

Lent, Day 22
Saturday, March 30, 2019

Revelation 13:1–10

The beast which comes up out of the sea takes the four beasts from Daniel 4 (where it represented successive kingdoms) and merges them into one. The monster which John sees is Rome. Behind Rome is Satan sharing his power, so Rome makes war against the Christians. This represents symbolically the clash the church had with the empire. Caesar is a god, is the claim being made. People could still have other deities, as long as they made offering to the emperor. Those who did not were disloyal and seditious.

The Christians, like the Jewish people (of course many were Jewish people), maintained a Jewish monotheism. There is only one God who created all things and who elected for himself a people. There were no other gods, so no other gods were to be worshiped. In the early days of the church, when it seemed little more than a Jewish sect, the Christians shared in the exemption regarding offering worship to the emperor. But, as the church became more Gentile and moved further out, it began to be considered its own thing. The church and Rome were in conflict.

John's message is the same as in chapter 11, stand firm. The beast still roams around today. It's no longer Rome, but the clash between the world and the church still continues. The world wants the church to bow down to itself. If the church refuses destruction is promised. Stand firm is the call. Yes, we might die (literally in some cases and figuratively in others), but stand all the same. Our firm witness is powerful.

Prayer

Give us strength O Lord, to stand firm when the world wants us to bow down. Teach us to be faithful and give us courage in the face of opposition. Amen.