

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 19,

Revelation 13 Two Beasts

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All right, let's jump into some really fascinating stuff today. We're going on a deep dive into Revelation 13. Oh, yeah.

And specifically, those two mysterious beasts everyone always talks about. Yeah, the beasts. We've got a lecture series here on the Book of Revelation from Dr. Dave Mathewson.

Oh, yeah. To help us understand all this. So by the end of this deep dive, you should have a much clearer understanding of who or what those beasts represent.

Right. How they connect to Satan and why any of this matters for us as Christians today. So, beast one: who or what is this creature? And what does Dr. Mathewson say about him? Well, he makes a pretty compelling case for the first beast symbolizing the Roman Empire.

Interesting. Maybe even the emperor himself. The Roman Empire.

Yeah. Okay, I'm intrigued. Right.

What leads him to that conclusion? Well, one of the big clues is that the beast demands this total worship and allegiance from everyone. And that was very much the reality in the Roman Empire. Remember the emperor cult? Right.

People weren't just respecting the emperor back then. Right. They were literally worshiping him as a god.

That's right. Yeah. So... the emperor cult was a big deal back then.

Yeah, it was huge. It was everywhere. And Dr. Mathewson points out that chilling question in the text that's like, who is the beast? Right.

That phrase, if I'm remembering correctly, was used to describe God's power and uniqueness in the Old Testament. Oh yeah, you got a great memory. Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Mathewson, he picks up on that too. He highlights that parallel to suggest that the beast is almost this twisted mirror image of God, you know? Right. Like mimicking his attributes.

Right. But in this corrupted, blasphemous way. Yeah, that's terrifying.

Oh yeah. Like he's trying to be God. Exactly.

But he's all twisted. Yeah, and he also points to the beast waging war on the saints. Oh right.

As being directly connected to what Satan was doing earlier in Revelation. So it's like this unholy trinity: you've got the beast on earth doing Satan's bidding, and they're both trying to usurp God's authority. That's a powerful way to put it.

Yeah. And while the beast seems to have a lot of power, Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that his authority is given. Yes, yes.

That detail for me is huge because it means that even with all this evil happening, God's still ultimately in control. Yes, absolutely. That's reassuring, especially when we're talking about this terrifying beast.

Yeah, you need that reassurance. But if beast one is this big, bad Roman Empire, who's beast two? Things seem to get even more interesting with this character. Right.

So who is he? Well, beast two is almost like the boots on the ground. You know? Okay. He brings the Roman Empire's power down to the local level.

Right. So he could represent those provincial officials who had to enforce Roman laws, and of course, promote that whole emperor cult thing. Oh, so they're the ones- are making the empire's threat a daily reality for the early Christians.

Exactly. So if beast one is this roaring lion, beast two is the one with his teeth sunk in. Oh, wow.

That's a good way to put it. Yeah. Okay.

And it gets even more intense when you look at the original Greek text of Revelation. Oh, okay. Dr. Mathewson points out that the verb tenses actually shift to the present tense when describing the actions of the second beast.

Which would have made everything feel much more immediate and impactful for John's original audience. So it's like the camera suddenly zooming in for this close-up. Right? Where it hits home for those early Christians.

Yes. Suddenly this abstract threat of the empire is at their doorstep. Yeah.

Right there in their face. Yeah. Impacting their daily lives.

Okay. And there's even more to consider. Yeah.

Dr. Mathewson suggests that beast two- Okay. Might actually be connected to the false prophet that we see later in Revelation. Oh, wow.

Yeah, so- the plot thickens. Yeah. And what makes him think there's a connection between beast two and this false prophet? Well, both figures are really deep into deception.

Right. They perform these spectacular signs and wonders, like calling down fire from heaven and- even giving life to statues. Hold on.

Giving life to statues? Yeah. That sounds a lot like magic or sorcery. Yeah.

Did people back then really believe that was possible? Well, you've got to remember the historical context. People in John's time- right. They were familiar with all sorts of magical practices and beliefs.

Okay. The Roman Empire was full of stories and myths about gods and demigods performing crazy supernatural feats. So these acts would have been pretty convincing to people at the time.

Oh, yeah, absolutely. And that would make them more susceptible to the beast's influence. Absolutely.

That's the whole point. Okay. And Dr. Mathewson points out that this whole theme of deception goes all the way back to Satan in the Garden of Eden.

Right. He tricked Adam and Eve. Right.

Leading them astray. And the beast is basically using the same playbook, trying to lure people away from God with false promises and these really impressive displays of power. So beast two isn't just some random figure then? No.

No, not at all. He's a powerful symbol of deception. Absolutely.

A key player in Satan's plan to undermine God's authority. Exactly. That's it.

Okay. It's a big deal. Yeah.

That's really interesting. Yeah. Now, speaking of deception.

Yeah. There's another element we need to unpack. Okay.

The infamous Mark of the Beast. Ah, yes. The Mark of the Beast.

That's one of the most well-known- it's a popular one. And often misunderstood- yeah. Aspects of Revelation.

People get it wrong all the time. So what's Dr. Mathewson's take on this? Well, he believes it might be connected to some very real practices in the Roman Empire back then. Participating in trade guilds or even just buying and selling goods often required people to perform acts of worship towards the emperor.

Wow. Yeah. So you couldn't even buy food without participating in this system that honored the emperor as a god.

In many cases, yeah. That's scary. Yeah.

It was a way for the Roman authorities to enforce loyalty and control people's lives. Wow. That puts a whole new spin on taking a stand.

Yeah, doesn't it? Imagine having to choose between staying true to your faith or putting food on the table for your family. It's a tough choice. Yeah.

So the Mark of the Beast isn't just this abstract symbol. No. It represents the very real systems of control and oppression- yes.

That people were forced to navigate in their daily lives. Exactly. Okay.

This is fascinating stuff. It is. But before we move on to other aspects of revelation- yeah.

We've got to address the elephant, or maybe beast, in the room. The number 666. Ah, yes.

Everyone's heard of it. Of course. What's the deal with this infamous number? Right.

What does it actually mean? Well, before we jump into specific interpretations, Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that the number 666 is primarily a call for wisdom. John's original audience needed to be able to discern the true nature of the beast and resist his influence. So it's less about decoding some secret code- right.

And more about understanding this bigger picture of spiritual deception. Exactly. Yeah.

Okay. That makes sense. Yeah.

But what about the number itself? Right. So- like, are there theories about that? There are. Yeah.

Right. One popular interpretation involves this thing called gematria. Hold on.

Gematria. Let me back up for a second. Yeah, of course.

Some of our listeners might not be familiar with that term. Right. What is that? Gematria is basically this practice where you assign a numerical value to each letter of the alphabet.

Okay. And some scholars use gematria to connect 666 to the name Nero Caesar. Okay.

When it's spelled in Hebrew. Nero Caesar. Yeah.

The Roman emperor. That's right. So maybe Nero becomes this archetype of the evil emperor.

Right. And 666 acts as a kind of warning sign. A big flashing red light.

Yeah. A way to recognize that same pattern of tyranny. Yeah.

Repeating itself. Throughout history. Throughout history.

Exactly. Okay. That's interesting.

Yeah. And it shows how, even though Revelation is dealing with very specific historical circumstances. Right.

It also speaks to these broader patterns of evil and deception that can pop up anywhere, anytime. That's chilling, but also really important to think about. Yeah.

So 666 isn't just about Nero himself. Right. It's about recognizing those same characteristics.

Mm-hmm. The lust for power, the demand for worship. Yes.

The suppression of dissent. Yeah. All of that.

In any leader or system. That's a scary thought. Yeah, it is.

Okay. Oh, there's another. Interpretation of 666 that Dr. Mathewson mentions.

Oh, okay. What's that? It's the idea that it's a human number. Okay.

So seven often symbolizes perfection in the Bible. Right. So 666 is only short of seven.

Yeah. Could highlight the imperfection and the godlessness of those who embody the beast's characteristics. It's like they're missing that divine spark.

Yes. That connection to what's truly good and right. Yeah.

That's a great way to put it. Yeah. It really underscores that contrast between those who follow the beast and those who follow God.

Right. Right. Okay.

Yeah. This has been incredibly enlightening. Good.

I'm glad. We've covered so much ground already. I know, right.

And I feel like we're just scratching the surface. We are, but this is a great place to pause for now. Yeah.

What's resonating with you the most so far? Well, I'm struck by the idea that these beasts aren't just these fantastical creatures. Yeah. From some distant apocalyptic vision.

Right. They represent very real systems of power, oppression, and deception. They do.

That people have faced throughout history. Yeah. And still face today.

Yes, it's true. It makes you think: what are the beasts we might be encountering in our own lives? Right. And in our own world? What are the beasts we're facing today? Yeah.

And how can we use wisdom and discernment to recognize them? Right. Good question. And resist their influence.

Exactly. These are big questions. Big questions that we'll continue to explore as we delve deeper into Revelation.

Okay. So we'll be back in just a moment with part two of this deep dive. Can't wait.

Where we'll uncover even more about the beasts of Revelation and their significance for us today. Sounds good. Welcome back to our deep dive into Revelation 13.

Yeah. My mind is buzzing after that last segment. I know, right? That's a lot to take in.

Yeah, we've unpacked so much about these beasts, their connection to Satan. Right. And how they reflect the struggles of those early Christians.

Yeah. But there's still more to explore. Oh, there's always more.

Yeah. We've only just scratched the surface. So we talked about the historical context.

Yeah. But Dr. Mathewson argues that the real power of Revelation lies in its timeless message. Right.

It's not just about predicting the future. No, not at all. It's about equipping believers to navigate the spiritual battles that rage around us, no matter what time period we're in.

Exactly. It's for everyone. So how does he connect these ancient symbols to our modern world? Right.

What beasts might we encounter today? He suggests that the beasts can represent any system, ideology, or even individual- oh, wow. That tries to usurp God's authority and demands ultimate allegiance. Like what? Well, think about things like political extremism.

Okay. Where loyalty to a party or ideology becomes the most important thing, even at the expense of truth and morality. Yeah.

Or the relentless pursuit of wealth and power. Oh, yeah. Where people just trample over others to get to the top, regardless of the consequences.

Yeah, that's a sobering thought. It is. It's scary, actually.

Yeah. It's easy to see how those kinds of things can become beasts in our own lives. Absolutely.

You know, demanding our time, our energy. Yeah. Even our moral compass.

Your soul. Like they consume us. They do.

Yeah. And just like that beast in Revelation, these modern-day beasts often use deception and manipulation to gain control. So how do they do that? Well, they make all these promises, you know.

Happiness, security, fulfillment. Yeah, the good life. Right.

Right. Exactly. But it's all a lie.

Ultimately, yeah. They leave people feeling empty and disillusioned. You know, that reminds me of something Dr. Mathewson said about the Mark of the Beast.

Oh, yeah. He suggested it might be connected to those practices in the Roman Empire. Yeah.

Where people had to participate in emperor worship to engage in commerce. Yeah. Buy or sell anything.

That's crazy. Yeah. It's a chilling reminder that these systems of control, they aren't just ancient history.

Right. Right. We see them in various forms throughout history.

Yeah. And even in our own time. Exactly.

What kind of things are you thinking of? Well, think about situations where individuals are pressured to conform to certain ideologies or behaviors in order to advance in their careers. Right. Belong to a particular social group.

Or even just access basic necessities. Wow. It's still happening.

Yeah. So it's like that pressure to fit in can become so intense that it feels impossible to resist. Right.

Even if it means compromising your values. Yeah. It's tough.

So as modern day Christians- Yeah. How do we discern these beasts and resist their influence? Well- what kind of wisdom are we supposed to be applying here? Dr. Mathewson really emphasizes the importance of critical thinking. Okay.

Questioning assumptions and being discerning about the information we consume. So we can't just blindly accept everything we hear and see. Exactly.

Okay. He reminds us that the beast's power lies in deception. Right.

Deceit. Yeah. So we need to be vigilant about recognizing propaganda- right.

Manipulation, false narratives, all of that. So it's not just about being aware of the beasts out there. Right.

It's also about developing the mental and spiritual tools to see through their lies. That's- okay. How do we do that? Well, that's where a strong foundation in scripture comes in.

Okay. And a deep understanding of God's character. Right.

So we need to know the truth. Yeah. The more we immerse ourselves in the truth- okay.

The better equipped we are to recognize and reject falsehood. That reminds me of that verse. Yeah.

You shall know the truth. Right. And the truth shall set you free.

Yeah. It's powerful. But knowing the truth isn't always easy.

No, it's not. Especially in a world where we're constantly bombarded with information. It's everywhere.

Much of it is designed to manipulate and deceive. Yeah. It's tough out there.

So how can we, as listeners, apply this wisdom in our daily lives? Well, Dr. Mathewson encourages us to be actively engaged with the world around us. Okay. But to do so with a critical eye.

Okay. So be involved- yeah. But think critically.

Right. Exactly. All right.

He suggests asking questions like, who benefits from this message? What are the underlying assumptions? Right. Does this align with my values and beliefs? So it's almost like becoming an investigator. Yeah.

I like that. Carefully examining the evidence before forming an opinion or taking action. Yeah.

Don't just jump on the bandwagon. And I think that's such a crucial skill for navigating our world today. Absolutely.

Because things are getting more and more complex. It's overwhelming sometimes. It is.

Yeah. So it's not just about analyzing information, then. No.

It's also about cultivating a heart of discernment. Okay. Seeking God's guidance through prayer.

Right. And the study of his word. So we need that connection with God.

Yeah. Absolutely. The more we connect with God- yeah.

The better equipped we are to recognize and resist those beasts that are trying to pull us away from him. That's a powerful reminder. It is.

It's so easy to get caught up in the noise and chaos of the world. Oh yeah. It's easy to get swept away.

But ultimately our strength and discernment come from our relationship with God. It all comes back to that. And speaking of strength- yeah.

Dr. Mathewson reminds us that even though the beasts in Revelation seem terrifying and powerful- yeah. They're scary. They ultimately meet their demise.

That's right. They're defeated by the Lamb. Yes.

Which is a symbol of Christ's victory over evil. That's the good news. It's a message of hope that we desperately need.

We do. Yeah. Especially when things seem dark and overwhelming.

It's easy to lose hope. Yeah. Knowing that God is in control and that good ultimately triumphs over evil- yeah.

Can give us the courage to stand firm in our faith. Yes. Absolutely.

Even in the face of opposition. It can be tough, but we're not alone. Exactly.

And that brings us to one of the most important takeaways from Dr. Mathewson's lectures. Okay. Revelation is not a book about fear and despair.

No, it's not. But about hope and encouragement. It's a message of hope.

It was written to strengthen and empower believers. Yeah. Give them courage.

Reminding them that even in the midst of trials and tribulation, God is with them. Always. And His victory is assured.

Yeah. That's the key takeaway. That's such an important message for us today.

It is. Yeah. We may not be facing Roman emperors or literal beasts.

Right. But we all encounter challenges. Yeah.

We all have our struggles. Temptations and systems that seek to pull us away from God. Exactly.

And that's where the wisdom of Revelation comes in. It does. It equips us to see those challenges for what they are.

Yeah. To see through the lies. To resist the lures of deception.

And to stand firm in our faith. Right. Knowing that we are not alone in this battle.

We're in this together. This deep dive has been so insightful. I agree.

I feel like I have a much deeper understanding of Revelation 13. Yeah. And how it applies to my life today.

I'm glad to hear that. But I'm sure our listeners have questions of their own. Oh, I'm sure they do.

Yeah. And we'll be here to address those questions. Absolutely.

And explore even more insights. Yeah. We'll dive even deeper.

When we return for the final part of our deep dive into Revelation 13. Welcome back to the final part of our deep dive into Revelation 13. It's been a journey.

It has. Lots to unpack. We've explored the symbolism of the two beasts, their connection to Satan.

Right. And how their deceptive tactics can show up even in our modern world. Yeah.

It's amazing how relevant this ancient text still is. It really is. Yeah.

But before we wrap up. Okay. I'd love to hear what stood out to you most from Dr. Mathewson's lectures.

Hmm. That's a good question. Yeah.

I think for me, it's the emphasis on God's sovereignty. Okay. Even when faced with what seems like overwhelming evil.

Right. You know, Dr. Mathewson reminds us that the beast's power. Yeah.

It's limited. Okay. Ultimately, God's the one in control.

That's a good reminder. Yeah. Because it's so easy to get caught up in the fear and anxiety of everything happening around us.

Oh, yeah. Especially with all the darkness and division in the world today. Right.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed. But Revelation calls us to look beyond the immediate circumstances and trust in God's ultimate plan. To have faith.

And that trust can empower us to resist the beast's influence. Absolutely. Even when it feels like everyone around us is conforming.

Yeah. It gives us the courage to stand up for what's right. Right.

Even when it's unpopular. Yes. Even when it costs you something.

It reminds me of something else Dr. Mathewson said. Oh, yeah. About how Revelation isn't just about predicting the future.

Right. It's about equipping believers to live faithfully in the present. To live it out.

Yeah. It's a call to action. Okay.

It reminds us that we're not just passive observers in this whole cosmic drama. Yeah. We have a part to play.

We do. We have a role in resisting evil, proclaiming the truth. Right.

And living out the values of God's kingdom. So as we wrap up this deep dive. Yeah.

What's one key takeaway you want listeners to remember? About these beasts. Yeah. About the beasts of Revelation 13.

I'd say it's the importance of discernment. Okay. You know, those beasts.

Yeah. They're masters of deception. Right.

They use these subtle tactic to lure people away from God. It's sneaky. It is.

Yeah. But Revelation reminds us. Yeah.

That we have the power to recognize those tactics and choose a different path. The path of truth. Yes.

Righteousness and faithfulness to God. That resonates so much in our world today. Oh yeah.

It's more relevant than ever. Yeah. We're bombarded with information all the time.

From every direction. So many competing narratives. It's tough to know what to believe.

It is. So we need to have that critical eye. Absolutely.

Question those assumptions. Don't just take things at face value. And seek out truth.

With humility. With humility and perseverance. Yeah.

It's a journey. And discernment. Yeah.

It's not something we could just achieve on our own. No. We need help.

We need God. It requires a connection with God. Yes.

A deep connection. Relying on his wisdom and guidance. Absolutely.

That's why things like prayer and Bible study are so important. Right. And fellowship with other believers.

Yes. We need each other. We do.

It helps us stay grounded in the truth. Yeah. And strengthens our kind of spiritual armor.

Our defenses against deception. This has been an amazing journey. It has.

Through Revelation 13. Yeah. I've learned a lot.

Me too. And I hope our listeners have as well. I hope so.

You know, I hope they found it insightful and empowering. It's been a pleasure unpacking all of this with you. Likewise.

Yeah. And to you listening out there. Yes.

To our listeners. We encourage you to continue exploring the Book of Revelation. Don't stop here.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Yeah. Keep digging.

Seek out resources. There's so much out there. And have thoughtful conversations with others.

It's how we learn and grow. Remember, Revelation wasn't written to scare us. No.

Not at all. It was written to inspire us. It's a message of hope.

It's a reminder that even in the darkest of times, God is with us. Always. And His victory is assured.

Yeah. That's the good news. Thank you for joining us on this deep dive.

Yes. Thanks for listening. Until next time.

See you then.