

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 12-13, Dragon and Two Beasts Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

Revelation 12-13 Dragon and the Two Beasts

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 12-13, Dragon and Two Beasts, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson **analyzes** Revelation chapters 12 and 13, focusing on **the symbolism of the dragon and two beasts**. He **connects** the imagery to Greco-Roman myths and, more significantly, to Genesis 3:15-16, **interpreting** the conflict as an age-old struggle between Satan and God's people. Mathewson **argues** that the beasts represent Satan's offspring, furthering his attack on the woman's offspring (the church), and **relates** this to the historical context of the Roman Empire's persecution of Christians. He also **suggests** a possible parallel between the seemingly healed wound of the beast and the Roman Empire's recovery after Nero's death.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson_Revela
tion_Session18.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture on Revelation chapters 12 and 13 by Dr. Dave Mathewson:

Briefing Document: Revelation 12 & 13 - The Dragon and the Two Beasts

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on Revelation chapters 12 and 13, focusing on the symbolism of the dragon and the two beasts. The primary purpose of these chapters is to reveal the true nature of the church's struggle, going beyond earthly conflicts to a cosmic battle against Satan and his forces. This is achieved by drawing on various backgrounds, including Greek/Roman myths, the Old Testament, and apocalyptic literature.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Revelation 12: Unveiling the True Nature of the Church's Struggle:

- **Apocalyptic Perspective:** Chapter 12 functions as a classic example of apocalyptic writing, "lifting the veil or the curtain" to reveal the spiritual reality behind the empirical world. It reveals that the earthly conflict of the church with the Roman Empire is part of a larger struggle against Satan, who seeks to destroy the Messiah and His people.
- **Satan's Defeat:** Despite the ongoing struggle, Revelation 12 makes clear that Satan has already been defeated by Christ. This provides a crucial perspective for the readers. "But chapter 12 clearly indicates that Satan has already been defeated, and Christ's kingdom has already invaded the kingdom of Satan."
- **Multiple Backgrounds:** John's imagery draws on multiple sources:
- **Greco-Roman Myths:** The imagery of a woman pursued by a dragon trying to devour her child has parallels in myths like Leto and Apollo and Python. John uses these familiar stories to point towards a "true version".
- **Old Testament:** More importantly, John draws heavily from the Old Testament, especially Genesis 3:15-16 (the Protoevangelion). The conflict between the serpent and the woman, and their respective offspring, provides a foundational understanding for the battle depicted in Revelation 12.

- **Genesis Echoes:** Mathewson points out that various details from Genesis are echoed in Revelation 12: "The promise that her offspring, there would be enmity between his offspring, the dragons or the serpents in Genesis 3, and her offspring is also represented in the dragon going after her offspring at the end of chapter 12 of Revelation."
 - Enmity between the serpent and woman (Gen 3:15) is reflected in the dragon pursuing the woman.
 - The serpent bruising the heel of the offspring is reflected in the dragon's attempt to devour the son and attack the woman's offspring.
 - The woman's pain in childbirth is echoed in her cries in Revelation 12.
 - The dragon is identified as "the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan" directly linking back to Genesis 3.
 - **The Church:** The woman and her offspring (both the son and later followers) represent the church as both the recipient of God's protection and also as an entity that faces persecution.
 - **Ephesians 6:** Revelation 12 can be seen as an expanded commentary on Paul's spiritual warfare passage in Ephesians 6:12: "your battle is not with flesh and blood, but with the rulers and authorities of the heavenly realms." The focus is shifted to the deeper spiritual battle behind earthly struggles.
 - **Resolution:** The death and resurrection of Christ have already dealt the death blow to Satan, despite his ongoing attacks. This encourages believers to see their suffering in a larger context. "The crushing wound has already been administered. Satan has already been defeated because of the death and resurrection of Christ."
1. **Revelation 13: The Dragon's Offspring – The Two Beasts:**
- **Chapter 13 as Further Explanation:** Chapter 13 is not a chronological sequel to 12, but rather provides a more detailed explanation of *how* Satan attacks the woman's offspring, even while she is protected. "I think chapter 13 is simply a further way of describing in more detail how it is that Satan goes after the woman's offspring."
 - **The Dragon's Helpers:** The dragon, standing on the seashore, summons two beasts to help him in his assault. These two beasts are described as the offspring of the dragon, from Genesis 3:15.

- **The Beast from the Sea:Description:** It has "ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name," resembling a leopard, bear, and lion.
- **Authority:** It receives its power, throne, and authority from the dragon, indicating a satanic origin.
- **Worship:** This beast seeks worship and causes people to blaspheme God.
- **Connection to the Abyss** This beast comes from the sea (which is linked to the abyss) connects back to the beast of chapter 11 that slays the two witnesses. This sea monster often represents chaos and evil and is linked to oppressive nations and rulers, especially as depicted in the Old Testament.
- **Interpretation:** The beast from the sea likely symbolizes the Roman Empire and its emperor, the oppressive pagan power that opposes God's people. "I'm convinced the first beast like the figure of a beast coming associated with the sea and the abyss in the Old Testament, now symbolizes an oppressive pagan empire and its ruler, and that is the Roman Empire." It is the culmination of the oppressive empires represented by the beasts in Daniel 7.
- **Wounded Head:** This beast has a head that appears to have suffered a fatal wound but has healed which can be linked to the defeat of Satan at the cross, and possibly with Nero's death and the Roman Empire's apparent recovery.
- **The Beast from the Land:Description:** This beast has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon.
- **Authority:** It exercises the authority of the first beast and promotes the worship of the first beast.
- **Deception:** It deceives people through miraculous signs.
- **Interpretation:** The beast from the land may represent a local authority or power structure, within Asia Minor, that enforces the worship of the Roman Empire.
- **Parody of the Trinity:** The three figures (dragon, beast from sea, and beast from land) may represent a perverted parody of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), with the dragon as Satan, the first beast a parody of Christ, and the second beast a parody of the Holy Spirit.

- **Apocalyptic Literature:** John draws on apocalyptic literature (e.g., 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra) and the concept of two monsters, Leviathan (sea) and Behemoth (land), though John gives them a unique application.

1. **Symbolism and Interpretation:**

- **Old Testament Texts:** John "juggles" or constructs a "mosaic" of several Old Testament texts, and in doing so, those Old Testament texts enhance and help to interpret his vision.
- **Context:** The text is not meant to be interpreted literally, but rather through the lens of its historical and spiritual context.
- **Purpose:** The overall purpose of these chapters is to provide perspective for the church, reminding them that their struggles are part of an age-old cosmic battle, but that Christ has already secured their ultimate victory. This is to give the readers perspective: "When they look out and see what's going on in the empire, all they see is what goes on from an empirical perspective. But now, by lifting the curtain, they see, no, this is not new. This is simply part of an age-old struggle that goes all the way back to creation."

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson's lecture provides a rich understanding of the complex symbolism in Revelation chapters 12 and 13. By understanding the various backgrounds and themes, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the cosmic struggle and the ultimate victory of Christ. These chapters offer encouragement to the church, reminding them of the true nature of their battles and the reality of Satan's defeat.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 12-13, Dragon and Two Beasts

Revelation Chapters 12-13: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary function of Revelation chapter 12, according to Mathewson?
2. What two backgrounds does John draw upon when creating the imagery in chapter 12, and how are they used?
3. How does Mathewson use Genesis 3:15-16 to explain the events of Revelation 12?
4. What is the significance of the dragon being identified as the "ancient serpent" in Revelation 12:9?
5. In Mathewson's interpretation, who or what do the two beasts of chapter 13 represent?
6. How does Mathewson explain the "fatal wound" of the first beast in chapter 13, and what possible historical context might be relevant?
7. How do the beasts in chapter 13 relate to the dragon and to the woman's offspring?
8. What two things does Mathewson suggest the sea symbolizes in Revelation?
9. What is the significance of the first beast being described as a combination of a leopard, a bear, and a lion?
10. How does Mathewson explain the idea of an "unholy trinity" in Revelation 13?

Answer Key

1. According to Mathewson, the primary function of Revelation 12 is to reveal the true nature of the church's struggle, lifting the veil to show that behind their earthly conflict with the Roman Empire lies Satan's attempt to destroy the Messiah and his people. It demonstrates that Satan has already been defeated and has only a short time left.

2. John draws upon Greco-Roman myths about a woman pursued by a dragon, using familiar stories to demonstrate the true embodiment of these stories in Christ, and also draws from Old Testament texts, particularly Genesis 3, highlighting the ongoing struggle between good and evil.
3. Mathewson uses Genesis 3:15-16 to explain that the enmity between the woman and the serpent, her pain in childbirth, and the conflict between their offspring are all reflected in Revelation 12, demonstrating a repetition of the original conflict between God and Satan.
4. The identification of the dragon as the "ancient serpent" in Revelation 12:9 directly connects the dragon to the serpent in Genesis 3, linking the original act of deception with the ongoing battle against Satan and his influence.
5. Mathewson suggests the two beasts of chapter 13 represent the offspring of the dragon from Genesis 3:15. They are the means by which the dragon attacks the woman's offspring, serving as agents of Satan's power on Earth.
6. The "fatal wound" of the first beast is primarily attributed to the death and resurrection of Christ, which defeated Satan. Some also see it as a possible reference to the chaos that ensued when Nero died before Rome's apparent recovery.
7. The beasts, as the dragon's offspring, are used to persecute the woman's offspring. The dragon gives them their authority, and they are the agents by which he continues to try and wreak havoc on God's people.
8. Mathewson suggests the sea symbolizes both evil and chaos, and it is associated with the abyss, a place of demonic activity. It may also be used to indicate the distance to Rome from Asia Minor.
9. The combination of the leopard, bear, and lion represents all the oppressive kingdoms of the past, culminating in the Roman Empire. John combines the four beasts of Daniel's vision into a single figure to portray the intensity of the opposition against God's people.
10. Mathewson suggests the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast represent a perverse parody of the Trinity. The dragon (Satan) counterfeits God, the first beast counterfeits Christ, and the second beast counterfeits the Holy Spirit.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of apocalyptic literature as a literary genre within the context of Revelation, including its purpose and interpretive challenges. How does Mathewson's lecture address these aspects?
2. Analyze the use of Old Testament imagery, particularly from Genesis 3 and other passages, in Revelation 12 and 13. How does John employ these themes to convey a message about the conflict between good and evil?
3. Explore the various ways that the symbols of the dragon and the two beasts might have been interpreted by John's first-century audience. What aspects of the Roman Empire and its culture would have resonated with these symbols?
4. Examine Mathewson's claims about the "unholy trinity" in Revelation 13. How persuasive is his argument that the dragon, first beast, and second beast parody the true Trinity? What are the implications of such a claim?
5. Evaluate Mathewson's argument that chapter 13 is not a chronologically distinct event following chapter 12. What textual and thematic evidence does he present to support his claim, and what implications does this interpretation have for our understanding of the book of Revelation?

Glossary of Key Terms

Apocalyptic Literature: A genre of writing characterized by symbolic visions, cosmic struggles, and the unveiling of hidden realities, often focused on the end times and God's ultimate victory over evil.

Proto-Evangelion: Refers to Genesis 3:15, the first biblical prophecy of the gospel and the promise of redemption, seen as an early prophecy of Jesus' victory over Satan.

Enmity: A state of deep-seated hostility or antagonism between two parties.

Sea Monster/Dragon Figure: A symbolic representation of chaos, evil, and oppressive rulers or nations that oppose God and his people, often depicted in the Old Testament and in other ancient near-eastern literature.

Abyss: A deep, bottomless pit or chasm often associated with the underworld and demonic forces.

Leviathan: A sea monster from Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic texts, often representing chaos and evil. In Revelation, the sea beast is thought to represent some form of governmental power.

Behemoth: A land monster from Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic texts, often representing earthly power and opposition to God. In Revelation, the land beast is thought to represent religious power that supports earthly power.

Blasphemy: Speech or actions that show contempt or lack of reverence for God or sacred things.

Unholy Trinity: A term used to describe the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast, as they pervert and oppose the true Trinity of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Greco-Roman Myths: The stories and beliefs of ancient Greek and Roman cultures, including their pantheon of gods and their explanations of the world.

Empirical Reality: Reality as perceived through the senses and scientific observation, as opposed to a spiritual or apocalyptic reality.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 12-13, Dragon and Two Beasts, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Revelation 12-13, The Dragon and the Two Beasts

- **What is the primary purpose of Revelation chapter 12?** Revelation chapter 12 serves to reveal the true nature of the church's struggle. It lifts the veil, allowing readers to see beyond their earthly conflict with the Roman Empire and understand that their real battle is against Satan's attempt to destroy not only the Messiah but also his followers. This chapter shows that Satan has already been defeated by Christ, and the church's earthly struggles are part of a larger spiritual battle.
- **What are the common backgrounds that influence the imagery in Revelation 12?** John draws upon two significant backgrounds: Greco-Roman myths and Old Testament stories. The Greco-Roman stories often involve a woman pursued by a dragon or serpent figure trying to devour her child, a theme similar to the story in Revelation 12. More importantly, John draws from the Old Testament, particularly Genesis 3:15-16, depicting the enmity between the serpent and the woman and her offspring, as well as stories of sea monsters and dragons representing oppressive nations.
- **How does the narrative in Revelation 12 relate to Genesis 3?** Revelation 12 echoes key elements from Genesis 3:15-16. The conflict between the woman and the dragon parallels the enmity between the woman and the serpent. The dragon's pursuit of the woman and her offspring mirrors the serpent's attacks in Genesis. Even the woman's pain in childbirth connects to God's judgment on the woman in Genesis 3. John uses these parallels to show that the struggles of the church are not new but a continuation of the age-old conflict.
- **Who are the two beasts in Revelation 13, and how do they relate to the dragon?** The two beasts in Revelation 13 are the dragon's offspring, stemming from Genesis 3:15, and are his agents in attacking the woman's offspring. The first beast, emerging from the sea, has characteristics similar to the dragon (seven heads and ten horns) and receives power and authority from him. The second beast, coming from the earth, promotes worship of the first beast and uses deceptive signs. These two beasts function as extensions of the dragon's power, enabling him to persecute the church.

- **What is the significance of the first beast coming from the sea?** The sea is a symbol of chaos and evil, often associated with the abyss. The beast coming from the sea connects to Old Testament depictions of sea monsters representing oppressive nations and idolatrous rulers, especially figures like Pharaoh. In the context of Revelation, the beast coming from the sea can be interpreted as the Roman Empire and its emperor, the major oppressive force the first century Christians were facing.
- **What could be the significance of the second beast coming from the land?** While the first beast represents an oppressive empire from across the sea, the second beast is associated with something from their own soil, possibly local authorities within Asia Minor who collaborate with the Roman Empire. This second beast deceives the inhabitants of the earth, leading them to worship the first beast and to persecute those who refuse.
- **How do the dragon and two beasts function as a parody of the Trinity?** Revelation presents an "unholy trinity." The dragon, representing Satan, holds primary authority. The first beast, with a seemingly fatal wound that heals, mirrors Jesus Christ's death and resurrection in a perverted way. The second beast, who encourages the worship of the first beast, acts as a dark parody of the Holy Spirit's role. The intent of this unholy trinity is to usurp the worship and authority due to the true God and His Messiah.
- **How does Revelation 12-13 help the readers in the first century understand their situation?** Revelation 12-13 provide a new perspective on the struggles that the first-century Christians were facing. These chapters reveal that their conflict with the Roman Empire is not just a political or physical struggle but a part of a much larger spiritual battle that has been ongoing since the beginning. The imagery helps the Christians to see that Satan has already been defeated by Christ, giving them hope and encouragement in the midst of their persecution. It also shows that the beastly and oppressive empire of Rome is actually part of a demonic power and encourages them not to compromise or conform to it.