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**BEAST - WHO
WAS THE BEAST?
- UNMASKING
NERO AND THE
FIRST CENTURY
CONTEXT**



By Dan Maines

**WHO WAS THE BEAST? - UNMASKING NERO AND THE
FIRST CENTURY CONTEXT**

INTRODUCTION The Beast of Revelation has long been a source of confusion and wild speculation. But scripture gives us clear identifiers. Revelation 13 and 17, when understood alongside Daniel 7 and Roman history, reveal the Beast as the Roman imperial line that persecuted the early church. Nero Caesar was the sixth head of this Beast, and after his death the Beast revived through Vespasian and his son Titus. Revelation describes a system that regenerates, where one head is slain

but the Beast lives on through succeeding emperors.

THE COMPOSITE BEAST – REVELATION 13 AND DANIEL 7

Revelation 13:1-2 "Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten crowns, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority."

The Beast is described with features of the beasts in Daniel 7: lion, bear, leopard, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, showing that this Beast continues the legacy of empires, specifically Rome.

The dragon (Satan) gives the Beast its power and authority (Revelation 12:9, 13:2).

THE SEVEN HEADS – KINGS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Revelation 17:9-10 "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a short time."

The seven heads represent seven kings. Counting from Julius Caesar: ◦ Julius ◦ Augustus ◦ Tiberius ◦ Caligula ◦ Claudius ◦ Nero (the sixth, who "is" during the writing)

"The other has not yet come" is Galba, who reigned only seven months, "must remain a short time."

This aligns with a pre-70 AD authorship of Revelation. Nero's death is the critical turning point.

THE MORTAL WOUND AND HEALING – THE BEAST

REGENERATES Revelation 13:3 "I saw one of his heads as if it had been fatally wounded, and his fatal wound was healed."

And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast."

Nero died in AD 68, triggering the Year of the Four Emperors. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius ruled briefly.

According to Josephus, Wars 4.9.2, Vespasian paused military action after Nero's death: "But now Vespasian was in suspense about the affairs at Rome, by reason of the civil war that was begun. So he permitted the affairs of the Jews to rest for a while..." (Josephus, Wars 4.9.2)

Vespasian took the throne in late AD 69, reviving the empire. Josephus, Wars 4.11.5 confirms: "Now the Romans were greatly divided about who should be their emperor... and Vespasian at last was declared Caesar."

The Beast recovered. The fatal head wound was healed, symbolizing the restoration of imperial power.

Revelation 17:11 "The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth king, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction."

Titus, Vespasian's son, is identified as the eighth king, and "of the seven" by family and function.

Though Titus did not officially become emperor until AD 79, he exercised Caesar's authority under Vespasian in the destruction of Jerusalem. Revelation identifies the eighth king as coming from among the seven, not necessarily reigning immediately but continuing their work.

TITUS AND THE WAR AGAINST THE SAINTS

Vespasian was commissioned by Nero to crush the Jewish revolt in AD 66. Josephus, Wars 3.1.1: "Now Nero was informed that the affairs of Galilee were in a bad condition... so he sent

Vespasian... to correct what was amiss."

After Nero's death, Vespasian delayed, awaiting the political outcome in Rome.

Titus, during this pause, held the siege lines outside Jerusalem and later finished the assault.

Josephus, Wars 6.10.1: "Titus retired into the tower of Antonia... and gave orders to set fire to the gates. Then they came into the temple and burnt it down..."

Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, fulfilling Luke 21:20-24 and Matthew 24:2.

Titus was not emperor at the time, but he acted under Vespasian's imperial authority and completed what began under Nero. He thus fits Revelation's description of the eighth king who is "of the seven."

THE HARLOT CITY BURNED BY THE BEAST Revelation 17:16-17 "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose."

The Beast and its allies burn the harlot, Old Covenant Jerusalem.

Titus commanded the burning of the temple and the city, carrying out divine judgment.

This fulfilled Jesus' words in Matthew 22:7: "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire."

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST – 666 Revelation 13:18 "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man, and his number is 666."

The Greek spelling "Neron Kaisar" (נרון קסר) adds up to 666 in Hebrew gematria.

Some early manuscripts say 616, which matches the Latin spelling "Nero Caesar."

This identifies Nero as the sixth king and the archetype of the Beast.

DOMITIAN WAS NOT A HEAD OF THE BEAST

Domitian ruled from AD 81–96, after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Domitian was also the son of Vespasian and the brother of Titus, but he played no role in the Jewish War or the judgment on Jerusalem.

He was not involved in the events of Revelation or the judgment against the harlot city.

Revelation's Beast is tied to the burning of Jerusalem and the persecution of the saints before AD 70.

Titus, not Domitian, fulfilled that role. Titus was of the same imperial line and completed the work of judgment.

ECONOMIC CONTROL AND IMPERIAL WORSHIP

Revelation 13:17 "No one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name."

Participation in Roman commerce often required showing loyalty to Caesar.

Imperial coins bore Caesar's image and inscriptions calling him divine.

Refusal to honor Caesar excluded Christians from trade (Revelation 2:9-10, 3:9).

The mark of the Beast represents allegiance to the persecuting power of Rome.

CONCLUSION - THE BEAST IS ROME'S PERSECUTING CAESARS, NOT A FUTURE DICTATOR

The Beast was not just Nero, but the line of emperors that made war against the saints.

Nero was the sixth king who initiated persecution and war.

Galba came briefly.

Vespasian revived the empire.

Titus finished the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Beast was judged, just as Revelation foretold.

Revelation 19:20 "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet... these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire."

The persecuting empire fell.

Christ triumphed.

The kingdom was established.

We are not waiting for a future Beast, we live in the victory of the Lamb.

APPENDIX – SOURCES AND REFERENCES (if interested)

1. The Beast is a line of kings, not a generic system

Revelation 17:10-11 calls the Beast one of seven kings and also an eighth.

These are individual rulers, emperors of Rome, linked together by imperial succession and persecution.

Revelation 13:1-2 connects this line to Daniel's beasts, confirming it continues the legacy of pagan empires.

2. The seven heads are Roman Caesars

Revelation 17:9-10

List: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero = six

Galba = short reign (7th)

This matches the timeline prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

3. Nero's death = mortal wound; Vespasian = healing

Revelation 13:3

Nero died in AD 68; Rome descended into civil war

Vespasian revived the empire in late AD 69

Josephus, Wars 4.9.2 and 4.11.5 confirm the transition

4. Titus completed the Jewish War under Vespasian's rule

Titus was not emperor during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70

He commanded the Roman army under his father's authority

Josephus, Wars 6.10.1 confirms he led the assault and burned the temple

Revelation 17:16-17 describes the Beast (Rome) burning the prostitute (Jerusalem)

5. The number 666 = Nero Caesar

Revelation 13:18

“Neron Kaisar” in Hebrew = 666

“Nero Caesar” in Latin = 616 (seen in variant manuscripts)

Supported by early witness: Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.30.3

6. Domitian was not part of the Beast

Domitian ruled from AD 81–96

Jerusalem was already destroyed

Revelation's Beast is identified with the destruction of the harlot city, not later persecution

7. Economic restrictions tied to emperor worship

Revelation 13:17

Coins and trade guilds required allegiance to Caesar

Refusal led to exclusion (Revelation 2:9-10, 3:9)

Mark of the Beast = loyalty to the empire, not technology

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