

The Beast of Revelation 13, part 3

Revelation 13:5-10

The Beast of Revelation 13, part 3

Revelation 13:5-10

Text

13:1 Now I was standing on the seashore, and I saw a Beast of prey coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten diadems and on his heads blasphemous names. 2 The beast that I saw was similar to a leopard, his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. 3 And one of his heads was as if it had been mortally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the Beast.

4 And they did obeisance to the dragon who had given the authority to the Beast, and they did obeisance to the Beast saying, "Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?" 5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy; and he was given authority to make war forty-two months. 6 So he opened that mouth of his in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in Heaven. 7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given him over every tribe and language and ethnic nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world.

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone has captivity, he goes away. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

I. Introduction - if demon, empire, and head are all "beast" can the beast continue after the demon is bound? Or does the demon get bound later?

Today I plan to fly through verses 5-10, but I do want to spend three minutes in review and then another 5-8 minutes sorting through two new issues that need to be addressed in order to make sense of the passage. In verse 1 John was standing on the seashore of Israel in his vision, and he saw a horrible beast coming from the direction of Rome onto the shore of Israel and attacking Israel. We saw that the Beast is sometimes the demon who controlled the empire of Rome and yet other times in Revelation the beast is the empire or the emperor that the demon controlled. And commentaries of

all stripes have noted a fluctuation between corporate beast and individual beast.

Then we saw that the seven heads of the beast were symbolic of the first seven Caesars from Julius Caesar to Vespasian. And since a head represents an emperor, you can see why the current ruling emperor would sometimes be addressed as the beast. He is the head of the beast. That makes total sense. The ten horns were ten demons who were the true power behind the empire. And thus it was the demonic horns that were crowned, not the emperors themselves.

In terms of symbolism we saw that the leopard body represents the cruelty and bloodthirstiness of Rome. The bear paws represent the rule by power and might rather than by true authority. The lion's mouth represents the way statism devours the productivity of a nation in order to provide its services and roars the threat of violence to back it up.

Verse 3 then predicted the death of the empire with the death of its head, Nero. So the first part of verse 3 is June 9 of AD 68. The revival of the beast from that death wound represents the revival of the empire under Vespasian in AD 69. But based on chapter 17, how did that happen? It happened by the demon beast being released from the Abyss and possessing both Vespasian and then Titus. So demon, emperor, and empire are all revived in mid-69 AD.

And Israel, who refused to worship Jesus (saying instead, "We have no king but Caesar") was forced at the point of the sword to worship Caesar in verse 4. And that is as far as we got last week.

But verses 5-10 now explain events from mid AD 69 and on. And there are a couple things that might be puzzling if you don't read it in light of chapter 17. And I want to spend just a few minutes addressing those puzzles. The first puzzling feature is that the Beast is in Rome in verse 2, sitting on the throne. Where is the throne? The throne is in Rome. Yet in verses 3-8 the Beast seems to personally be in Israel, fighting against Israel, uttering blasphemies against God and against the temple in Israel, and authority seems to be given to the Beast over all nations while he is in Israel. How can that be? How can the beast be both on the throne in Rome and fighting in Israel? Revelation 17:10-11 explains it that "the beast that was and is not" "is also the eighth, yet he is of the seven, and he is going into perdition." What does that mean?

Vespasian and Titus were both declared Caesar at the same time. Vespasian

is the seventh head and chapter 17 says he continues to exist as a head even while the eighth emperor (his son Titus) is "also" ruling. Revelation 17 uses the word "also" for Titus. Later we will see that the demon Beast will perform some of the same miracles in Titus that it had performed in Vespasian to consolidate his rule. We saw that the Beast apparently wanted to be in on the action of Titus' war in Jerusalem rather than back with Vespasian in Rome, so once Vespasian was safely on the throne, the Beast traveled back to Israel, possessed Titus, and with that possession, Titus started acting very strange - living out the things that are mentioned here and in chapter 17. So today's message is going to answer some conundrums that have faced preterists. I think these verses are very key.

But there is another puzzle related to dates. I had previously said that the demon Beast was bound in AD 70. I still believe that. That is based on a straightforward reading of Revelation 17:11. But there is an apparent problem with that in chapter 13, verse 5, which says, "And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy; and he was given authority to make war forty-two months." Since a straightforward reading of this chapter shows that the 42 months happens after the events of verses 3 and 4, it appears (chronologically) to refer to the second half of the war, that is, AD 70-74. But if that is the case, you can probably already see a problem. How can the demon be bound in AD 70 (a straightforward reading of chapters 17 and 19) if he is given authority to make war for an additional forty-two months after AD 70?

The solution some people give is to say that the forty-two months has to refer to the first half of the war, in AD 67-70. But that completely messes up the chronological flow of verses 1-10. Remember? We saw last week that the first half of verse 3 refers to the death of Nero and the death of the empire in mid AD 68, and the second half of verse 3 refers to the revival of demon, empire, and emperor in AD 69. And it is at that precise time that the personalities of both Vespasian and his son Titus changes and they both start prophesying and doing amazing miracles. That's when the Beast possesses them. So we saw last week that the forty-two months of verse 5 must refer to the second half of the war, namely, from AD 70-74. I just do not see any way of placing it earlier. So we can't get out of the conundrum by mixing up the order. There is a chronological flow.

As I see it, there are four reasonable solutions to this apparent problem. The first is the simplest. Many have pointed out that the term beast moves fluidly between demon, emperor, and empire, and that the name "beast" is used in chapter 13 primarily for the empire and for Titus. The only reason that the

Beast died (or disappeared for a time) in verse 3 is because in AD 68 all three manifestations of beast disappeared. There was no demon, emperor, or empire for a year and a half after Nero's death. But here that is not the case. Even after the demon is once again bound in AD 70, the empire-beast and the emperor-beast continue to live. That makes the most sense to me. It is Titus who is authorized to make war for another 42 months.

A second solution that has been proposed is given by Duncan McKenzie.¹ McKenzie's view is that there are actually a total of eight demon beasts standing behind the first eight emperors. So on his view, each head is a human and a demon-beast. If there were eight beasts instead of one, that would resolve the tension. I don't agree with that solution because it has its own problems, but it is a possible solution.

The third possible solution is to say that the demon was bound in the pit in AD 74, not in 70. That could be a possible read of chapters 17 and 19, but not the most likely read. But that solution would completely resolve the apparent contradiction. I have my exegetical reasons for not accepting it. But I acknowledge that it is a possible solution.

The fourth possible solution is to say that the binding of the beast that Revelation 19 refers to is still in our future and that the 1000 years is still in our future. That was the position I used to hold to, and it is still a possible solution. There are indicators in chapter 19 of progress over time. But I doubt that interpretation for a number of reasons.

Some of you could perhaps care less about this, and others of you may run with this information and may be interested in puzzling through those four theories. But here is the bottom line - there is no provable contradiction if there are four plausible explanations. I tentatively hold that the beast as demon gets bound AD 70 (the most natural reading of chapter 19), and that in turn explains why Titus was not able to perform miracles after AD 70. But he continues to represent the beast of Rome and is himself the little horn of Daniel and thus corresponds to both Daniel's and Revelation's major preoccupation.

But whichever of those four explanations is true, these verses are perfectly fulfilled in Caesar Titus. I am very confident that it has to refer to Titus. Titus was the real power behind the throne. So with that as background, let's pick up where we left off and look at four things that the Beast as Titus is

¹ This view is discussed in two books: Duncan W. McKenzie, PhD, *The Antichrist and the Second Coming*, volume 1: Daniel and 2 Thessalonians (xulonpress.com, 2009); Duncan W. McKenzie, PhD, *The Antichrist and the Second Coming*, volume 2: The Book of Revelation (xulonpress.com, 2012).

given.

II. In AD 70 the Beast (as Titus) is given four things

A. *Titus was given a blasphemous mouth (v. 5a; cf. 4,6,8)*

Verse 5 says, "And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy..." The Greek of the first clause is identical to the Greek Septuagint translation of Daniel 7:8 where Titus (the little horn)² is there said to have a "mouth speaking pompous things." So this is interpreting those great things or pompous things as blasphemy. Verse 6 expands on that blasphemy a bit more. it says, "So he opened that mouth of his in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in Heaven." And then there was one more action of blasphemy that Titus required of all the Jews. It is stated in verse 8: "All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world."

So the question comes, "Did this kind of blasphemy really occur? Was Titus really that bad? Did he really require people to worship him?" Some people question that. Well, my research shows that Titus continued the blasphemy of previous emperors, but more to the point, Titus was the only Caesar who was ever directly worshiped in the temple. In fact, he was the only Caesar in the temple. He was the only Caesar who ever blasphemed inside the temple. Consistent with verses 5-6, the Talmud calls him, "the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven." Here is the full quote:

Vespasian sent Titus who mocked, Where are their gods, the rock in whom they sought refuge? (Deut. 32:37). This was the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He entered the Holy of Holies and with his sword slashed the curtain. Through a miracle blood spurted forth and he thought he had killed God Himself. He brought two harlots and spreading out a scroll beneath them, transgressed with them on top of the altar. He began to speak blasphemies and insults against Heaven, boasting "One who wars against a king in a desert and defeats him cannot be compared to one who wars against a king in his own palace and conquers him."³

2 Duncan McKenzie, while not always reliable, has done a superb job of reconciling the seven heads of Revelation with the ten linear horns of Daniel 7. If the sixth emperor was Nero, if the seventh was Vespasian, and if the eighth was Titus, who were the three horns that the eleventh little horn of Daniel 6:7-8 displaced? It would be Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Though not emperors of the whole empire (and thus not counted in the seven heads of Revelation 13 and 17) they were rulers in the city of Rome (and thus counted in the ten horns). When counted, there are eleven horns up through Titus. They would be numbered thus:

3 Judah Nadich, *The Legends of the Rabbis*, volume 1, *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aaronson, 1994), p. 350. There are several sources that have similar tales (see next footnote). It is hard to say how much is fact and how much is fiction, but the stories probably originated from at least some degree of historical blasphemy that Titus engaged in. That the purported

In saying this, Titus was claiming to be more powerful than Yehoweh and to have conquered and killed Yehoweh. But his actions on top of the altar and on top of a spread-out Bible-scroll were also a very deliberate attempt to blaspheme God and to defy God to do anything about it. As 2 Thessalonians describes the man of sin, Titus opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sat as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thes. 2:4). Did Titus call himself God. Most definitely - just like the previous emperors did. But did he exalt himself above God? I think this quote shows that he did. A very early Jewish Rabbi, Rabbi Nathan, (possibly second century) said of this entry into the Holy of Holies,

What is more, he dragged a prostitute into the Holy of Holies and he began to blaspheme, curse, vilify and spit toward Him on high, saying, "So this is the one who you say slaughtered Sisera and Sennacherib. Here I am in his house and in his domain. If he has any power, let him come out and face me."⁴

He is daring God to a fight. The same rabbi said that when he took shiploads of prisoners to Rome for the Triumphal Entry, that,

... a gale arose to drown him in the sea. He stood on the (deck of) the ship and began to blaspheme, curse, vilify and spit toward Him on high. He said: When I was in his house and in his domain, he did not have the power to come and face me, but now here he has come forth to meet me. It seems that the God of the Jews has power only where there is water.⁵

It was mockery and disdain for God; another exaltation of himself above God. When we look at the miracles he performed later in the book, we will see that those miracles were used to try to induce worship of Titus and his father. But when people refused to worship him, he tortured them. Even Josephus (who was dependent upon Titus and therefore motivated to say good things about Titus) admits that Titus did do this. He describes how in AD 74, at the end of the war, the Jewish leaders captured over 600 Jews who refused to worship Caesar and handed them over to Titus to show the leadership's total allegiance to Titus. But the 600 refused to worship Caesar. Josephus describes what happened then:

Subjected to every form of torture and bodily suffering that could be thought of, for the one purpose of making them acknowledge Caesar as lord, not a man gave in or came near to saying it, but rising above the strongest compulsion they all maintained their resolve, and it seemed as if their bodies felt no pain and their souls were almost exultant as they met the tortures and the flames. But nothing amazed the spectators as much as the behavior of young children; for not one of them could be constrained to call Caesar lord.

quotes are from Christ-hating sources and yet are so close to what Revelation says Titus would say is significant.

4 Anthony J. Saldarini, S.J. (translator), *Abot De Rabbi Nathan, The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 68. While it is difficult to know how much legend has entered into these stories, they probably reflect some historical truth.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

So even Josephus admits that Titus was a persecuting tyrant. For a Jew to call Caesar "lord" was tantamount to calling Caesar God, since they used the term "lord" as a substitute for Yehowah's name. I've often wondered if those Jews were Christian Jews. But notice from that quote that both older people and children were compelled to worship, which parallels Revelation 13:16, which says that this emperor-worship was forced on "everyone — both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave." The evidence is so strong for a Titus identification that even an Idealist like G. K. Beale admits that the evidence seems to perfectly fit him.⁶ No other Caesar and no other candidate that we know of actually sat in the temple and declared himself to be God there, and blasphemed God in the temple, as 2 Thessalonians 2 requires. Nero didn't do it. Caligula tried, but he wasn't able to do it. Only Titus fits.

B. Titus was given authority to war an additional 42 months (v. 5b)

The second thing that Titus was given was authority to war an additional 42 months. Verse 5 is not jumping back in time to AD 67 here. This is something new. He is given this authority after the death of Nero in verse 3a and after Vespasian is put on the throne in verse 3b. So it has to be after mid AD 69. The whole war lasted from AD 67-74, and I agree with early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), Tertullian (AD 155-240), Eusebius (260-339), and Ambrosiaster (366-384??), who said that this was Daniel's seventieth week. We've discussed Daniel's weeks before. But even if you think Daniel's seventieth week was finished in AD 33, you still have to account for the mention of a seven-year war in Daniel 9:27. So either that is an additional week that is unconnected to Daniel's 70 weeks, or it is the seventieth week. In any case, every historian knows that Titus' war was

6 "...Both Vespasian and Titus were known to have attacked the temple by blaspheming God and desecrating it (b. Gittin 56b says Titus "blasphemed and insulted heaven"; cf. also Sifre Deut., Piska 328)." He also says on verse 4, "The multitudes likewise worship the beast because of his purported incomparability: they proclaim in their worship "who is like the beast and who is able to make war with him?" The expression of Satanic incomparability is an ironic use of OT phraseology applied to Yahweh (cf. esp. Exod. 8:10; 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5; Pss. 35:10; 71:19; 86:8; 89:8; 113:5; Mic. 7:18). This is a further attempt at Satanic imitation of God. In all these OT texts Yahweh's incomparability is contrasted polemically with false gods and idols. B. Gittin 56b uses some of these texts in a polemic against the Roman leader Titus because of his desecration of the temple in A.D. 70. Therefore, the expression of incomparability on the lips of the beast's worshipers is the epitome of blasphemy. It brings to greater expression the Danielic idea of the proud king who attempts to magnify himself above God in the end time (Dan. 8:11, 25; 11:36-37). So also the beast's incomparability in "waging war" can be considered a reflection of the horn's war against the saints in Dan. 7:8 LXX, 21 LXX, Theod. (so also 8:10-13, 22-25; 11:31ff.). The beast's power to persecute is the motivation for widespread worship of him." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 694-698.

seven years long, not three and a half years long. Until partial preterists take the full seven year war into account, they will not convince others of their position.

But in any case, the meaning of verse 5 is that once Titus finished burning the temple and conquering Jerusalem, he was called upon to finish securing the land of Israel and to fight against all Jewish resistance, wherever found, for the next 42 months. And that is exactly what Titus did.

C. Titus was given authority to persecute Christians (v. 7a)

The third thing Titus was given was authority to resume persecution of the Christians. Verse 7 says, "And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to conquer them." Many preterists who stop their historical timeline with AD 70 can't apply this to Christians, because it would contradict chapter 12's assertion that Christians were protected for the three-and-a-half-year-period prior to AD 70. So they apply the word "saints" to unbelieving Jews. But you can't do that. John doesn't do that a single time in this book. Instead, John calls unbelieving Jews fake Jews and a synagogue of Satan. So the word 'saints' has to refer to Christians. It is one of many weak points in full Preterism.

And it can't apply to the broader Roman empire in the first half of the war either because there was no persecution of Christians between the death of Nero and the ascension to the throne of Vespasian. It simply doesn't fit the first half of the week, whether you view it as Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians. The resumption of persecution of Christians began in AD 70, and the quote I gave earlier about Jewish people who stood firm for God despite torture was under Titus in AD 74, near the end of the war. There would be periods of persecution off and on again under Titus, his brother Domitian, and several other emperors who followed. But after AD 74, never again would there be a triumph over Christianity.

But some people object and claim that there is no evidence that Titus ever persecuted Christians. Actually, there is lots of evidence. At this point in the series I will just give you one quote. The early church historian, Sulpicius Severus, who lived from AD 363-425, had boatloads of original documentation at his disposal, and he documented a war council called by Titus which deliberated on whether they should destroy the temple or not. Some on the war council argued that it was going overboard to destroy the temple. But Severus says,

Others, however, including Titus himself, opposed this view and said that the destruction of the Temple was a prime necessity in order to wipe out more completely the religion of

the Jews and the Christians;...

Notice his commitment to wiping out both Jews and Christians. The quote goes on:

...for they urged that these religions, although hostile to each other, nevertheless sprang from the same sources: the Christians had grown out of the Jews if the root were destroyed, the stock would easily perish.⁷

So yes, Titus was just as dedicated to destroying Christianity as he was to destroying Jerusalem. And this decision to destroy Christians was made just before the beginning of the second half of the seven year war. He was an incredible persecutor of the church.

D. Titus was given authority to rule over a restored empire (v. 7b)

The fourth thing Titus was given was the authority to rule over a restored empire. Verse 7 goes on to say, "And authority was given him over every tribe and language and ethnic nation." If you haven't read much on the history, this may puzzle you, because Titus' father Vespasian was on the throne from AD 69-79, with Titus taking sole rule from AD 79-81. But the more you read of the history, the more remarkable the detailed accuracy of these prophecies becomes.

Here was the way things turned out. According to the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, from mid AD 69 to early 70, both Titus and his father Vespasian were given the demonic power to do amazing miracles, such as instantly healing cripples and blind people. The Roman historian Tacitus records that "many miracles occurred" through Vespasian.⁸ We will look at those demonic deceiving miracles later in the book. The Romans considered this grounds to make both Vespasian and Titus gods, and both were declared Caesar at the same time. Some historians believe that Titus was the one who ruled through his father, and he was the brilliant strings-puller who influenced and controlled all the key people around the empire. And it was easier for him to push the limits of consolidation of power with his father on the throne than to do it if he alone were on the throne. But many have pointed to Titus's incredible power. It is one of the reasons why Titus boldly sat on his father's throne when he returned to Rome in AD 71, and Titus had already been issuing decrees in his own name as Caesar during the war. According to Suetonius, numerous pagan prophecies declared that Titus was

7 As quoted in B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Titus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 54. As to whether Titus could have known the difference between Jews and Christians, I would point out that he had Josephus as his right hand man, that he was carrying on the policies of Nero, who certainly knew the difference, and that Roman historians such as Tacitus, clearly knew the difference.

8 Tacitus, *The Histories*, 1, 10, translated by Kenneth Wellesley (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 263-264.

the resurrected Nero. Well, if demons knew that the same Beast that was in Nero was now in Titus, it is no wonder they would prophesy that Titus was the resurrected Nero. They were both the pawns of the beast. You may remember that we have previously seen that the demon beast that was in Nero had been bound in the Abyss for a year and a half and Revelation says in AD 69 that he was "about to" come back up out of the Abyss. That may be the reason why the moment Vespaian came to power, the head of the huge statue of Nero in Olympus was replaced with the head of Titus, not Vespaian. Why would you replace the head of the previous emperor with Titus' head. Well, the evidence seems to show that without Titus, Vespaian would have been nothing. He was a puppet emperor.

Interestingly, Vespaian was only able to perform miracles in the presence of Titus and together with Titus. I don't recall a single miracle that he performed outside of Titus' presence. As soon as Titus left Vespaian to fight, Vespaian lost his powers. So when Titus returned to fight Israel, Titus was still able to do the miracles, but not Vespaian.⁹ It appeared that the demon was at work only when Titus was present. And it seems that Titus' miracles dried up at the burning of the temple, where I date the binding of the beast in the Abyss. But even after the binding of the demon, Titus was still in charge. And by the way, there would have been plenty of other demons to demonize him.

Historians point out that between AD 71 and 79 when Vespaian died, much of Vespaian's life is a silent mystery. It is almost as if he didn't do anything. While Vespaian fell into sensual self-absorption, Titus had the true authority over the empire. So in both name and in reality, Titus was emperor from AD 69 and on. He was the one who had authority over the empire. Or as chapter 17 words it, the seventh head must continue for a short time (namely the time that Titus was fighting) but very quickly Titus would return and verse 11 calls him the eighth emperor but is also of the seven. In other words, the eighth was part of the seven because he was doing his work through the seventh - through his dad. It makes me stand in awe when I see how perfectly the tiny details weave together in this book.

And how extensive was Titus' authority? Historian Barbara Levick noted that "[Mucianus] had secured all the Syrian cities by 15 July [of AD 69], and [all] the provinces of Asia Minor... according to Josephus all the cities were holding festivals in Vespaian's honor and offering sacrifices on his behalf; some sent crowns and congratulatory decrees."¹⁰

⁹ See Tacitus in previous footnote. Also see Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Vespaian, 7.

¹⁰ Barbara Levick, *Vespaian*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 47.

Based upon the decrees of Titus as Caesar, it appears that Titus was calling the shots right from the get-go, and by the end of the war, all of the former Roman empire had declared allegiance to him and to his father. The declarations of allegiance were to both Titus and to his father. And by the way, they both took the same name, Titus Flavius Vespasianus, a name which I will demonstrate in a future sermon adds up to 666.

III. Another reference to all Jewish survivors bowing down to Titus (v. 8)

Verse 8 says, "All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world."

Because of the civil war and the divided loyalties, Titus enforced emperor worship in every city throughout the empire. He wanted to make sure there was total allegiance. I've already read an account of 600 Jews who were tortured because they would not do so, and the complete submission that the Jewish pro-Roman leadership gave to him. By the end of the war, submission was total. But this was happening everywhere. Josephus records the festivities of all the cities doing obeisance to the image of Caesar, but it is not until recently that we have found any document describing what that might have looked like. It is a severely damaged papyrus document, but experts have been able to piece together most of what took place on July 1 of AD 69, with the declaration of Vespasian and Titus as Caesar. Here is a summary.¹¹

The legions had already gone through the allegiance ceremony. But then the citizens were taken through it crowd by crowd. They were brought into the hippodrome of Alexandria. In a speech, the governor addressed his Lord Caesar, prayed for his health and preservation, and describing him in the traditional language of "one saviour and benefactor." Of course, we as Christians know only one savior, and it is Jesus. But the crowds were made to acknowledge one savior and benefactor, namely Caesar. Then there are words speaking of an imperial edict "rising like the sun to shine on mankind." Then there are scraps of words like this that have been deciphered: "Preserve for us our emperor... O Augustus, benefactor Sarapis... son of Ammon." [Ammon was an Egyptian deity.] The crowd appears to reply on cue with thanks to the Emperor. Then the governor says, "the divine Caesar prays for your well being." You can see that the whole purpose of the

¹¹ Discussed by Kenneth Wellesley, *The Year of Four Emperors*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 122.

ceremony is to get people to acknowledge that Caesar is God and Lord. The crowd then declares, "O Lord Augustus [which means worthy of worship] Vespasianus."

We've already seen in chapters 2-3 that the seven churches of Asia Minor were about to face persecution. All the evidence seems to indicate that if the Christians were not willing to submit to Titus Flavius Vespasianus (the name shared by both father and son) it could have resulted in persecution or even death. And in AD 69, the legions returned from Israel to Rome to enforce submission to Vespasian and his son in precisely those cities of Asia Minor. In Israel, it guaranteed death to fail to do so. Even slaves would have had to have taken the oath or died.

IV. Solemn warnings

A. True believers must not do obeisance to Caesar (v. 8b)

With that as background, you can totally understand the need for the solemn warnings of this passage. It would have been so easy for Christians to compromise if they were not prepared. The pressures would have been enormous. Verse 8 implies that true believers will not (or at least must not) bow down and call Titus Lord. It says, "All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world."

The implication is if you do obeisance to the Beast, the assumption is that your name is not written in the Book of Life; in other words, that you may not be elect because that is something the non-elect would do. But at a minimum we can surmise that true believers must not bow down to the Beast or declare him Lord. When there is a conflict between state and Christ, we must always follow Christ.

I just got a notice on Wednesday that the church in China has been forbidden from allowing any children in their churches, even if accompanied by a parent. That is a clear-cut call for a decision for Christ or a decision for the state. Obviously parents must be wise in how they do it, especially since church buildings are not commanded. But when parents are commanded by God to bring your children up "in the training and admonition of the Lord," that is a task that cannot be relinquished.

And the fact that obeisance is forbidden makes me wonder if there are any ways that we bend the knee to Caesar. It is a worthwhile question for self-examination.

B. All true believers must pay heed to this book (v. 9)

Verse 9 gives another solemn admonition. "If anyone has an ear, let him hear." The way Scripture uses that phrase, "If anyone has an ear," He is not talking about just physical ears. We can have spiritual ears that are regenerate, and still not be listening carefully to God's warnings. This admonition is basically saying that all truly regenerate believers must pay heed to this book.

C. The Jewish population will be punished in one of two ways: death or captivity (. 10)

Next, verse 10 gives a solemn warning that the Jewish population is about to be punished in one of two ways: "If anyone has captivity, he goes away. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." There is debate on exactly what that means, and when commentators differ, I try to see if there was similar language in the Old Testament. And there is. Prior to Israel's destruction by Babylon, Jeremiah gave almost identical language in Jeremiah 15 and again in chapter 43. I'll read part of Jeremiah 15, starting at verse 1.

Jer. 15:1 Then the LORD said to me, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. Jer. 15:2 And it shall be, if they say to you, "Where should we go?" then you shall tell them, "Thus says the LORD: 'Such as are for death, to death; And such as are for the sword, to the sword; And such as are for the famine, to the famine; And such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.'" ' ... Jer. 15:5 "For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Or who will bemoan you? Or who will turn aside to ask how you are doing? Jer. 15:6 You have forsaken Me," says the LORD, "You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am weary of relenting!

Jeremiah 43:10-11 says something very similar - those appointed to captivity to captivity and those appointed to the sword to the death. But this verse explicitly gives a *lex talionis* punishment with the sword image. It is upholding the Old Testament foundational principle of justice. God's justice does not change. It says, "If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." Jews had started the persecution of Christians and countless Christians had been put to death as a result of that persecution. God sorts out which Jews deserved to die and which ones deserved to go into captivity. It was a solemn warning. God is not mocked, whatever a man sows that he will also reap.

D. All true believers will still need to endure and have faith even after this first century conflict (v. 10c)

And the last solemn warning was, "Here is the endurance and the faith of the

saints." Dennis Johnson says,

The "here is" formula in Revelation identifies the response that is called for by the truth that precedes it, as if John were saying, "What is needed in this situation is..."¹²

This book has promised wonderful things and will continue to promise wonderful things for the church. But when tough times come, it will require faith to believe those promises and to see them through. And since the promises do not automatically happen any more than Joshua's conquest of the land of Canaan automatically happened, endurance must be added to faith. The application to us is that if we want to see promises fulfilled, it requires faith and endurance. Those Christians who lack faith and endurance will be shelved just like the wilderness generation in Numbers was shelved for forty years.

Conclusion - our security does not rest in our faithfulness, but in the steadfast decrees of a God who cannot lie (v. 8)

But though lack of faith and endurance can make us lose out on earth, our eternal security rests not in what we do. It doesn't even rest in our endurance and faith. It rests in God's decrees that happened before the foundation of the world. Verse 8 hints at it when it speaks of those "whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world." They and only they will eternally perish. But if you are one of those for whom Christ was decreed to die before the foundation of the world, then your name was written in the book of life from before the foundation of the world. And Jesus affirmed that if you are in that book and if you are in God's hand, no one can pluck you out of His hand - not even a Titus.

So rejoice that though times might get tough, our security rests in something much stronger than our faith. It rests in God's eternal decrees. Predestination should be a comfort to the saints. If God has promised salvation to His elect, He is a God who cannot lie and He cannot go back on that promise. Romans 8 guarantees that all whom He predestined will not only be saved in life but will be glorified in heaven. All. Not one will be lost. Philippians 1:6 says, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

You might wonder, "What happens if I deny Him?" We have a test-case in Peter, don't we? Christ assured Peter that Peter would deny him, but He also assured Peter that He would pray for Peter and would restore him. Now, we assume that if a person never gets restored he was never elect. Paul words it this way in 2 Timothy 2:13: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He

12 Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001), p. 194.

cannot deny Himself." Though a Titus may kill your body, he cannot kill your soul. Your salvation is secure from eternity past to eternity future.

Hallelujah. Praise God. Let's pray.

- Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)
- Augustus (31 BC - AD 14)
- Tiberius (AD 14-37)
- Gaius, otherwise known as Caligula (AD 37-41)
- Claudius (AD 41-54)
- Nero (AD 54-68) Galba (AD 68-69) -----> Otho (AD 69) -----> 3 horns pulled out (Dan. 7:8) Vitellius (AD 69) ---->
- Vespasian (AD 69-79)
- Titus in AD 70 - the little horn

While the following commentaries do not mention McKenzie's interpretation, they all acknowledge that the beast of Revelation 13 looks remarkably like the little horn of Daniel 7: Alford, Henry. Alford's Greek Testament, an Exegetical and Critical Commentary. Vol. 4. 1875. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; Caird, G. B. A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Black's New Testament Commentaries, edited by Henry Chadwick. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966; Thomas, Robert L. Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995; Charles, R. H. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920; Ladd, George Eldon. A Commentary of the Revelation of John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; Mounce, Robert H. The Book of Revelation. Revised ed. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977; Beale, G. K. The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999; Bruce, F. F. The Revelation to John. A New Testament Commentary, edited by G. C. D. Howley. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969; Swete, Henry Barclay. Commentary on Revelation. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977; Bratcher, Robert G. and Howard A. Hatton. A Handbook on The Revelation to John. New York: The United Bible Societies, 1993; Walvoord, John F. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Chicago: Moody, 1966; Aune, David E. Revelation. Word Biblical Commentary, Vols. 52a and 52b, edited by Ralph p. Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998.