

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY TWELVE

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10

What is true in the realm of good unfortunately also is true in the realm of evil. We should not be at all surprised to learn that the great usurper of this world, the devil himself, in his quest to hold full dominion over the earth, uses very carefully chosen vessels to do his evil work.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

POWER isn't a bad thing. Those in positions of authority can and *should* use their reach to do good things not only for themselves, but for everyone within their sphere of influence.

A president should use his position to protect his people and his land during a war or a natural disaster. A business executive should use her authority to cut costs, maximize sales, increase wages, and boost morale. A coach should use his influence to push, motivate, and inspire his players to play their best. These leaders have power, and that power is best used to serve others.

Though power isn't always a bad thing, we sinful humans far too often misuse it. And sadly, many who have wielded great power have abused it to serve themselves, to harm others, and to oppose God.

In fact, some of the most powerful people throughout history have actively worked to thwart God's plans and those who carry them out. This isn't likely to change anytime soon. Scripture warns us of the coming arrival of one particularly cruel figure—a beast whose purpose is singularly united with Satan.

Yet this beast's time is limited, and its earthly might is microscopic compared to the divine strength of our Lord.



Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you search the Scriptures today, take a few moments to speak with God. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you and to transform you through His Word. Pray that He will lead you to a clearer understanding of His power, glory, and majesty because of your time with Him.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In Revelation, the red, seven-headed dragon whom John identified as Satan plays the role of main antagonist (see [Revelation 12:9](#)). After God cast the dragon out of heaven, the creature began to prowl the earth in an attempt to upend God’s good work for humankind. John observed, “Then the dragon took his stand on the shore beside the sea” ([12:18](#)).

This may seem like a strange detail, but for John’s ancient readers, the sea was a place of evil. In the beginning, God demonstrated His rule over creation by calming the dark, chaotic waters and by raising up safe, dry land (see [Genesis 1:1–10](#)). Yet many still considered the frightening sea to be the abode of evil spirits who dwelled in its mysterious depths.

So John harnessed this symbol of evil in [Revelation 13:1–10](#) to describe the Satanic dragon summoning a terrifying beast out of the sea.



Observation: A Wicked and Powerful Beast

Reading the book of Revelation has historically led readers into a frenzy of speculation—an attempt to connect any and every image with a current event or living person. Yet such speculation rarely finds its foundation in solid observation.¹ Take some time to slowly and carefully read [Revelation 13:1–10](#). Then read it again. The better you understand what the text says, the more easily you will be able to discern what the passage *means*.

According to [13:1–2](#), how did John describe the beast that rose up out of the sea? Include as much detail as possible. In what source did this beast find its power, throne, and authority?

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10

What happened when this beast appeared to be “wounded beyond recovery” in *Revelation 13:3a*? According to *13:3b–4*, how did this event cause the people of the world to view the beast? How did this event cause the people of the world to view the dragon?

John described the activity of this beast in *13:5–7*. What kind of authority did the beast have? How did he treat God? How did he treat God’s people?

In *13:8*, John identified two sides of this earthly conflict. What were the two sides? How did he describe those on each side?

John concluded this vision with a pointed message to “anyone with ears to hear” (*Revelation 3:9*). According to *13:9–10*, to whom did John address this message? Summarize the message in your own words.

Though the imagery of this vision may feel cloudy, John’s message is clear: “This means that God’s holy people must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful” (*13:10*). The satanic beast may blaspheme God and target God’s people, but John’s call is a call to perseverance and faithfulness.

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10



Interpretation: Exposing the Antichrist

Many identify this beast out of the sea as *the Antichrist*—a future ruler who, like a marionette animated by a puppeteer, takes all cues from Satan and attempts to lead the world away from Christ. Some naturally find their fingers flipping open the newspaper and their eyes looking to see which wicked leader already at work in the world today has the potential to be the Antichrist.

Sure, this wicked leader could be alive and active today, but we are wise to exercise restraint. Interpretation helps us do so by keeping us grounded in Scripture. Rather than seeking to identify this beast, start by developing a crystal-clear picture of its characteristics.

Use your Bible-study tools like Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org, or the article, “*Who Is the Antichrist?*” at gotquestions.org.² Record what you learn in the space below.

It is important to note that John never used the term *antichrist* in Revelation. He did, however, use the term several times in his letters. Read the following verses and summarize what John taught about this difficult concept: *1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7*. In what ways did John define this term? From his perspective, who is an antichrist?

Apocalyptic literature often uses one vision to describe past, present, and future realities. Many of John’s original readers would have found themselves facing beastly persecution as they lost their homes, businesses, and even their lives under the cruel hand of the Roman emperor, Domitian—an evil ruler who certainly stood against Christ in nearly every possible way.

How would Christians in the past have found comfort in John’s vision of the beast out of the sea? How is the message of this vision instructive for Christians who presently endure similar trials because of wicked people with great authority?

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10

John's message is simple: "You live for Christ one day after another. You trust Him. And if your enemies find you and bring you into captivity, you go. Because if you kill with the sword, you'll be killed in return." Here's the perseverance and faith of the saints. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Four Other Beasts

The authors of apocalyptic literature often painted pictures of frightening beasts to depict even more frightening realities. In John's description of this particular beast in [Revelation 13:1–3](#), he intentionally made subtle allusions to another apocalyptic vision of similar beasts.

When Israel lived in exile in Babylon, the prophet Daniel witnessed a vision of four distinct beasts that signaled the God-ordained destiny of Babylon and other future empires that would oppose God and His purposes. As you read of each of these beasts in [Daniel 7:4–12](#), take note of the similarities each beast shares with the beast in [Revelation 13:1–3](#).

The First Beast ([Daniel 7:4](#)): _____

The Second Beast ([Daniel 7:5](#)): _____

The Third Beast ([Daniel 7:6](#)): _____

The Fourth Beast ([Daniel 7:7–12](#)): _____

Understandably, this vision left Daniel scratching his head in confusion. So, he asked his heavenly guide for an explanation, and thankfully, he recorded that explanation for us. According to [Daniel 7:17](#), what did each of these beasts represent? For additional explanation of the nature of these symbols, see [7:23–25](#).

While this explanation seems like bad news for the people of God, the central purpose of apocalyptic literature is to offer a clear sense of hope to its struggling readers. What hope did the angelic messenger offer Daniel in [7:13–14, 18, 26–27](#)?

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10

How does this correlation help you better understand the meaning and purpose of John's vision in *Revelation 13:1–10*?

This image of the beast resembles those powerful, vast empires of ancient years: brutality, ferocity, swiftness, strength of military might, craftiness, determination, cruelty, deception. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Standing Strong against the Beast

As Pastor Chuck reflected on *Revelation 13:1–10*, he developed three timeless principles. Pause and think on these points and consider how they might apply to your life today.

- Satanic wonders are often impressive, but they are always deceptive.
- Whenever anyone or anything other than God is worshiped, Satan is pleased.
- When Satan's power is at its worst, God's power is at its best.

What or whom does your culture tend to worship? These objects, ideas, or people may appear impressive—perhaps even more impressive than God. Satan wants to deceive you and others into worshiping these idols rather than the Creator. In what ways can you resist this false worship?

You may not face overt persecution as John's original readers did, but God still is calling you, as one of His holy people, to "remain faithful" to Him (*Revelation 13:10*). What does this practically look like in your current circumstances? How can you rely on God's great power as you seek to lead a life of faithfulness?

Antichrist: The Beast Out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1–10

Satan is a powerful enemy. And he will share that power with anyone who wants to cooperate with him in his mission against God. Yet there is none greater than our God. And He has already given power to His followers through the indwelling Holy Spirit—power that can overcome Satan and sin. Remember that and use this power for good today.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the reminder that You are greater than anyone who resists You. It is easy to forget. Embed this truth in my mind and heart so that I can remain faithful to You—especially when it feels like Satan’s power is too great. He will never be greater than You. And for that, I praise You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 12 • Page 7

