**Revelation 13**

I. The images of the two beasts

A. The sea beast (v. 1-10)

1. He has power and authority (v. 1, 2, 7)

2. He uses his power and authority to demand worship/allegiance (v. 3-4, 8)

3. He puts himself in place of Jesus and blasphemes God in the process (v. 1, 5-6)

4. He is violent towards those who oppose him (v. 7, 10)

5. His main weapon is intimidation

B. The land beast (v. 11-18)

1. His role is to get people to worship the sea beast (v. 12)

2. He also uses intimidation (v. 15-16)

3. His main weapon is deception (v. 11: a dragon in sheep’s clothing)

II. Who or what do these beasts represent?

A. Biblical sources of interpretation

A. Revelation 17

v. 9: the seven heads are seven kings

v. 11: the beast is an eighth king

v. 12: The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

B. Daniel 7

-Daniel sees four beasts that represent four earthly anti-god kingdoms that will emerge before God hands over his eternal kingdom to his faithful people

-Rev 13:2: = the sea beast is an amalgamation of those 4 kingdoms

B. The meaning of the images

1. So the beasts seem to represent earthly kingdoms and kings/political and military (and even spiritual) forces that assert themselves in the place of God and demand allegiance

2. These forces that were at work in Daniel’s time and John’s time may be fully embodied in a final kingdom and king that is the ultimate expression of this anti-Christ spirit in the world

C. John’s 1st century audience would have seen this as a picture of Roman Imperial Power

-17:9: the seven heads are seven hills. Rome known as ‘the city of the seven hills”

-The Caesars were claiming to be divine beings: “Lord and Savior of the universe”

-v. 3: there was a first century rumor that Caesar Nero (who committed suicide in AD68 was going to return from the east with a great army)

-They would see in the second beast the spirit of the Roman Imperial Cult: the whole religious/cultic system that promoted (and enforced) worship of Caesar

D. Multiple Fulfilments of Prophecy

1. Rome, then, became a “type” pointing to some ultimate fulfilment in the future at the end of history

2. The already/not yet reality of the anti-Christ (see 1 John 2:18, 4:4)

III. How do we be a people prepared?

A. We must be people of wisdom/discernment (v. 18)

1. Satan and his two beasts function as a deceptive counterfeit Trinity, yet they fall short of God’s perfection (666)

2. This calls us to have wisdom and discernment: am I really worshiping the true God, or am I worshiping the gods of the world and surrounding culture?

a. What is our cultures view of the good life (the American Dream), or truth, or the self, and how do those intersect with the Bible’s view of those realities?

b. We need to take our cues from Scripture rather than the surrounding culture

B. We must be people of patient endurance (v. 10)

1. Those who stand up to the beast must be prepared to take the hit (v. 10)

2. What are the subtle ways we might experience persecution or conflict if we choose to worship Jesus and follow Scripture rather than worship the gods of our culture?

3. Perspective is the thing that creates patient endurance: the perspective that we are not living for this life alone

a. Those who live for Christ and eternity may face death in this life (v. 7, 10)

b. But those who live for the beast and this life face eternal punishment (14:9-11)

c. The beast is given authority for 42 months, 1260 days, 3 ½ years (v. 5). Whatever that number means it is a limited time especially when compared with eternity

4. The ultimate question of this passage is: What life are you living for?

See 2Corinthians 4:16-18

**Discussion Questions**

1. On Sunday it was suggested that the two beasts represent something more complex than simply two future individuals who appear at the end of time (though it may include two such individuals). As you consider the verses mentioned in Revelation 17 and Daniel 7, what did you think of that interpretation, and how did it square with your own interpretation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that interpretation?

2. On Sunday it was argued that Satan and his two beasts form a kind of counterfeit trinity, mimicking the real thing. Discuss the parallels between the two trinities, and discuss the implications for our own lives.

3. Discuss this quote mentioned on Sunday: “False prophets take their cues from the way things are, not from the way things ought to be. They take their cues from the surrounding culture instead of from God’s word. And they advocate putting our trust in human power and human institutions. They encourage us, in the name of God, to seek salvation in human resources, human technology and human ideology.” (Darrell Johnson). Where do you see the church in Southern California taking its cues from the surrounding culture instead of God’s Word?

4. Revelation 13 states that remaining faithful to Jesus in the face of these two beasts calls for “patient endurance” (v. 10) and “wisdom/discernment” (v. 18). Where in your life at this time do you need patient endurance and/or wisdom?

5. Rev 13 poses this question: what life are you living for? How has God worked in your life to help you live more for eternity? How can we actively participate in that change of perspective?