

b) War on earth: The beasts from the Sea and the Earth - 13:1-18

The Beast from the Sea

1. Ten horns and seven heads: See Daniel 7.1-6 and 7.19-27. John’s vision seems similar to the fourth ‘empire’ Daniel referred to. This is often seen as a reference to the Roman Empire.
2. The Beast from the Sea is the demonic rival of the Lamb:

Similarity	Lamb	Beast from the Sea
Trinity	Rev 14-5	Rev 16.13; 20.10
Worshipped	Rev 5.14	Rev 13.4
Slain and rose	Rev 5.6	Rev 13.3
Sits on throne	Rev 3.21	Rev 13.2
Every tribe and nation	Rev 5.9	Rev 13.7
Power and glory	Rev 5.12	Rev 13.2
Name on forehead	Rev 14.1	Rev 13.16-18

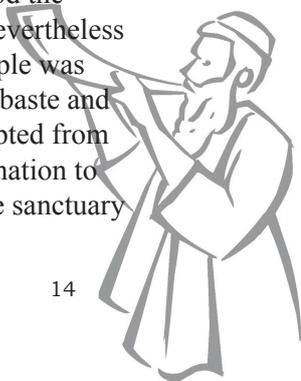
3. One of its heads, Rev 13.3: These heads refer to (Roman?) kings. See Rev 17.9-10.

Many commentators think that John refers to the death of Emperor Nero (suicide, June 68AD). Many thought Nero’s death meant the end of the Roman Empire - but Emperor Galba (after Nero) revived the Empire.

Or is the ‘revive’ theme a reference to a popular legend in those days that Nero never died but that he escaped to Parthia, where he would amass a large army and would return to Rome to destroy it? At least three ‘Nero imposters’ led rebellions: The first, who sang and played the cithara and who looked like Nero, appeared in 69 during the reign of Vitellius. (Emperor from 16 April to 22 December 69 AD.) Under Emperor Titus (c 79-81) there was another impostor, who appeared in Asia and also sang with the lyre and looked like Nero but he was also exposed. Then, during the reign of Domitian, there was another pretender. Supported by the Parthians, who hardly could be persuaded to give him up, the matter almost came to war.



4. Rev 13.5: 42 months, see Rev 11.1-2 and 12.6.
5. Rev 13.6-7: Compare with Daniel 7.21. God’s dwelling is symbolised by those who dwell in heaven. These are the saints that the Beast wars against. Hence: those who dwell in heaven includes the faithful followers of Jesus on earth.
6. The Roman State had grandiose pretensions and all citizens had to participate in worshipping the symbol of that State, the Roman Emperor. This worship was established during the reign of Augustus, and was practiced throughout the Roman Empire. It is the direct continuation of the Hellenistic worship of the ruler. Emperor worship first appeared in Palestine during the reign of Herod the Great. Although it was completely unacceptable to the Jewish population, Herod could nevertheless not afford to lag behind other vassal princes in establishing the cult. Thus although a temple was not erected in Jerusalem to honor the emperor, these rites were adopted in the cities of Sebaste and Caesarea, both predominantly non-Jewish. The Jewish population was everywhere exempted from the loyal duty of emperor worship and only one attempt was made to compel the Jewish nation to accept emperor worship, when Caligula issued a decree to erect a statue of himself in the sanctuary



at Jerusalem. The decree was never carried out, however, due to the death of Caligula in January 41 c.e.

7. Rev 13.10: Here we see why this book of Revelation was written. It is (among other things) a call to endurance and faithfulness for the beleaguered saints.

The Beast from the Earth

8. Rev 13.11-12: As the sea was often seen in Israel as a symbol for the world of the nation, the earth, or the land, then stood for the Jewish nation in Israel. In this vein, some see in this Beast from the Earth a focus on Israel. The religious authorities in Israel, in order to keep their position, called their people to obedience to the Romans. See John 19.15.
9. Others prefer to see in the Beast from the Earth the (religious) authorities in the Roman Empire in general; they forced the people to worship the Roman State (The Beast from the Sea).
10. Notice the deceptive work by this Beast from the Earth, and how it uses the method of the carrot and the stick to make people worship the image of the Beast from the Sea.
11. Image of the Beast, Rev 13.15: Man was made in the image of God, and is now invited to worship an image of something that is not God. Amazing how idolatry debases us, humans.
12. Mark on the right hand or the forehead, Rev 13.16: A clear reference to Deuteronomy 6.8. The same concept as in Rev 7.3, 14.1. This indicates that the choice is between obedience to God or obedience to idolatry.
13. Number of the Beast, Rev 13.18: 666 (some manuscripts have 616). Any play on the numbers six that is repeated three times, seems incorrect, because this works well in English with our present Arabic numbers. John used Greek letters for the numbers, and those are three different letters: χξς. If written in Hebrew, the words Neron Caesar add up to 666. As well as the Hebrew word for 'Beast'. But also the names of Henry Kissinger and so many others have been calculated to have a numerical value of 666.

