

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 18, Revelation 12-13 Dragon and the Two Beasts

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Hey everyone, and welcome back. We are diving deep today, even deeper. That's right, into the book of Revelation oh, yeah- chapters 12 and 13 specifically. Lots to unpack; they're using Dr.

Dave Mathewson's lecture as our guide. Great source it is. Get ready for some seriously wild imagery- wild. I'm talking dragons, beasts rising from the sea. A woman giving birth- intense. Yeah, it's intense, but there are layers of meaning beneath these vivid descriptions that we're going to unpack together. Absolutely, and that's what makes Revelation so fascinating. It uses all this symbolism to reveal these deeper truths about spiritual conflicts. Okay, so Dr. Mathewson argues that chapter 12 shows us the true nature of the church's struggle. Yeah, and it connects it to Satan's attempts to destroy both the Messiah and his followers. Yeah, big conflict. It sounds pretty epic; it really is like a cosmic battle playing out on a historical stage, and the lecture highlights this interesting concept of the Already, but not yet, victory of Christ over Satan. It's a bit of a theological puzzle. But think of it like this: Imagine knowing you've won a huge prize, but you haven't actually received it yet. You're already a winner, but there are still challenges to navigate before you can fully experience the victory; that's a great analogy. Yeah, so Satan has ultimately lost, but he's still out there, right, trying to cause chaos. Yeah, it makes you wonder how this idea of a larger spiritual conflict might connect with our own experiences. Have you ever felt like you were facing Overwhelming odds in your life?

Yeah, maybe this idea of a spiritual battle resonates with you. I think it's something a lot of people can relate to. Absolutely, and that's one of the things that makes Revelation so powerful, right? It speaks to those universal human experiences of struggle and the hope for ultimate victory. One of the things that really struck me about Dr. Mathewson's lecture was how he brought in ancient myths oh, yeah, Old Testament stories to help us understand the symbolism in Revelation. He even uses the example of the Lido and Apollo myth Interesting where Lido gives birth to Apollo while being pursued by a dragon like figure named Python Classic right and later Apollo returns to defeat Python, right? It's a classic hero story, but John, the author of Revelation, right, isn't endorsing these myths Yeah, he's drawing familiar imagery to illustrate a deeper truth rooted in the Bible itself So it's like he's using a language that his audience would have understood exact drawing on those shared cultural stories Yeah, but pointing them towards something even more profound and the key to unlocking that deeper truth Yeah, it's found in Genesis three point one five sixteen. Okay, the conflict between the serpent and the woman's offspring, right? It's like John is saying, remember that ancient story.

Well, this is the cosmic version playing out on a grand scale. That's so cool Yeah, so we've got the dragon pursuing the woman and child in Revelation which echoes that Lido and Apollo myth But the real meaning is rooted in Genesis in that ongoing conflict between the serpents offspring and the woman's offspring It's almost like John took a familiar Storytelling trope and gave it this epic divine twist and the parallels between Genesis and Revelation 12

are striking Yeah Both mention the enmity between the dragon or the serpent and the woman both Described the dragon pursuing the child and both even mentioned birth pains Wow It's like a deliberate echo connecting these two key moments in biblical history It really makes you appreciate the artistry and intentionality of the text now if the dragon represents Seton Then who are his offspring in this cosmic drama? That's where the two beasts of Revelation 13 come into play. Exactly. These beasts are directly connected to the dragon, and their whole purpose is to persecute the woman's offspring, right? Which Dr. Mathewson interprets as the church or the living embodiment of that Genesis prophecy about the conflict between the serpent seed and the woman's seed, and they're described in some seriously terrifying detail. Oh, yeah, they both have seven heads and ten horns like the dragon just like the dragon which emphasizes their shared power and authority representing that.

Yeah, it's almost as if evil is multiplying and taking on these monstrous forms and there are a lot of different interpretations of who or what these beasts represent Yeah, but for John's original audience, it's likely they would have immediately thought of the Roman Empire Okay, one beast might represent the Empire itself this massive oppressive force while the other could symbolize Local authorities within the Roman provinces right carrying out the Empire's will on a more personal level Okay, so this is where it gets interesting for me Okay, have you ever noticed how Revelation often flips familiar concepts on their head? Yes, like it's showing us a divine mirror image. Yeah. And a prime example of that is the unholy Trinity Presented in Revelation: the dragon, which is Satan, right; the beast from the sea, possibly representing the Roman Empire or the Emperor himself; okay, and the beast from the land. It's going to be a false prophet or those local authorities we just mentioned. It really is a twisted reflection of the true Trinity- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but instead of love, creation, and guidance, right, these beasts embody evil, deception, and persecution. Pretty powerful image. What's fascinating is how this unholy Trinity Parodies.

Yeah, and perverts the roles of the true Trinity. Uh-huh. It's not just a random assortment of evil figures, right? It's a deliberate attempt to mimic and distort the divine order, setting up this cosmic battle between good and evil, truth and deception, and that battle isn't just something abstract or far-off. It's playing out in our world, in our lives, every single day, right here, right now. Where do you see these forces at work today? That's a great question. What are the beasts that we might need to be aware of in our own time? And it leads us to one of the most puzzling parts of Revelation 13.

Okay, the beast with the fatal head wound. Oh, yeah, that somehow heals what's going on there. I know, right? It's one of those details that really makes you stop and think. Dr. Mathewson believes this wound represents the death and resurrection of Christ. Okay, the ultimate blow against Satan's power, delivered through the sacrifice of Jesus and he connects this idea to Isaiah 27.1 in Psalm 74 Yes, where God is depicted as slaying sea monsters with his sword, right likely symbolic of evil empires It's a powerful image of God's triumph over the forces of evil So while the beast which we think represents the Roman Empire Might have seemed invincible at the time.

Mm-hmm. Its ultimate defeat is already secured through Christ's victory. It's a reminder that even when things look bleak. Yeah, there's always hope, but there's another layer to consider here. Okay, some scholars link this wound to the death of Nero.

Uh-huh, and the subsequent revival of the Roman Empire. Yeah, like the Empire itself experienced a near-death experience, but then came back even stronger. So it's not just about a single historical event. Yeah, but about this idea that evil can appear defeated but then resurface in new and even more terrifying forms. Exactly. That's a bit unsettling, isn't it? It definitely is, and I think that's part of what John is trying to do here. I agree.

He's using this image of a seemingly fatal wound that heals to challenge us to think about what systems or ideologies in our world today Yeah, might resemble this beast. What powers or structures appear? Invincible but are in reality already under judgment. That's a really thought-provoking question, and I think it's a perfect place to pause and reflect before we dive into part two of our deep dive. We'll be back soon to explore more about these beasts and what their message might be for us today. Let's dive a little deeper into these beasts, starting with the one that rises from the sea, right? Dr. Mathewson suggests that this beast isn't just a symbol of any generic evil Empire For a first-century Christian, right? It would have been almost impossible to read this and not think of the Roman Empire. Specifically, that makes a lot of sense. Yeah, when you think about it, the Roman Empire was the dominant force at the time, and they were known for being pretty ruthless, right, especially toward those who didn't conform to their beliefs, and remember how the beast is described. Uh-huh. It has blasphemous names on its head. Okay, points to the idea of the Roman Empire demanding a kind of worship that only belongs to God, right? It's a direct challenge to the true worship that John is emphasizing throughout Revelation.

So Dr. Mathewson is saying that John is using this beast imagery to expose the true nature of Rome, to show that beneath its facade of power and civilization, there's a force opposed to God and persecuting his people. And remember the description of the beast. Yeah, this terrifying combination of the beasts from Daniel's vision. Okay, a leopard, a bear, and a lion all rolled into one. Wow. Dr. Mathewson argues this shows Rome is like the culmination of all the evil empires that came before it. That's a chilling thought. It's like all the worst aspects of those previous empires are concentrated into this one monstrous entity. It makes you wonder if there are parallels to that in our own time. Yeah, maybe systems or structures that embody that same kind of oppressive power.

It's a question worth pondering. What powers or ideologies today might resemble this beast? What seemingly invincible forces demand our allegiance and threaten those who refuse to conform? That's something I'm sure our listeners can relate to, yeah, maybe even on a personal level. Yeah, but let's move on to that second beast. Okay, the one that comes out of the earth, right? It's described as having two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon. Hmm, that's a confusing image.

It is. What do you make of that? Well, Dr. Mathewson suggests that this second beast could represent local authorities or officials within those Roman provinces. They might have appeared less threatening than the Emperor himself, like a harmless lamb. Yeah, but they were still enforcing those decrees and carrying out the will of the Empire. So it's like they were the ones on the ground putting those oppressive policies into practice. Even though they might have seemed less intimidating than the Emperor himself It's a good reminder that persecution can come from unexpected places even from those who might appear friendly, and notice what this second beast does. Okay, it performs miracles and signs Wow,

even calling down fire from heaven Hmm all in an attempt to deceive people right into worshipping the first beast the Roman Empire It's a twisted use of power meant to manipulate people into conforming It's almost like a perversion of the Holy Spirit's power used for a completely different purpose It makes you think about how important it is to be discerning To test the spirits as the Bible says and not blindly follow anyone who claims to have power or authority Absolutely, and there's that chilling detail about the mark of the beast Oh, yeah That the second beast enforces right everyone is forced to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead Mm-hmm, and without it they can't buy or sell It's a symbol of total control of being completely under the power of the system That sounds like something out of a dystopian novel It does you're either completely in line with the Empire or you're essentially cut off from society It makes you appreciate the freedom we have at least in many parts of the world to follow our conscience Even when it means going against the grain, you know, dr.

Mathieson pointed out, yeah, that John might be drawing on a specific historical fear here: the death of Nero threw the Roman Empire into chaos. Now, while some people believe that Nero would return to life, or that someone just like him would appear, continuing his reign of terror, this idea of the beast's wound healing could be tapping into that fear, right? Suggesting that even when the Roman Empire seemed defeated, it could always come back in a new, even more terrifying form. Exactly, and Dr. Mathewson also highlights the symbolic significance of the number six six six, which is associated with the beast. It's a number that falls short of the perfect number seven, right, which represents completion and God's wholeness. So six six six symbolizes imperfection, incompleteness, a counterfeit of the divine. That's a fascinating insight. It's like the beast, and everything it stands for is an imitation of the true God, a twisted, distorted version. Yeah, but the question remains: what does all this imagery mean for us today in our own lives? Let's shift gears.

Okay, and explore that in the final part of our deep dive. So we've uncovered some pretty wild imagery in Revelation 12 and 13: yeah, a dragon, a woman giving birth, beasts rising from the sea and land, a fatal wound that heals, and a mark that controls who can buy and sell intense stuff. It's intense stuff for sure, but Dr. Mathieson reminds us that these chapters aren't just about some ancient history, right, or a far-off apocalypse. Yeah, they're about spiritual realities that shape our lives right here, right here, right now. He's getting at something really important there. Yeah, think about those parallels we discussed between Genesis and Revelation, right? The conflict between the serpent seed and the woman's seed it isn't just a one-time event, right? It's an ongoing struggle that plays out in every generation, including ours.

So these chapters are like a mirror, reflecting the spiritual battles we face every day. Yeah, temptations to compromise our faith, right? Pressures to conform to the world's standards. Forces that try to silence or marginalize those who follow Christ. That's a really insightful way to put it. Thanks, and just as the early Christians faced persecution from the Roman Empire.

Yeah, we might encounter opposition, from those who hold different beliefs or see our faith as a threat. Sadly, it's almost like history's echoing, isn't it, in a way? But here's the encouraging part: Okay, just as Christ triumphed over death. Yes, and defeated Satan. Uh-huh.

We too can have victory through him. That's the hope, even when things look bleak, even when the beasts seem to be winning. Yeah, God is still in control, and his purposes will prevail. That's a powerful truth to hold on to. Absolutely, Revelation 12 and 13. They aren't meant to scare us into hiding, right? They're meant to empower us to stand firm in our faith, to be discerning about the forces at work in the world, and to live lives that reflect the victory we have in Christ. So as we wrap up this deep dive, okay, I want to leave you with this challenge, right: what beasts do you see around you today? Good question? What systems? Ideologies or powers are trying to control your thoughts, beliefs, or actions.

It's a question we all need to wrestle with. I agree because the battle might be real. Yeah, but so is our hope in the one who has already overcome; that's such a great point to end on. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into Revelation, and remember, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, there's always hope to be found in the victory we have through Christ. We'll see you next time for another deep dive