast

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Land Beast

- **Performed Great signs:** The second beast performs great signs publicly on behalf of the first beast. It imitates the signs and wonders that the two witnesses perform (11:3-5), even making fire come down out of heaven like Elijah of old (2 Kgs. 1:10-12).
- **Make an image:** In the ancient world, after an idol was made, it was customary to “animate” it by means of a magical ritual to cause the god to inhabit it and to “speak” through casting lots to obtain answers to questions, through prophetic oracles by a priest, or through a ventriloquist’s trick (233).

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Land Beast

- **Anyone who did not worship it put to death:** Recalls the archetypal biblical example of governmental-imposed idolatry, the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar that the three young men were commanded to worship on pain of death (Dan. 3) (233).
- **Stamped image:** This “mark” (NIV) of the beast mimics the “seal of the living God” (7:2-4) and the names of God and the Lamb written on the foreheads of the one hundred and forty-four thousand (14:1) and the redeemed (22:4) (233).
- The stamped image, like the seal, denotes allegiance and ownership (233).

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Land Beast

- **No one could buy or sell:** The false prophet makes this mark a condition of participation in economic society; only those having it can buy or sell. In other words, the second beast subjects Christians who refuse the mark of the beast to economic discrimination (233).
- **Six hundred and sixty-six:** There has been much speculation around the meaning of this assigned number to the second beast.
- Among its traits, the *number* of the beast is probably the least important and may pertain primarily to its manifestation in the first century (234).

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Number of the Beast

- We need to be clear that 666 is the number of the sea beast and not the land beast even though it appears immediately after the land beast material (McIlraith, 128).
- The text tells us that the number of the beast is 666. The land beast is the false prophet who works for the beast (McIlraith, 129).
- This is the only individual in the Bible that has a number and not a name. The actions of the sea beast, the totalitarian state, reduces everyone to a number, a very contemporary issue (McIlraith, 128-129).

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Number of the Beast

- What does the number signify? At the most basic level of biblical symbolism, if seven represents perfection, six signifies imperfection. Where there are three sixes, we have the superlative form of imperfection (235).
- **Calculate:** One can literally “count” the number of the beast and that it stands for a person (literally, “is the number of a man.”) (235).
- This suggests the ancient practice of of gematria (guy-MAY-tree-uh). Both in Hebrew and in Greek the letters of the alphabet were also used as numbers (235).

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Number of the Beast

- It is therefore possible to add up the numerical value of the letters and to ascertain a number for a word or phrase (235).
- When the Greek word for “beast” *thērion*, is transliterated into Hebrew (i.e., written with Hebrew letters), the numerical value of the letters is 666 (235).
- When the Greek version of Nero’s name, Caesar Neron, is transliterated into Hebrew, it also totals 666. Many scholars believe that John identifies Nero with the number of the beast. For John, the beast is a Nero-like figure and Nero was a historical embodiment of the beast (235).

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Saints' Suffering

- We should not try to identify the beast too easily. While Nero may have been a historical embodiment of the beast, the beast is a symbol of wickedness and idolatry, the very personification of those who wish to separate us from Jesus (McIlraith, 130).
- In chapter 12, we saw that the dragon attacks the child, the woman, and her offspring. In chapter 13, Satan's two agents – the two beasts – take over the world, with, strangely, God's permission. There is an attempt to seduce the saints and coerce them into idolatry. They face being conquered and killed (McIlraith, 130).

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Saints' Suffering

- It is sometimes possible to discern the spirit of the first or second beast in historical movements that manifest a family resemblance to the antichrist or the false prophet (236).

Event	Explanation
French Revolution	Tried to destroy the Church in France. Set up goddess of reason in Notre Dame Cathedral.
National Socialism in Germany	Rejected Christianity, proclaimed the Führer and the Nazi party as the nation's hope, killed millions of Jews and Christians
Communist Regimes of the 20 th century	Taught atheism, held up the party and some its leaders as saviors, persecuted religion, tried to make the Church a tool of the government.

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Deception

- Although in Revelation the second beast, the false prophet, wields political power to persecute Christians, its primary tool is deception (237).
- A major form of deception is presenting good objectives of an ideology (e.g., promoting equality, justice freedom, and love), while at the same time rejecting God's revelation (God's plan for marriage, the dignity of the human person, etc.).
- For example, the pro-choice movement highlights "choice" or freedom, privacy, the welfare of women, quality of life, and yet, the object of abortion is the direct killing of an innocent child.

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Deception

- Those who promote pornography emphasize freedom and art and yet, it objectifies women to satisfy lust.
- Those who promote euthanasia emphasize kindness and mercy to the sick and elderly and yet, the object is the direct killing of innocent people in need of compassion and love.
- Those who promote the transgender movement emphasize freedom of expression, compassion, and the dignity of the person and yet, reassignment surgeries mutilate healthy bodies (many times children) doing irreversible physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage.

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Mark of the Beast

- The “stamped image” or mark of the beast need not be physical. After all, the seal of the living God and the names of God and the Lamb (7:2-3; 14:1) that mark the faithful are spiritual rather than physical (238).
- Whatever one thinks of the use of “implanted” electronic means of managing financial transactions, the fundamental problem with the mark of the beast is a spiritual compromise with evil (238).
- To focus on a literal physical mark could lead Christians to fail to notice and refuse marks of collaboration with the beast that come in subtler forms (238).

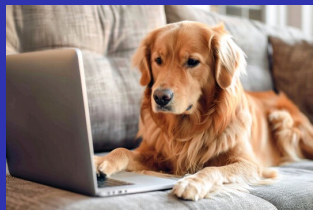
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Next Time

- Tuesday, February 18th



Revelation 14	
The Lamb's Companions	14:1-5
The Three Angels	14:6-13
The Harvest of the Earth	14:14-20

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