5.3 - Out of the Sea

Watch the Beast

By this point in time, you should have a good handle on how Revelation uses words and symbols to tell a deep and layered story. One of the symbols that is often used in Revelation is "the sea". There are different schools of thought of what the "sea" stands for, so let's explore this deeper to ensure we have a proper handle on it, how it's used throughout the bible, and how it's used in Revelation.

Before we begin, what are your thoughts on what the "sea" stands for in Revelation? What are common teachings you've learned over the years?

There's another term in Revelation and in the rest of the Bible: the "waters". How are the "waters" different from the "sea"?

In this study, we'll consider:

1. Imagery of the "sea" in the Bible
2. The Beast and the "Sea"
3. The Angel and the "Sea"
4. The New Earth and the "Sea"

Imagery of the "sea" in the Bible

Read Revelation 21:1

This is a very interesting verse in Revelation about the "sea was no more", which confuses a lot of people when they read it. What is the Greek word being used here and what does it mean?

Is this word referring to something literal or symbolic? In the context of this verse, is it literal or symbolic?

Are there specific bodies of water that this is related to?

Let's go back to the first mention of this concept and follow it throughout the bible to see what we can find out.

Read Genesis 1:10

What is the Hebrew word being used here for "seas"? What does it mean?

Is this word referring to something literal or symbolic? In the context of this verse, is it used literally or symbolically?

Generally speaking, the definitions of these words are pretty straightforward. Do any bible stories come to mind related to "seas" that have meaning for you?

Read Exodus 14:15-31

This is one of the most significant stories about the Red Sea. Summarize the events.

When the Israelites crossed the red sea, how did they do so? Did they use boats? Did they swim? Did they touch the water? Or did they walk across dry land?

What happened to the Egyptians when they tried to cross?

What would have happened to Israel if the Red Sea did not part? What would have been their options? What were they surrounded by?

What did the path of land that opened up for them represent? What was on the other side of the sea? What were they walking away from and walking toward?

Read Psalm 23:4

What's a valley, in its simplest of terms? Did the parting of the Red Sea create a valley for Israel? What were they surrounded by?

In this story, what does the "dry land" represent and what does the "sea" represent?

Read Jonah 1

This is another popular story about a sea, this time the Mediterranean Sea. Summarize the events.

There was a violent storm. Why were the sailors afraid? What would have happened to them all if they were thrown into the sea?

When Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea, what was he really saying? What did Jonah volunteer to do?

What was the significance of Jonah being in the belly of a fish in the midst of the sea for three days and three nights? What was he surrounded by? What did that represent?

Read Matthew 12:38-40

Jesus compared Himself to Jonah in what way? What did the three days and night in the fish/heart of the earth represent?

In the story of Jonah, what does the sea represent? What does the land represent?

Read John 3:23, Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38, Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 2:11-13, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2

What is needed for a physical baptism, according to the customs in the Bible?

What does baptism represent? When someone is dunked into the water, what does the water represent? When they are lifted back out of the water, what does their return to land represent?

What do you think it means that Israel was “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”? What sea are they talking about? What did they walk through and how does that count as baptism?

In this context, what does the water of a sea represent?

Matthew 8:23-34, Matthew 14:22-33, Luke 17:2

Read these assorted stories and think about how the sea is used in them.

Why did the sailors who were on the sea cry out that they were perishing? What did the sea represent to them?

What happened to the pigs when they entered the sea?

Why did Peter ask Jesus to save him on the sea? What would have happened if he fell in? What did the sea represent to him? Jesus was walking on the sea like one does on the land. What does that represent?

What happens to someone who is thrown into the sea with a millstone on their neck? What is their fate?

Generally speaking, in these passages, is the sea used to represent chaos or death?

Let's transition back to the book of Revelation and look at the verses using "the sea". With the above interpretation in mind, let's see if we can decipher specific passages in their context and what is actually being communicated.

The Beast and the Sea

Read Revelation 13:1-2, Revelation 17:3

> "Then I saw a beast with ten horns and seven heads **rising out of the sea**. There were ten royal crowns on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. The beast I saw was like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority."
>
> *Revelation 13:1-2*

What does the "sea" represent in this passage? What is the beast rising out of?

Think about our last study. What is the difference between this beast versus the beast of Revelation 17? Are these two beasts the same entity?

Think about our timeline for the Revelation story. At what point in time does the description of the beast from Revelation 17 apply?

At what point in time does the description of the beast from Revelation 13 apply?

What happens to the beast between these two periods of time?

Read Revelation 17:11, Revelation 13:3

The beast is both the seventh and eighth king. How is that possible? What does this verse say about that? What happens to the seventh king?

What type of wound did the seventh king receive? What do those types of wounds typically cause a person to do?

Thinking back as to how the beast rose “out of the sea” and the wound he received, what is Revelation telling us? What happened to the beast?

Read Revelation 11:7, Revelation 9:1-12

Who kills the two witnesses?

What is this “Abyss” that is spoken of? Where else is it used in the New Testament?

Is the Abyss and Sheol/Hades the same place or different? Explain your reasoning.

Who is often referred to as being in Sheol? Who is often referred to as being in the Abyss? Can you find any instances where these terms are used interchangeably?

Would someone who “comes up from the Abyss” also symbolically represent someone who “rises up out of the sea”? What are your thoughts? Provide any evidence for your reasoning.

Why is the individual who kills the two witnesses called a beast? But in chapter 9, the main individual referenced from the Abyss is called a king? What is the significance of this? Are these the same individuals? Why or why not? Who else in Revelation is both a beast and a king?

Is the beast from the Abyss who kills the two witnesses also the beast who rises from the sea?

How can the king/beast from the Abyss also be the beast from the sea/eighth king? What might need to happen for these two to become one?

The Angel and the Sea

Let’s pivot to another section of Revelation that also mentions the sea, but is not about the Beast.

Read Revelation 10:1-7

> “Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven,
> wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head. His face was
> like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. He held in his hand
> a small scroll, which lay open. **He placed his right foot on the sea
> and his left foot on the land**. Then he cried out in a loud voice like
> the roar of a lion. And when he cried out, the seven thunders
> sounded their voices.”
>
> *Revelation 10:1-3*

Think back to our study on the characters of Revelation. Who is this “mighty angel”?

What is the significance of this individual putting “his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land”? What does sea and land represent?

Read Isaiah 31:4, Amos 3:4, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Revelation 1:17-18

This angel roars like a lion. According to the bible, why does a lion roar?

This implies that the angel has captured his “prey”. What do you think its prey is?

Capturing prey is a form of conquering. What did Jesus conquer?

What is promised to us through that conquest?

Read Revelation 1:4, Revelation 4:5, Revelation 5:6

In response to this “roar,” the seven thunders replied. Who do you think are the seven thunders?

Who is having a back and forth conversation in this passage?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, Romans 8:9, John 14:17, 2 Corinthians 1:22

As Christians, Who resides within us?

What is one of the reasons that the Holy Spirit “seals” us? What is the “pledge of what is to come”? What are we promised?

Alright, so we have an angel (Jesus) roaring like a lion (taking prey, conquering) while having a conversation with the seven thunders (God's Spirit) who we know lives within us while having one foot on the sea (death) and one foot on the land (life).

What event do you think this is describing?

Is the order of sea then land important in this verse? Why do you think so?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

During the resurrection, who gets their glorified bodies first?

Is the roar of a lion similar to a shout or a trumpet sound?

In conclusion, what is happening in this Revelation 10 passage? What does the sea and the land represent and how does it relate to the event it is describing?

The New Earth and the Sea

Read Revelation 21:1

> "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and **the sea was no more**."
>
> *Revelation 21:1*

Some people, in passing, often see this and think, "Oh, will the new earth have no oceans? Is it just all land?" How do you interpret this passage knowing how "sea" is used in the bible?

Read Revelation 20:11-13

What event immediately precedes the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth?

Who is being judged at the Great White Throne judgement?

Where did those people reside while waiting for this moment?

Read Revelation 20:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

What happened to Death and Hades immediately after the Great White Throne judgement? How does this relate to the “sea” in the next verse?

What does Jesus conquer permanently after everything is said and done? What will no longer exist after everything is under His feet?

Read Revelation 22:1-5, John 4:14, Revelation 21:3-4

What is the “curse” referring to?

What does the “river of the water of life” provide to people?

Knowing all this, when Revelation says the “sea was no more,” what is it really saying? What will all the people living in the New Heavens and New Earth never experience again?

Final Thoughts

Tell me what you've learned in this study. Do you agree or disagree with some of the things we focused on here? What are other questions or concerns that you have from this study?

Resources

Heaven, Hades, the 'Sea', Outer Darkness, New Jerusalem