

The Three Beasts

—The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet

1. The Three Beasts: The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet

In his visions, John saw three evil beasts. This lesson is about them.

“The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13).

- *The first beast came down from the heavens. This beast is called “the Dragon” (Revelation 12:3).*
- *The second beast came out of the sea. This beast is called “the Beast” (Revelation 13:1-4).*
- *The third beast came up from the earth. This beast is called “the False Prophet” (Revelation 13:11-15; Revelation 16:13).*

1 The Dragon

The first beast we encounter is the Dragon. John first sees him as “a sign in heaven” (Revelation 12:3).

The Dragon’s first act in the visions is an attempt to devour the Christ child as soon as he is born to the splendid woman (Revelation 12:4).

The Dragon and his angels makes war in heaven with Michael and his angels (Revelation 12:7). The Dragon is defeated and cast down to earth (Revelation 12:7-8).

John is in no doubt who this Dragon signifies: “The serpent of old who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

In later visions, the Dragon is locked in the Abyss for 1000 years while those who took part in “the first resurrection” reigned with Christ (Revelation 20:3-6).

We might feel secure that this 1000 years represents a restraint so complete that the Dragon need not be feared. However, the visions also tell of “a little season” during which the Dragon himself is loosed and on the rampage. So whilst the Dragon is largely bound, he still is loosed to a limited degree and “roams like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

The description "once was, now is not, and will come up" is a **parody on the title of Jesus Christ, "who is, who was, and who is to come"** (Revelation 1:8).

Satan "was" that serpent of old. He "now is not" while in the Abyss—in other words he "is not" the king even now. He "will come up" at times to seek our ruin, but he, not we, shall be destroyed (Revelation 20:10).

2 *The Beast*

In Revelation 13, we meet the second beast. It comes out of the sea (Revelation 13:1), and is called simply "the Beast". Like the king of Daniel 11:36, he "exalts and magnifies himself above every god ...against the God of Gods".

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, 13:1-8).

The form of the beast resembles a mixture of leopard, bear, and lion. This represents 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.

3 *The False Prophet*

A third beast comes out of the earth (Revelation 13:11). This beast is called "the False prophet" (Revelation 16:13). He makes an image of the Beast and forces people to worship it (Revelation 13:11-17).

The False Prophet has two horns like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon. The resemblance to a lamb indicates priesthood, but his priesthood is false because his words are the false and lying doctrines of the Dragon.

Satan's authority is given to, and exercised through, this False Prophet just as it is through the Beast (Revelation 13:11-12).

This beast, the False Prophet, represents the Antichrist (in fact many antichrists) of which John spoke in his first epistle (1John 2:18-24).

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