

Revelation 17:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Analysis

The beast 'was, and is not, and yet is' parodies God's eternal existence ('which is, and which was, and which is to come,' 1:4). This satanic counterfeit astonishes earth-dwellers whose names aren't in the book of life. The beast's emergence from the bottomless pit identifies it as demonic. The going into perdition reveals its certain doom despite temporary power. Reformed theology emphasizes that only those whose names God wrote in the book of life from the foundation of the world will resist deception. Election precedes and secures believers' perseverance. The non-elect naturally marvel at Satan's power, lacking spiritual discernment to see through the counterfeit.

Historical Context

The description may allude to Nero redivivus myth—expectation that Nero would return from death. The beast represents successive kingdoms/emperors embodying satanic opposition to God. First-century Christians needed to recognize that impressive political power, though seemingly resurrected or invincible, was ultimately doomed. The book of life assured them their election secured their endurance.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Satan's counterfeit of divine eternity (was/is not/is) help you recognize false claims to ultimate authority?
2. What assurance does election (names written before the foundation of the world) provide against deception by seemingly impressive powers?

Interlinear Text

τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδες ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ μέλλει
G3588 **The beast** G2342 **that** G3739 **thou sawest** G1492 **was** G2258 **and** G2532 **not** G3756 **is** G2076 **and** G2532 **shall** G3195

ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν
ascend G305 **out of** G1537 G3588 **the bottomless pit** G12 **and** G2532 **into** G1519 **perdition** G684

ὑπάγειν· καὶ θαυμάσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς
go G5217 **and** G2532 **shall wonder** G2296 G3588 **they that dwell** G2730 **in** G1909 G3588

γῆς ὃ οὐκ γέγραπται τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον
the earth G1093 **that** G3739 **not** G3756 **were** G1125 G3588 **names** G3686 **in** G1909 G3588 **the book** G975

τῆς ζωῆς ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου βλέποντες τὸ
G3588 **of life** G2222 **from** G575 **the foundation** G2602 **of the world** G2889 **when they behold** G991 G3588

θηρίον ὃ τι ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ περ ἔστιν
The beast G2342 **that** G3739 G5100 **was** G2258 **and** G2532 **not** G3756 **is** G2076 **and yet** G2539 **is** G2076

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 17:11 (Parallel theme): And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Revelation 11:7 (Parallel theme): And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Revelation 3:10 (Parallel theme): Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Revelation 3:5 (Parallel theme): He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Matthew 25:34 (Parallel theme): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Ephesians 1:4 (Parallel theme): According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

John 17:24 (Parallel theme): Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Daniel 7:11 (Parallel theme): I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

Titus 1:2 (Parallel theme): In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;