

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 19, Revelation 13, Two Beasts Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 13, Two Beasts, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture analyzes Revelation chapter 13, focusing on the **two beasts** as symbolic representations of the **Roman Empire's oppressive power** and its influence. The **first beast**, possibly the empire itself or the emperor, demands universal worship, mirroring God's attributes in a blasphemous imitation. The **second beast**, interpreted as provincial officials enforcing imperial worship, facilitates the first beast's actions through deception and economic control. The **number 666**, possibly referencing Nero as a symbol of evil emperors, calls for discernment rather than literal calculation. The lecture ultimately aims to equip first-century Christians to resist the Roman Empire's idolatry and oppression.

2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 19 – 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_Session19.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Revelation 13:

Briefing Document: Revelation 13 - The Two Beasts

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture (Session 19) on Revelation Chapter 13, focusing on the interpretation of the two beasts and their implications for the original audience and the broader themes of Revelation. Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that Chapter 13 unveils the spiritual reality behind the earthly persecution of Christians, highlighting the demonic forces at play and urging believers to remain faithful and resist compromise with the Roman Empire.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **The First Beast (Verses 1-8): A Satanic Imitation of God and the Roman Empire**
 - **Universal Worship and Allegiance:** The first beast demands universal worship and allegiance, mirroring God's rightful claim to such devotion. This is seen as a perversion, a "satanic imitation of God" (p. 2) and potentially a specific reference to the emperor cult.
 - **Claim of Invincibility:** The beast is seen as invincible. The question, "who is like the beast, and who can make war against him?" (p. 1) parodies the Old Testament question of "who is like God?" (p. 2).
 - **Blasphemy and Slander:** The beast blasphemes God and slanders His name, possibly reflecting the emperor cult's claims of divinity and potentially recalling Daniel 7.
 - **Limited Time of Activity:** The beast is active for "42 months," connecting its activity to other time references in Revelation (e.g. the casting out of the outer court in chapter 11) and showing that the events of Chapter 13 are not meant to be interpreted as happening chronologically after chapter 12. (p. 2)
 - **War Against the Saints:** The beast makes war with the saints, revealing the demonic nature of their struggle and linking to earlier chapters where the Dragon (Satan) persecutes the woman and her offspring.

- **Claims of Sovereignty:** The beast claims sovereignty over the entire earth, which is portrayed as a deliberate hyperbole to highlight Rome's dominant power but also to demonstrate how the kingdom of the world will be transferred from the beast to God. (p. 3)
 - **God's Sovereignty:** Despite the beast's power, the text repeatedly states that the beast was “given” authority, which demonstrates that God remains sovereign over all, including the beast and Satan. God does not have any rivals. (p. 4)
 - **Rome as an Agent of Satan:** The beast is identified as the Roman Empire (and likely the emperor) and as the agent of Satan, so compromise with Roman rule is giving allegiance to Satan. (p. 5)
 - **Call to Discernment:** Verses 9-10, an insertion in the text, is a call for believers to discern the true nature of their struggle and to respond with perseverance in obedience.
1. **The Second Beast (Verses 11-17): The Means of Enforcing Roman Authority**
- **Connection to the Dragon:** The second beast speaks like a dragon, connecting it to Satan, and it exercises the authority of the first beast.
 - **Enforcing Authority of the First Beast:** The second beast represents the means by which the Roman Empire enforces its authority over its provinces, particularly Asia Minor.
 - **Provincial Leaders:** Dr. Mathewson suggests the second beast could represent the leaders and officials in the provinces of Asia Minor, who enforced emperor worship and loyalty to Rome. (p. 7)
 - **Deceptive Power:** This beast is able to deceive people into worshipping the first beast through various means, which echoes the deceptive nature of Satan in earlier chapters. The means include fire coming down from heaven and giving life to an image, perhaps reminiscent of the Old Testament events and miraculous signs. (p. 8)
 - **The False Prophet:** The second beast is also described as a false prophet, linking it to false teachers and prophetic figures in the churches of Asia Minor who were encouraging Christians to compromise with the Roman Empire. This connects to examples of false teaching in chapters 2 and 3 (e.g., Balaam, Nicolaitans, Jezebel). (p. 9)

- **Economic Sanctions:** The second beast enforces economic sanctions on those who refuse to worship the first beast, requiring a “mark” for participation in commerce which is an evil perversion of the seal that the followers of God are given. This mirrors how trade guilds in first-century Rome were intertwined with emperor worship and created pressure to conform. (p. 10-11)

1. **The Mark of the Beast and 666 (Verse 18): A Call for Discernment**

- **Symbolic Mark:** The mark on the forehead is likely a symbol of identity and allegiance to the beast, a counterfeit to the mark/seal that God gives his followers.
- **666 as a Number of Man:** The number 666 is a call for wisdom and discernment, and it should not be used in the context of modern, technological speculation. (p. 11-12)
- **Gematria:** The practice of Gematria (assigning numerical values to letters) is likely the context for the number 666.
- **Nero as a Possible Reference:** The most common historical association is with the name "Nero," possibly not as a literal reference, but as a model of evil embodied in the present emperor. The spelling of Nero in Hebrew to achieve the number 666 is somewhat debated.
- **Imperfect Number:** Another explanation is that 666 is a number that signifies imperfection and evil. It is seen as falling short of the perfect number 777, portraying the emperor as an evil, idolatrous human.

Implications for the Original Audience:

- **Spiritual Warfare:** Chapter 13 is intended to reveal the true nature of the struggle facing the churches in Asia Minor. Their persecution comes from a demonic source, not merely from human authorities.
- **Call to Resist Compromise:** The chapter is a stark warning against compromising with the Roman Empire and the emperor cult. Such compromises are seen as giving allegiance to Satan.
- **Perseverance and Endurance:** The knowledge of the spiritual reality behind their suffering should empower the Christians to persevere and endure in their faith, resisting the pressure to conform.

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson's analysis of Revelation 13 emphasizes the importance of understanding the spiritual dimension of earthly struggles. The two beasts represent the demonic power behind the Roman Empire, urging believers to reject idolatry, resist compromise, and persevere in their faith with spiritual insight and perseverance. The call to wisdom concerning the number 666 is not about decoding future events, but about discerning the true nature of the conflict and remaining faithful to God.

Key Quotes:

- "So, the beast is to be understood in the context of a satanic imitation of God." (p. 2)
- "Compromising with Roman rule is not a neutral thing, but compromising with Roman rule is now to be seen as ultimately giving allegiance to Satan himself." (p. 5)
- "The beast number two probably represents the leaders and the official officials in the provinces of Asia Minor who are responsible for enforcing things like emperor worship." (p. 7)
- "So, probably, this should be taken symbolically again and indicate identity and belonging or allegiance and association, depending on whose name one bears." (p. 12)
- "It's a call for wisdom so that they can have true discernment and insight into their situation." (p. 11)
- "...666 would be one short of the perfect number 777. So this would be the number of sinful, fallen, godless, idolatrous humanity now embodied in the human ruler Domitian..."(p.15)

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of the key ideas and themes discussed in Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Revelation 13. It serves as a valuable resource for understanding the complex symbolism and its relevance for the original audience and for contemporary readers of Revelation.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 19, Revelation 13, Two Beasts

Revelation Chapter 13: The Two Beasts - Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 complete sentences each.

1. According to the lecture, what is the significance of the beast claiming universal worship and allegiance?
2. How does the language used to describe the beast connect back to the Old Testament? Give a specific example.
3. What are the different ways the lecture explains the symbolic meaning of the "42 months" during which the beast is active?
4. How does the lecturer describe the relationship between the first beast and the dragon?
5. Why does the lecture suggest that the depiction of Rome's universal authority might be intentionally hyperbolic?
6. What is the significance of the repeated phrase that the beast was "given" authority?
7. According to the lecture, what is the primary purpose of the first beast?
8. How does the lecture distinguish between the roles and functions of the first and second beasts?
9. What actions does the second beast perform to deceive people, and what might these actions symbolize?
10. What is the significance of the mark of the beast in relation to the mark or seal given to God's people?

Answer Key

1. The beast's claim to universal worship is a perversion of God's rightful claim to worship and highlights the beast's pride and arrogance. It also reflects the Roman Empire's attempt to absolutize its power, demanding allegiance that only belongs to God. This claim is a satanic imitation of God.

2. The language used to describe the beast, particularly the question "Who is like the beast?" is a parody of Old Testament passages where God's unique majesty and power are questioned. The specific example is Exodus 15:11, where Moses asks, "Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?"
3. The "42 months" or its equivalents (time, times, and half a time; 1260 days) link the beast's activity to other periods of testing, tribulation, and persecution within Revelation. It connects the beast's actions with the casting out of the outer court in chapter 11, the witness of the two witnesses, and Satan's activity in chapter 12. All of these represent the time the church is under trial.
4. The first beast is presented as the agent of the dragon (Satan), acting on his behalf to oppress God's people. This demonstrates that the power of the beast is not independent but derives from Satan's influence. The beast is how the dragon makes war against the woman's offspring.
5. The depiction of Rome's universal authority as hyperbolic serves to emphasize Rome's complete domination and power at the time the book was written, reflecting the author's intent to show its immense influence. It also highlights a broader principle of an evil empire's worldwide rule, of which Rome is just the first manifestation.
6. The repeated phrase "the beast was given authority" underscores God's ultimate sovereignty over events, implying that Satan and the beast's actions are permitted by God, and their power is not inherent. God is seen as having no rivals.
7. The primary purpose of the first beast is to demonstrate the true source of the saints' trouble, persecution, and difficulty, which is rooted in the demonically inspired power behind the Roman Empire. This understanding helps Christians see their persecution in its true spiritual context.
8. The first beast represents the Roman Empire and its emperor, which seeks universal worship and makes war against the saints. The second beast is the means by which the first beast's authority is enforced in the provinces, perhaps through local officials, and deceives people into emperor worship. The second beast carries out the activity of the first beast.
9. The second beast deceives people through performing seemingly miraculous signs, such as fire coming down from heaven and giving life to an image. These actions likely symbolize the deceptive power of the Roman Empire, reminiscent of

Old Testament acts, and may point to false prophets and teachers in the churches.

10. The mark of the beast on the forehead is a parody of the seal that God gives his followers, showing identity and belonging. Whereas God's people have his name on their forehead, the mark of the beast indicates allegiance to the beast/empire, and is a mark of exclusion from those things promised to the overcomers in Revelation.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Please develop a thorough response to each of the following essay questions.

1. Analyze the significance of Old Testament allusions and parallels in Revelation 13, focusing on how these references contribute to the author's theological and political message.
2. Discuss the symbolic nature of the two beasts in Revelation 13. How do they represent different aspects of power, deception, and oppression in the context of the Roman Empire?
3. Evaluate the implications of the "mark of the beast" in Revelation 13. What does it represent in the context of identity, allegiance, and the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world?
4. How does Revelation 13 function as a call to discernment and resistance for the early church? How can the lessons within it be applied to contemporary situations?
5. Compare and contrast how the lecture portrays the beast in the first section of chapter 13 to how it portrays the beast in the second section. What are the implications of these different characterizations?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocalyptic Literature:** A genre of prophetic writing characterized by symbolic language, visions of the future, and dualistic themes of good versus evil, often revealing heavenly realities and God's ultimate triumph.
- **Beast (in Revelation 13):** A symbolic figure representing earthly power, particularly the Roman Empire and its emperor. There are two beasts: the first representing the Roman Empire and the second representing its enforcement of imperial control.
- **Blasphemy:** The act of speaking irreverently or disrespectfully about God or sacred things; in Revelation, often attributed to the beast's claims of divinity.
- **Dragon (in Revelation):** A symbolic figure representing Satan, the ultimate source of evil and opposition to God. The dragon gives power to the first beast.
- **Dualism:** A concept that involves two opposing entities, such as good and evil, light and darkness. Revelation does not promote a dualism where these entities are on equal footing; instead, it highlights God's supremacy over all.
- **Emperor Cult:** The practice of worshiping the Roman emperor as a god, often involving sacrifices, temples, and oaths of loyalty, particularly common in the Roman provinces.
- **False Prophet:** A figure in Revelation who deceives people and promotes idolatry, often associated with the second beast and with false teachers in churches.
- **Gematria:** An ancient practice of assigning numerical values to letters of the alphabet, used to calculate the numerical value of names and words, sometimes to discover hidden meanings.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally, often used in apocalyptic literature to emphasize the significance or extent of something.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of anything other than the one true God, often involving statues, temples, and practices that give allegiance to false gods or rulers.
- **Mark of the Beast:** A symbolic mark received by those who give allegiance to the beast, often on their foreheads or hands, allowing them to participate in trade and commerce. This is a parody of the mark of God.

- **Parody:** An imitation of something, often in a satirical or mocking manner; in Revelation, used to highlight the perversion of true worship.
- **Sovereignty (of God):** The concept that God is the supreme ruler of the universe, having ultimate power and authority over all of creation and all of history. God's sovereignty is highlighted in the lecture's claim that God only permitted the beast to act.
- **Unjust Commerce:** Refers to the economic practices of the Roman Empire, which are presented as unbalanced, oppressive and unjust. This is illustrated in chapter 6 and again in the reference to trade guilds in this chapter.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 19, Revelation 13, Two Beasts, Biblicalelearning.

FAQ on Revelation 13: The Two Beasts

1. **Who are the two beasts described in Revelation 13, and how do they relate to each other?** The first beast is a symbol of the Roman Empire and its emperor, representing a power that demands worship and allegiance, much like empires of the past. It is seen as an agent of Satan and a parody of God. The second beast acts as the means by which the first beast exerts its influence, particularly in the provinces like Asia Minor. The second beast represents the local leaders and officials who enforce emperor worship and allegiance to Rome. The second beast carries out the agenda of the first beast.
2. **What does the worship of the first beast signify, and how does it connect to Old Testament themes?** The worship of the first beast signifies the idolatrous and blasphemous act of giving absolute allegiance and worship to a worldly power instead of God. This act is a perversion of true worship and echoes Old Testament accounts of idolatry where nations and rulers usurped the authority that belongs only to God. The language used in Revelation 13, like "who is like the beast?" is directly pulled from Old Testament texts such as Exodus 15:11, Isaiah 44:7, and Psalm 89:10, where such language is used in praise of the one true God.
3. **What is the significance of the 42 months mentioned in relation to the first beast's activity?** The 42 months is a symbolic period that ties the beast's activity to other periods of time mentioned in Revelation, such as the time of testing in chapter 11 and Satan's activity in chapter 12. These are all various ways of referring to the same time period which represents the church in a time of tribulation and persecution. These periods are not necessarily consecutive but are different ways of describing the same time of testing.

4. **How does the first beast make war with the saints, and what is the true source of this struggle for Christians?** The first beast makes war with the saints through various forms of persecution and oppression, forcing them to choose between allegiance to Rome and loyalty to God. The true source of this struggle for Christians, according to Revelation, is not merely a political battle but a spiritual one against a demonically-inspired power, specifically Satan, and his agents, including earthly powers. This highlights the underlying spiritual dimension of their persecution. The first beast, therefore, acts as the dragon's (Satan's) agent in the earthly realm.
5. **Why is the second beast described as speaking "like a dragon," and what is its primary role?** The second beast speaks like a dragon because it is also ultimately acting under the influence of Satan (the dragon). Its primary role is to enforce the first beast's agenda, deceiving people into worshiping the Roman Empire and its emperor. Specifically, it represents the local leaders who compel people to participate in emperor worship.
6. **How does the second beast deceive people, and what is the significance of the "fire from heaven" and the speaking image?** The second beast deceives people through a variety of means, including performing deceptive signs like fire coming down from heaven and giving a lifeless image the ability to speak. These are not necessarily literal events but rather are symbols of the Roman Empire's deceptive power to manipulate people into allegiance and worship. They allude to the Old Testament stories like Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 3, using that language to symbolize the power of the Roman Empire to deceive.
7. **What is the "mark of the beast," and what does it symbolize in the context of Revelation 13?** The "mark of the beast" is a symbol of allegiance and belonging to the Roman Empire, specifically to the beast (Rome) and its emperor, a contrast to those who bear the seal of God. Those who take the mark are allowed to engage in commerce, while those who refuse are subject to economic hardship. This mark is not necessarily a physical brand but a symbol of one's allegiance, often demonstrated through participation in emperor worship or trade guilds which required acknowledgment of the emperor's divinity.

8. **What is the significance of the number 666, and how should Christians approach its interpretation?** The number 666 is a call for discernment and wisdom in light of the deceptive nature of idolatry. It is not primarily intended to be a puzzle to be solved for end-time calculations. The most common explanation for 666 is that it is a reference to the name of Nero using Gematria in Hebrew (though some argue this is unlikely because it requires rare spellings), where the letters in a name would be given numerical values and summed. Another view is that 666 is one short of the perfect number (777), thereby symbolizing the imperfect and evil nature of the beast (and Rome) and the emperor as well as godless humanity, and is a deliberate contrast to the perfect nature of God. Ultimately, this is a call for insight to recognize and resist idolatry, oppression, and any worldly power that attempts to usurp the authority of God, rather than an exact historical identification.