

## Revelation 13 • The Beasts

### Introduction

[Note to Small Group Leaders: This is a longer than usual Bible study.]

There are but a handful of genuinely new things introduced in Revelation which have no corresponding previous counterpart in Scripture, and delineating that the Antichrist is actually composed of two figures is one of them. All the obvious previous examples for 1<sup>st</sup> century believers to this point were lone, Gentile political rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes IV and Caesar. And interestingly enough, all the counterfeit messiahs experienced both before and after Christ always seem to be lone, unaccompanied figures. But what they all share in common is the irresistible urge to deify themselves and seek to be worshiped. Politics and military conquest may be tools of the Antichrist and False Prophet, but there is no mistaking that it all for the goal of engendering worship.

<sup>13</sup>And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. <sup>15</sup>And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup>So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore.

Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

### [Read 12:13-17]

#### Q: Who does Scripture specify is the dragon?

A: Rev. 12:9 plainly states his identity as the one “who is called the devil and Satan”.

#### Q: What is the difference between v.13-14 and 15-16 where Satan is concerned?

A: Whereas he first acts in the character of the dragon where persecution is his primary aim, he then acts in the character of the serpent where he primarily works deception. Revelation 12:9 specifically calls Satan both a dragon **and** a serpent.

#### Q: What is the difference between how Israel will endure these things vs. the Church?

A: Israel will flee into the wilderness and be protected by God’s divine intervention; the Church will overcome Satan by being faithful even to the point of death.

**Point:** Satan’s tactics, even while he still had a place in heaven, have always primarily consisted of deception and persecution. When he and those who follow him into rebellion are cast out of heaven to the earth, deception and persecution are magnified to a level never before experienced by mankind, particularly God’s people. This is the very definition of what Scripture calls “the great tribulation”. (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 2:22; 7:14)

### [Read v.1]

#### Q: Why is it significant that the beast is “coming up out of the sea”?

A: The sea is the repeated biblical metaphor for all the Gentile nations of the world. It is a clear scriptural indication that this first and primary Antichrist figure is an ethnic Gentile.

#### Q: Why would a 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian immediately recognize the truth of this?

A: Because to this point, because of the book of Daniel, all the Antichrist types known to this point from both Scripture and history have all been Gentile political figures. What John provides here is a confirmation of previous Scripture.

#### Q: Does this prevent him from having any kind of Jewish background?

A: No. For instance, Herod was accepted religiously as a Jew even though he was both ethnically Gentile and a citizen of Rome. He was

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accepted simultaneously as a Jew, Gentile and Roman.

**Observation:** Note the following scriptural parallels for the beast and dragon:

Daniel 7:7-8	Rev. 12:3	Rev. 13:1
<i>"...a fourth beast...and it had ten horns...and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots..."</i>	<i>"...a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his head were seven diadems."</i>	<i>"...a beast...having ten horns and seven heads and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names."</i>

**Q: What is common in each case?**

A: There is a ten and a seven. In Daniel it is having three horns uprooted to leave seven, the dragon has only seven diadems for its ten horns while the beast maintains a diadem for each horn. This all seems to indicate something which begins as a ten but contracts to a seven, the other three being subdued or absorbed at some point.

**Observation:** In Daniel's very first vision (Dan. 2), the kingdom of Antichrist is depicted as ten toes of "iron mixed with common clay" which is explained as being "a divided kingdom". Part of the kingdom of Antichrist is subdued along the way.

**Q: How is this a counterfeit of Christ?**

A: When Christ returns we find "on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself". (Rev. 19:12) The diadems on the beast are limited in number and the names on each head are "blasphemous".

**Point:** Biblical blasphemy is to slander God and bear false witness against Him. This feature of the beast leaves no doubt that he is in outward opposition to the Godhead.

**Q: How might these slanderous names on each of the heads reveal something about the mark of the beast to come at the end of this chapter?**

A: Taking the mark is an overt stance against God that involves slandering and bearing false witness against Him, the scriptural definition of "blasphemy". We will see this overtly take place when at the end of the Bowl judgments it is recorded, "and men blasphemed God". (Rev. 16:21)

**Q: There are many suggestions as to the identity of the ten horns, which Scripture explains are "ten kings". (Rev. 17:12-13) Why are probably none of them correct?**

A: Because it is still too early to know; they do not exist yet.

<sup>12</sup>"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. <sup>13</sup>These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. (Revelation 17:12–13)

They will not arise until just before the very end, and only for the purpose of serving the authority of the beast. They come into existence with the arrival of the Antichrist.

**Point:** *The first beast comes in the character of Satan, both described as having seven heads and ten horns. The kingdom of Antichrist mimics this shared feature.*

<sup>2</sup>And the beast which 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.

**[Read v.2]**

**Q: How were animals used in Daniel 7?**

A: Four successive empires were associated, first the lion with Babylon, the bear with Media-Persia, the leopard with Greece, and a dreadful fourth beast with the kingdom of Antichrist.

**Q: Why do you think the order of these same animals as shown to John is reversed?**

A: Whereas Daniel was looking from the beginning toward the end, John is at the end looking back from the future when those three previous kingdoms have come and gone and all that is left is the kingdom of Antichrist. This also shows that all the characteristics of all the great earthly kingdoms are combined in to the final kingdom of Antichrist.

**Point:** *This is a clear scriptural connection to assist us in connecting the dots, so to speak, between Daniel and Revelation. John's vision is built upon and fulfills Scripture which came before it rather than replacing it or invoking a new interpretation.*

**Q: What is significant about Satan giving the beast "his power and his throne and great authority"?**

A: It shows who and what is really being worshiped, served and at work.

**Point:** *This is the fulfillment of what was initially provided in the book of Daniel, the final dreadful kingdom of the Antichrist.*

<sup>3</sup>I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed.

And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; <sup>4</sup>they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

**[Read v.3-4]**

**Observation:** *This is the first of three mentions in this chapter of the beast's wound. (v.3, 12 & 14) Twice it is referred to as a "fatal wound".*

**Q: What is the meaning of a "fatal wound"?**

A: It speaks of something which inevitably leads to death.

**Q: There is much speculation as to how this will come about. What does Scripture identify as the cause or method?**

A: In v.14 Scripture states, "the wound of the sword and has come to life". It comes about in the course of a military conflict or action.

**Q: How is this verified in v.4?**

A: As a result of his miraculous recovery his worshipers declare, "... who is able to wage war with him?" so as to lift him up as militarily invincible and impervious to death.

**Q: What is probably the greater purpose behind this?**

A: It is a satanic attempt to counterfeit Christ's death and resurrection.

**Q: But what is the real satanic goal here?**

A: They do not merely follow the beast, but "they worshiped the dragon...and they worshiped the beast". (v.4)

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**Q: Why might this sound familiar to us? How was this expressed directly between Satan and Christ?**

A: In the course of Satan's attempt to test Christ he "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to Him, 'All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me.'" (Mt. 4:8)

**Q: How might the declaration, "Who is like the beast" be actually displaying yet another aspect of acting as a counterfeit?**

A: There are many scriptural declarations, "Who is like You?" when referring to God. (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 89:8; 113:5) One of Satan's chief ambitions is stated in Isaiah 14:14, "I will make myself like the Most High".

**Point:** This first beast may operate mainly in the political realm, but it is only to achieve the ultimate, spiritual result of being worshiped.

**[Read v.5-6]**

<sup>5</sup>There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. <sup>6</sup>And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

**Q: How might these open acts of blasphemy against God's name and tabernacle in heaven be reflected here on earth?**

A: He does the same by going into the earthly temple—the Abomination of Desolation, and doing the same by demanding to be worshiped and making his identity known.

**Q: How would this all connect with the time limit of forty-two months?**

A: Both Daniel and then Christ in the Olivet Discourse place the emphasis of the Last Days calendar on the last half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week beginning with the Abomination of Desolation. A 3-1/2 span of years is comprised of 42 months.

**Q: Why use "forty-two months" instead of "3-1/2 years" or even, as in the case of the Two Witnesses in chapter 11, "1,260 days"?**

A: "42" is the biblical number for apostasy, the result of multiplying the number for perfection, "7", times the number for man, "6", to express the corruption taking place. Whereas "1,260" is used to refer to "good guys" such as Israel (Rev. 12:6) and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3), "42" is used for the bad guys such as the Gentile nations (Rev. 11:2) and Antichrist. (Rev. 13:5)

**Observation:** In Scripture, "42" as associated with apostasy is found:

- It was 42 apostate youth who were killed for mocking Elisha concerning the rapture of Elijah. (2 Ki. 2:24)
- It was the 42,000 apostate Benjamites who were expunged from Israel. (Jg. 12:6)
- The unfaithful generation prevented from entering the Promised Land stopped at 42 places in the wilderness. (Num. 33)

**Point:** Side-by-side with Satan's authority conveyed to Antichrist is a message of open blasphemy against God.

<sup>7</sup>It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. <sup>8</sup>All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

### **[Read v.7-8]**

**Q: What is the primary purpose of the first beast's political power?**

A: To persecute those who follow Christ, and to obtain the worship of everyone else.

**Q: How are those "who dwell on the earth" defined?**

A: They worship Antichrist because their name is not found in the "book of life of the Lamb". In other words, they are unsaved.

**Q: Why is the contention of some that it is possible to take the mark of the beast and still repent and be saved scripturally wrong?**

A: Among other things, those who take the mark and worship the beast are absent from the book of life. Their earthly actions in taking the mark and worshiping the beast simply mirror their ultimate spiritual condition.

**Point:** Earth dwellers are differentiated from saints in that instead of worshiping "the Lamb who has been slain" (v.8), they worship the beast with "one of his heads **AS IF** it has been slain". (v.3)

<sup>8</sup>"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. (Revelation 17:8)

**Application:** The spiritual corollary to "you are what you eat" is "you are what you worship".

<sup>9</sup>If anyone has an ear, let him hear. <sup>10</sup>If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

### **[Read v.9-10]**

**Q: Why are some offended when the phrase is employed, "the rapture of the faithful"?**

A: The offended are usually those who hold to Pre-Tribulationism who believe the Church will be removed before the appearance of the Antichrist, and therefore see this phrase as being exclusive and exclusionary.

**Q: But why is it appropriate for those who accept Scripture at face value that the Antichrist must be experienced as well as at least part of Daniel's final 70<sup>th</sup> Week?**

A: Consider not just all the physical hardships of the Seal judgments, but the unprecedented deception, apostasy and persecution. By definition, the only Christians who will survive these circumstances without apostatizing are going to be "faithful".

**Point:** When the Rapture takes place, all the nominal Christians will have been purged from the ranks and all that will remain are the faithful.

### **Summary of the First Beast**

*1<sup>st</sup> century believers reading John's vision for the first time would have recognized this first beast as the Antichrist figure conforming to what was provided by the Prophet Daniel:*

- He is mainly a political figure of Gentile ethnicity.

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- *His character and kingdom is a satanic reflection of a beast with seven heads and ten horns.*
- *His marking of blasphemous names reflects what he is doing in marking his follower.*
- *He is the last and final kingdom as originally designated by Daniel combining all who came before.*
- *Although he will experience what is normally a fatal wound in battle, Satan will effect a miraculous recovery in order to counterfeit Christ's death and resurrection.*
- *Although working primarily through the political realm, his agenda is purely spiritual to obtain worship. Those who will not worship him will be pursued and persecuted to the point of death.*

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. <sup>12</sup>He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup>He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

**[Read v.11-13]**

**Q: What is the difference between coming from the sea versus “coming up out of the earth”?**

A: Whereas the biblical metaphor of the sea is the Gentile nations, coming from the land like this is the biblical metaphor for Israel. This indicates that the figure we have come to call the “False Prophet” is ethnically Jewish.

**Q: Does that automatically disqualify him from having any non-Jewish connections?**

A: No. The Church is composed of both Jew and Gentile. In 1 John 2:19 it is stated that antichrist figures go out “*from us, but they were not really from us*”. In the character of Herod he can cross over into many other things in spite of his ethnicity.

**Q: Why do you suppose at least one of these two beasts has to be ethnically Jewish?**

A: Judaism has historically experienced false christs, both before and after Jesus, and they are always Jewish. They are spiritually disposed toward following a Jewish Antichrist.

**Point:** *Those who insist that the Antichrist is exclusively Gentile (many even say of Islamic origin) and those restricting the possibility to his only being a Jew may both be technically correct, but not taking into account that there are two beasts who are **BOTH** Antichrist.*

**Q: How is the theme of a counterfeiting Christ continued in this second beast?**

A: “...he had two horns like a lamb”, so that there is a visible resemblance, but “he spoke as a dragon”—that is, he is spiritually motivated by Satan.

**Q: How is this working of Satan illustrated in John’s vision?**

A: By the fact that Satan is standing on the shore between the two. What is essentially illustrated is a counterfeit Trinity attempting to effect a substitute for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Q: What does the second beast lack when compared to the first?**

A: He has horns, but no crowns, which symbolize authority. This is explained by the fact that “*He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence*”.

**Point:** *The False Prophet does not operate outside the Antichrist's presence in a visible example of his devotion and service to him.*

**Q: What is the chief responsibility of the False Prophet?**

A: To get everyone to “worship the first beast”.

**Q: Who is the False prophet counterfeiting in not just performing “great signs”, but even making “fire come down out of heaven”?**

A: The Two Witnesses effect many authentic signs from God including “fire come down out of heaven”. (Rev. 11:5) This also replays the Exodus motif when, to a point, Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated the first few signs of Aaron and Moses.

**Q: Why might it be important that the biblical text here indicates that the signs the False Prophet performs takes place “in the presence of men”?**

A: This proves that these are literal, real miracles which take place in the earthly realm and that they cannot simply be allegorized or spiritualized away as something else.

**Q: However, how does the text also indicate that he is limited in what he can do?**

A: They are qualified as “the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast”, whereas the Two Witnesses “have the power...to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire”. (Rev. 11:6)

**Observation:** *Another significant difference between the Two Witnesses and the False Prophet is that whereas they “will prophesy” (Rev. 11:3, 6)—that is, speak the Word of God, the False Prophet “spoke as a dragon”—speaks the word of Satan.*

**Point:** *The primary purpose of the second beast—the False Prophet, is to deify and engender worship of the Antichrist, the first beast.*

<sup>14</sup>And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

**[Read v.14]**

**Q: Who is stated here to be the ones who are deceived by the False Prophet? Why is this significant?**

A: It is specified to be “those who dwell on the earth”. This group was defined in v. 8 as “everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb”. The authentically saved will not be deceived by either his works or accompanying message.

**Q: What is biblically familiar about the command “to make an image to the beast”?**

A: It harkens back to the Gentile ruler Nebuchadnezzar, whose God-given dream in Daniel 2 contained an image of different metals, his being the top-most made of gold, who then in Daniel 3 erects an entire image of himself of gold and demands that everyone worship it. He establishes the precedent wherein all antichrist figures deify themselves and seek to be worshiped.

**Q: How would this be historically familiar to 1<sup>st</sup> century readers?**

A: Leading up to the Maccabean Revolt, the Gentile ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV commits the Abomination of Desolation by going into the Temple, erecting a statue of Zeus using his own face, and sacrificing a pig on the alter in a public act of self-deification.

**Point:** The second beast imitates the signs of the Two Witnesses in the course of overseeing the establishment of an image of the beast upon which to focus worship. It is the ultimate and complete implementation of establishing a false god in place of the One True God.

<sup>15</sup>And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

**[Read v.15]**

**Q: Is this just the “ultimate” magic trick? What is really taking place here?**

A: Like Nebuchadnezzar and Epiphanes IV before him, the most prominent characteristic of the final Antichrist to come is to focus all worship on himself.

**Q: Is this just a trick of technology as many postulate?**

A: The keyword here is that the False Prophet gives the image “breath”, which is exactly what God did to give life to Adam and Eve. The Antichrist counterfeits Christ in his role as Creator.

*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men”. (John 1:3-4)*

**Q: Again, what is the stated goal of these activities?**

A: To worship the beast by worshiping his image.

**Q: Why is the penalty for not worshipping the beast significant?**

A: It is death. The False Prophet does not issue the requirement to take the mark or be killed, but it is refusal to worship the image which invokes the death penalty regardless, exactly in the character of Nebuchadnezzar’s image in Daniel 3.

**Point:** The second beast counterfeits Christ as Creator with a living image of the beast upon which to focus worship of Antichrist.

<sup>16</sup>And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, <sup>17</sup>and he provides that 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.

**[Read v.16-17]**

**Q: To what do parallel Scriptures speaking about this mark make a direct connection?**

A: To the worship of the image of the beast in v.15.

<sup>9</sup>Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone **worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark** on his forehead or on his hand, (Revelation 14:9)

<sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and **those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand**; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4)

**Q: Why should this feature of the Antichrist not be unexpected? Why is it, in reality, yet another attempt to counterfeit the Godhead?**

A: Because Scripture contains examples of how God makes this kind of mark on His own people.

1. There is the marking on the forehead with the Hebrew letter “tav”

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(which literally looks like a cross) in Ezekiel 9.

2. The Mosaic Law led to wearing phylacteries on the forehead and hand so as to be marked with God's Word. (Ex. 13:9, 16; Dt. 6:6-8; 11:18)
3. Even in Revelation, the first to be marked were the 144,000. (Rev. 7 & 14)
4. In eternity, all believers "will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads". (Rev. 22:4)

**Q: Is this the first time Satan has marked someone?**

A: In the Nativity Narrative, Caesar as an antichrist figure "marks" everyone by assigning each a number in the course of census, a method designed to exert financial control over everyone. It is a shadow of what is to ultimately come.

**Application:** More concern needs to be exerted to obtain the mark of God so to never worry about the mark of the beast.

**Q: What is the dual aspect of the mark?**

A: It is "either the name of the beast or the number of his name".

**Point:** There is an unhealthy preponderance of interest in "the number" to the exclusion of almost any discussion about "the name".

**Point:** The second beast employs financial control to force worship of Antichrist.

## Summary of the Second Beast

For 1<sup>st</sup> century readers, this is a new point of information which was previously not plainly disclosed in Scripture, that the Antichrist is composed of two beasts, one mainly working in the political realm, but this False Prophet in the religious:

- He is ethnically Jewish
- He counterfeits Christ as a lamb but is empowered by Satan.
- His authority and working is exercised only in the presence of the first beast in order to foster worship of him.
- To a point he counterfeits the signs of the Two Witnesses.
- He successfully deceives the unsaved.
- He counterfeits Christ as Creator by giving life to the image of the beast the world worships.
- He requires worship of the beast not just by financial control through the mark of the beast, but by a death sentence for not worshipping his image.

<sup>18</sup>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 six hundred and sixty-six.

### [Read v. 18]

**Q: How does this final detail establish that there must be believers present at this time?**

A: Only Holy Spirit-filled believers in Christ possess biblical "wisdom", which is required to "calculate the number of the beast".

<sup>20</sup>Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (1 Corinthians 1:20)

<sup>30</sup>But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, (1 Corinthians 1:30)

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**Q: How is this further corroborated by Daniel?**

<sup>10</sup>“Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and **none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.** (Daniel 12:10)

**Point:** When appropriate within the greater scheme of God's timing, there will come a time when the identity of the Antichrist will be plainly understood by the faithful in Christ.

**Overall Application**

The reason there is such an emphasis on the last half of Daniel's 70th Week, in this case the forty-two months, is that it is initiated by the Abomination of Desolation, and from that point forward Satan in every way is attempting to accomplish through the earthly Temple an imitation of what transpires in the heavenly. Just as the emphasis in heaven is worship, so is the aim of this satanic counterfeit. This is what Satan is attempting to do spiritually at present, but in the Last Days he is cast down to earth in a final attempt to do it openly and literally.