

The Beasts—Who Are They?

People want to know who the two beasts found in Revelation 13 represent. Ever since God gave John these visions (95 AD), followers of Jesus have come up with different answers to these symbolic monsters. Even today, if you don't like someone, you may call them "a beast." And whoever you label "a beast" might call you "a beast."

While the book of Revelation has many interpretations, there are four basic ways people interpret the Book, with variations within each of these four. The four are:

Past—What John wrote happened in John's day, so we read it as ancient history because it happened in John's time—95 AD. The sea beast was the Roman empire and the earth beast was the Jews who killed Jesus and then His followers.

Future—John was put in a time machine and taken to the end of the world. He wrote down what he saw and did it in symbolic terms because much of what he saw he couldn't understand (airplanes, tanks, missiles, etc.). It will happen in the (near) future. The sea beast will be the return of the Roman empire and the earth beast will be the Antichrist, or the pope, or a false Jewish Messiah.

History—John received a vision of God and his activities with his people on earth over the span of history called The Christian Era (from the ascension of Christ to heaven until Christ's Second Coming). The sea beast is the Roman empire and the earth beast is the Catholic Church. Seventh-day Adventists adapted this and made the sea beast the Roman Catholic Church and the earth beast the United States.

Spiritual/Idealist—This isn't based on time, but on personal application. What does this mean to you? Who are the beasts in your life? The sea beast is any political or social evil, and the earth beast is false religion.

Adapted from Ranko Stefanovic's *Revelation of Jesus Christ* and presented in the *Participant's Guide to Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation* by Steve Case and Daniel Wysong.

For more of an explanation, see *7 Keys for Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation* pages 14-20 and the *Participant's Guide to Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation* page 81. These were written by Steve Case and Daniel Wysong and are available at AdventSource.org