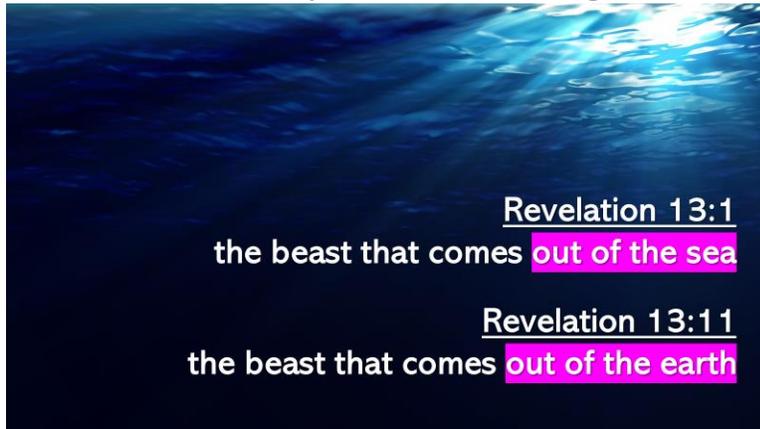


In Revelation 12 we were introduced to the great dragon, who is called the devil, Satan, the ancient serpent, who leads the whole world astray, and who wages war against the people of God.

In Revelation 13 God reveals two other entities aligned with the dragon... who demand of humanity that which belongs to God alone.



What we will see in chapter 13 is that the great dragon and these two beasts... not only are counterfeit gods, but who form a counterfeit trinity.

This is important to keep in mind as we work with our passage.

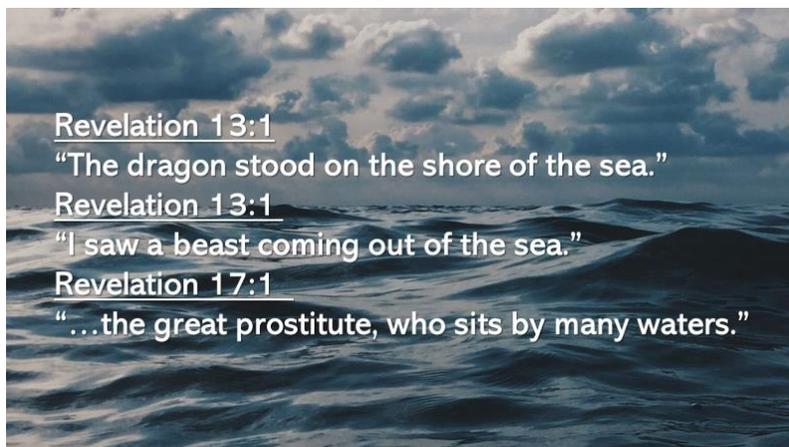
The dragon's aspirations to be God have never abated, though he was driven out of heaven and hurled down by the cross of Jesus.

Today we will focus our attention on the beast from the sea.

v.1a – The dragon stood on the shore of the sea.

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea....

GK Beale writes that in the book of Revelation the sea symbolizes the place where evil dwells – here in the creation.



Like the dragon, this beast is a sign... that points to something beyond itself. Look at how it is described.

v.1b – It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

The beast is similar to the dragon, yet different.



We are not told specifically the blasphemous names that are on each head....but most likely they are names and titles that belong uniquely to the triune God.

What is this beast from the sea a sign of?

Here again we turn to the OT for answers.

In a vision Daniel saw four creatures...



What did this vision mean?

Daniel was told...



The four great beasts
are four kingdoms
that will rise from the earth.

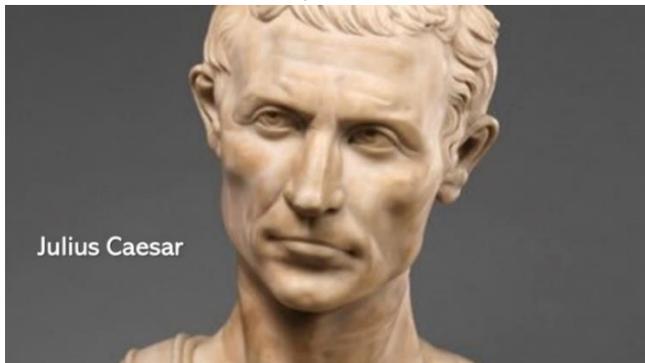
Daniel 7:17

Let's come back to Revelation **13:2 – The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.**

The beast seen by John is a compilation of the beasts seen by Daniel. Drawing upon the explanation given to Daniel we are able to understand that the beast from the sea is a sign of human government... **under the influence of and empowered by the dragon.**

Who would John's original audience have understood the beast to be? The Roman Empire, which in the early 90's AD, demanded of its citizens and subjects', not only worship, but in addition... unquestioning allegiance.

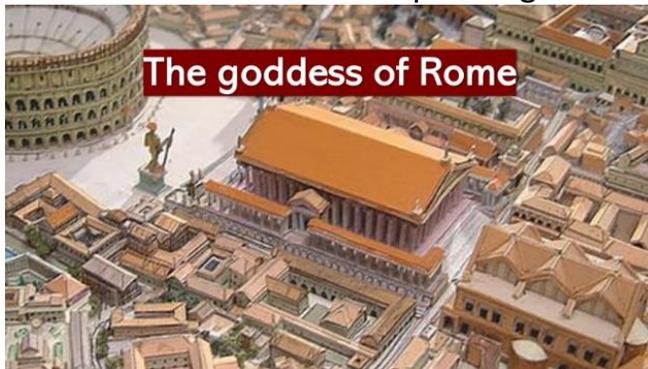
In the case of Rome, it had started in 27 BC when Caesar Augustus spoke of...



... as being divine.

The emperors who followed Julius Caesar said the same about themselves or had similar claims made about them.

Around the same time temples began to be built to...



.. and pressure exerted upon all in the empire to worship the imperial spirit of Rome.

Eventually during the reign of...



...81-96 AD

...it was demanded of the whole world that he, Domitian, be worshiped as “Lord and God.”

It is important to state that Revelation 13 is not saying that human government in and of itself is evil.

Romans 13:1-5

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.

⁴ For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Romans 13 explains... that governmental officials are intended by God to operate under his authority and to be his servants for the accomplishing of good in a community or nation.

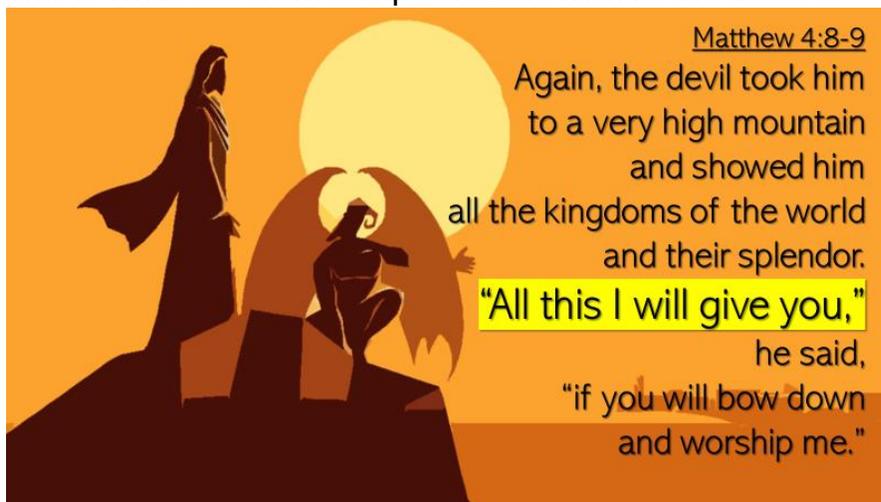
What Revelation 13 reveals to the people of God... is that the dragon will... whenever and wherever it is possible, corrupt human government, turning it into a beast, something not intended by God... in order to achieve the dragon's purposes.

Above all things the dragon craves worship.

To the achieving of that end, he gives to the beast... look again at v.2....

"...his power and his throne and great authority."

This is what the devil tempted Jesus with in the desert?



This has been the dragon's game plan since he became the god of this world.

We will deal with v.3-4 next time because what happened to the beast from the sea is connected to what the beast from the earth does.

Read v.5a – The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies...

This beast claims titles that are God's alone.
Full of himself he exalts himself in the words he speaks.

It is important to see this... like God who communicates through his holy angels and people, so the dragon mimics God and speaks through the beast.

Read v.5b - ...and to exercise its authority for 42 months.

Forty-two months... 3 ½ years... 1260 days... a time, times and half a time....
... these numbers are symbols of the last days... the time between Jesus' ascension and his return.

This is the time period when the beast exercises the authority given it from the dragon.

Read v.6-7 – It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.

It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

Who gave the beast power to war against God's people in order to conquer them?

Who gave the beast power over every tribe, people, language and nation?

Look back at v.2 – **the beast acts with the authority and power of the dragon.**

It is here where we must make a qualification – the beast and the dragon can only do what God allows them to do.

They cannot act independent of God.

What we are able to deduce is that in the last days...

...when and where human government operates without reference to God...

...when and where human government views their subjects as existing to serve them and their aspirations...

...when and where human government becomes infatuated with the exercise of power and the building of a name....

... when and where human government boasts proudly of itself...

...God may permit and allow the dragon to influence and dominate through such governments.

There are many reasons why God would do so.

1. So that in every generation the true character of the dragon would be revealed... he is not benevolent, but cruel and vicious.
2. So that in every generation humanity might experience the end result of sin which is not only folly, but oppression and ruin... and that this experience might lead people to turn to the good and gracious God.
3. So that in every generation God's people might grow in their faith and in perseverance.

As we learned in Revelation 12, God keeps his people out of the serpent's reach.

But there are times, as is identified here in Revelation 13, when for the sake of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth... for the sake of God's ongoing rescue of men and women who are enslaved to sin and held captive by the dragon... the people of God may be required to participate in the sufferings of Jesus.

Peter spoke of this theme in his first letter, 4:12-19.

1 Peter 4:12-19

¹² Dear friends, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

¹³ But **rejoice** inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Peter 4:12-19

¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

1 Peter 4:12-19

¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

What Peter wrote of... helps us to understand the emphasis of v.9-10.

"Whoever has ears, let them hear."

The follower of Jesus is being told... pay attention, listen carefully, think upon this.

Throughout the last days... the beast with the help of the dragon will war against the people of God... he will endeavor to stop us from announcing the gospel of Jesus, and living our lives for the glory of God.

Do you remember our call to worship?

Do you remember how Paul spoke of himself?

“I am a prisoner for Christ.”

Ephesians 4:1

In whatever circumstances befall us; whatever is permitted by God to touch our lives, in that place and to those we encounter in that place... our God and Savior has placed there... to live and to speak for him.

Just to make sure that the church understands ... it is stated in v.9... these circumstances may include... captivity... confinement...restrictions... or even death.

Why does this call for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people?

Because it can feel as if the reign of the dragon and the beast will never end.

But follower of Jesus we live on the basis of faith, not simply sight.

God’s word tells us that the dragon’s reign is but a short one.

Therefore, we do not lose heart, no matter how spiritually dark and oppressive it may be.

The dragon and the beast from the sea can never separate us from God... from his grace, from his love, from his providential care.

As v.8 reminds us... they can never erase our names from the Lamb’s book of life.



God has claimed us as his own.

Let me leave you with several connections to our lives that I see in this passage.

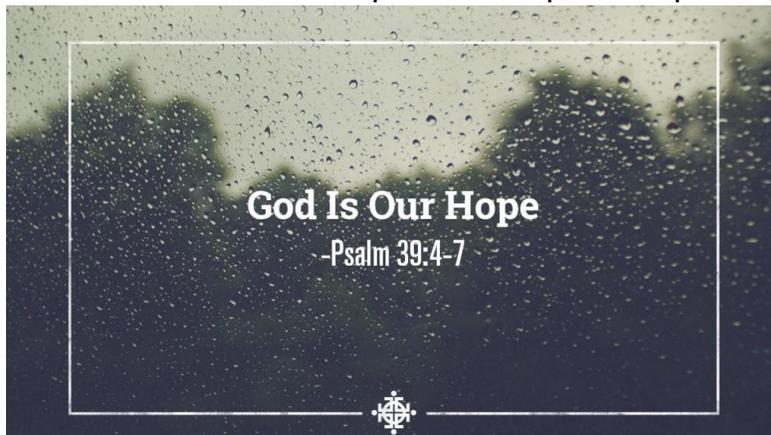
1. We are not unaware of the devil's schemes.



God brings the dragon's strategies out into the open.

We learn from Revelation 13, that throughout the last days, the dragon will ... whenever he can... use political power in order to gain worship of himself and to oppress the followers of Jesus.

2. The Christian's hope is not in political power, but in God.

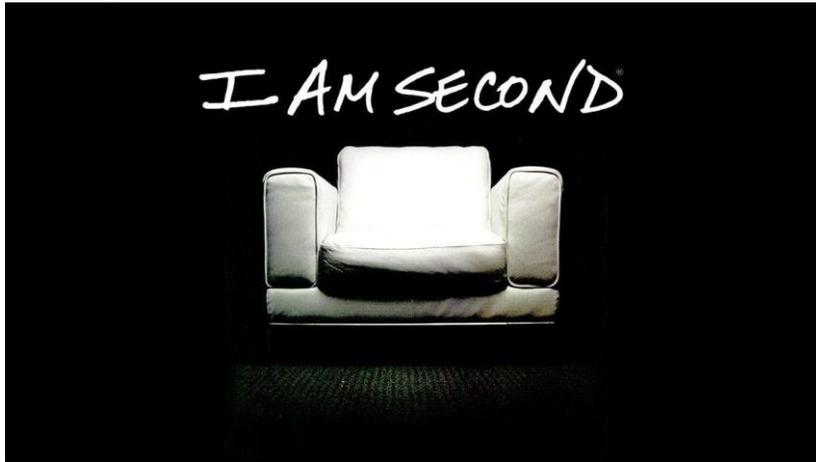


The early church did not turn the Roman Empire upside down because they were able to place senators in Rome who lobbied for favorable laws.

The early Christians lived and announced the gospel, and as a result, the Roman Empire was changed from the inside out, because men and women were born of God and became new creations.

Culture is changed, one transformed life at a time.

3. For the follower of Jesus our first and primary allegiance is to God – he governs our lives ...



... and holds first place in every facet of who we are and what we do.

Anyone and everyone...and that includes ourselves... is second.

What this means... is that if anyone, including the state... ever demand of us something that would compromise our allegiance to the triune God, we put God first and live with whatever consequences may come.

4. Our identity ...



...is defined by our relationship with the triune God.
We belong to him.

He says who we are.



Philippians 3:20



We are residents of the earth, but we are first and foremost citizens of heaven.

And so... as God's word tells us... we patiently endure and faithfully live and wait for the appearing of our Lord Jesus.