

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About...

The Beast

The scripture related to this topic is found in Revelation 13:1-7. The beast that the apostle John writes about in verse 1 is the pagan civil power of Rome, which "makes war with the saints" in verse 7. Also notice in verse 7 that power was "given to him" [Rome the beast], by God, and that the dragon [Satan] gave the beast power and his throne.

This beast [Rome] came up "out of the sea" in verse 1, which was prophesied by Daniel. In Daniel's dream and visions there were four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts [kingdoms] were coming up from the sea, different from one another (Daniel 7:1-3). Daniel defines the first beast "like a lion," which was the Babylonian Empire. The second beast "resembled a bear," which was the Medo-Persian Empire. The third beast "like a leopard," was the Greek Empire. The fourth beast was "dreadful and terrifying, and extremely strong and had large iron teeth." This was the Roman Empire (Dan. 7:4-7).

John describes the beast in Rev. 13:2 as that which is "like the leopard, the bear, and the lion" all combined, explaining the fierceness of the Roman Empire.

Therefore, the beast is not an individual "man" who will draw the world to him. The beast is not the "Antichrist." John defines the "antichrist" as false teachers who were "many," and who "have already appeared" in the first century (1 John 2:18). "The antichrist is one who denies the Father and the Son," (1 John 2:22). The "antichrist" was never defined as a Christian because John wrote "They went out from us, but they were not really of us," (1 John 2:19). The beast is not the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:3). The "man of lawlessness" will come from the apostasy, who once were believers and then rebelled against the truth and have fallen away. The beast, antichrist, and man of lawlessness are all different entities when defined properly by God's word.

These three entities are used by false teachers to predict the "end time. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour [Christ's return] no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone," (Matt. 24:36). "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people you ought to be in holy conduct and godliness," (2 Peter 2:10-11). No one can predict Christ's return, so it is imperative that we be ready!