

Blessed Are Those: A Journey through Revelation – Part 15

The Dragon and Beasts from the Sea and Earth - Rev 13:1-18

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 13th, 2025

Intro:

- Today, in chapter 13 of the book of Revelation, we will encounter two diabolical beasts and the ever-speculated “mark of the beast,” the number “666.” As with the last chapter, there is a lot to take in from this chapter, and many have come up with a spectrum of wide-ranging theories as to what exactly everything means in these chapters.
- I have spent considerable time studying, praying and thinking about these things as well, with the hope that I can present to us what will be the most important for us to know and do. Regardless of your thoughts on this chapter and how it will all play out in time, no matter what comes, the two most important things to do are these. One, *to be faithful to Christ and patiently endure persecution*, and two, *refuse to worship anyone or anything besides Christ*. If you hold tight to these two things over all others, you will make it through.
- If you remember from last week, the great dragon of old, the devil who is frustrated, filled with fury, and enraged, has turned to “wage war against the woman and the rest of her offspring, those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus” (Rev 12:17). This is why Paul instructs believers in Jesus to:

Eph 6:10-14 ESV

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, stand against the schemes of the devil, withstand the evil day, and stand firm. These are the same things that John tells us to do as he recounts the revelation of what God has shown him so that we will be prepared for whatever supernatural-empowered evil that may come our way and rage against us.
- Many commentators call the dragon, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, or the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet the “unholy trinity,” which is a mockery of the “holy trinity” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is why the number of the “beast” is “666,” which falls short of perfection, which is “777.” The “unholy trinity’s” ultimate goal is to replace God and be worshiped in His place. They intend to do this by brute force, deception, and through signs and wonders, and they will kill those who refuse to honor and worship them.
- This is why the text tells us to be faithful to Christ and patiently endure persecution, as we will see in our text.

Be faithful to Christ and patiently endure persecution

Rev 13:1-10 NIV

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a

bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. 4 People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.

7 It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. 8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

9 Whoever has ears, let them hear. 10 “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.” This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

- This beast that comes from the sea is a composite beast that Daniel saw in his vision of these things recorded in Daniel 7. In Daniel’s vision, there were four separate beasts: one was like a lion, one like a bear, and one like a leopard, which had four heads, and another one that was powerful and had 10 horns on its head and said blasphemies against God. So this beast that comes out of the sea in Rev. 13 is the combination of all those things, a lion, bear, and leopard, a beast that has seven heads and ten horns and spoke blasphemes against God (See Dan. 7 -8).
- This beast is understood to be the spirit of the antichrist with its various manifestations over time (heads), with the last one being THE antichrist before the second coming of Jesus.
- John talked about the antichrist in his letters. In 1 John 2:18-19a, he said, **“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come”** (ESV). In 1 John 2:22, he said, **“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son”** (ESV) (See also 1 John 4:1-4, 2 John 7). Anyone who says that Jesus is not Christ is not God’s Son is an antichrist, and at this time, the most prevalent and pervasive is Muhammad and the followers of Islam. And by just saying this, in some countries, even today, you would be arrested and killed.
- Notice that at a certain time, this “beast” will be “given power to wage war against God’s holy people and conquer them” (v. 7). He will also have authority over all people of the earth, from every tribe, people, language and nations and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship him – that is all who do not have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life – the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world (v. 7-8).
- In the end, only the true Christians will not worship the beast, who is the antichrist. And just like the Lamb who was slain, they will be conquered and slain as well. This is what verses 9-10 are all about.

Rev. 13:9-10

Whoever has ears, let them hear. 10 “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.”

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

- The beast (antichrist) “conquers” by killing followers of the Lamb (Christians), and Christians conquer by being killed because they patiently endured persecution and were faithful to the Lamb, even unto death (See Rev. 2:10). Remember that Rev 12:11 tells us **“They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death”** (NIV).
- Jesus taught the same things when He told us about the end:

Matt 24:9-14 ESV

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- The most important thing for us to do is to remain faithful to Jesus, to never deny Him, to never bow our knee to another, to be faithful to Him even unto death. If you were meant for captivity, then to captivity you will go, if you were meant to die for Christ, then die for Him you will. This is how you overcome; this is how you win. The worst they can do is kill you, do not be afraid of them, “rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 24:28). Your love for Christ must be greater than any other love, even love for your own life (See Matt. 10:37-39).
- So again, regardless of how all this pans out, always be faithful to Christ and patiently endure persecution. This leads us to the next point: refuse to worship anyone or anything besides Christ. Here, we read about the second beast, the false prophet, and the number of his name.

Refuse to worship anyone or anything besides Christ

Rev 13:11-18 NIV

Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.

14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

- This second “beast” looked like a lamb but spoke like a dragon - this is a false prophet, a deceiver who puts on a harmless appearance but, in reality, is ruthless, cunning, and deadly. He has authority and power even to perform signs and wonders that deceive the earth’s inhabitants to worship the first beast (the antichrist). He even creates an image of the beast that can speak; if anyone refuses to worship it, they are put to death.
- All those who choose to worship the image of the first beast then are forced to take the number of the beast on their forehead or right hands in order to participate in the economic system controlled by the beast, enabling them to buy and sell.
- No one will accidentally take the “mark of the beast.” It is only given to those who choose to worship the antichrist. This is a deliberate act. There is speculation as to if this is a literal mark put on people’s heads or hands, it might be. However, it might not be. It could be like the “mark” that God puts on his children’s foreheads (Rev. 7:14, 14:1, 22:4) or His seal of ownership on us, the Holy Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor 1:21-22), which is not literal. Again, this is a mimicry of what God does, as Satan communicates by this act, “I also can do what God can do.”
- The head and hand are indicators of your thoughts and actions – that are dedicated to the one you serve, the one who “owns” you. The Jews do this with a phylactery, which is a small, black leather box containing Torah passages. It is worn on the head and arm during weekday morning prayers and serves as a reminder to keep God’s Law and to be mindful of His presence. So having the “mark of the beast” means you serve and worship him.
- The mark “666” has a lot of speculation around it. Many have used a practice called “gematria” that assigns letters to the alphabet to come up with a number for names. They have come up with hundreds of candidates for this number, including Nero Caesar, Julius Caesar, Henry Kissinger, Ronald Wilson Reagan, various popes, world leaders, etc. This method seems “iffy” at best. What is clearer is that the number “666” means “incomplete, incomplete, incomplete” or “unholy, unholy, unholy” and less to God’s perfection, or “777” “complete, complete, complete” or “Holy, Holy, Holy.”
- Paul explains how all these things come together in 2 Thess 2. Reminding us not to be deceived, the man of lawlessness will come – proclaiming himself to be God. And then Jesus will come back and overthrow and destroy him with the breath of His mouth and the splendor of His coming (Please read 2 Thess. Chapter 2 for more information).

Conclusion

- We are blessed to know that there is an “unholy trinity” at work that will manifest itself in fullness at the end. Above all things, fix your eyes on Jesus and stand firm in your faith. Be faithful to Christ and patiently endure persecution even unto death. Refuse to worship anyone or anything besides Christ and Him alone, regardless of what you are threatened with if you worship another or promise to receive if you do.
- Christ is worthy of it all, our life, our worship, our everything.

Questions for Growth Groups

1. What stood out to you most from the sermon or the reading of Revelation 13? How did it challenge or encourage your faith?
2. Read Revelation 13:1-4 and Daniel 7. How does the composite image of the beast connect with Daniel's vision? What does this reveal about the continuity of biblical prophecy and the nature of evil in the world?
3. Revelation 13:7-10 emphasizes faithful endurance even when believers are "conquered." How do you reconcile this idea of victory through apparent defeat? How does this mirror the life and death of Jesus?
4. How does Ephesians 6:10-14 equip us to resist the schemes of the enemy described in Revelation 13? What piece of the armor of God do you most need to strengthen right now?
5. Revelation 13:11-15 introduces the second beast—who looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. How can we recognize false prophets or deceptive spiritual leaders today? What warning signs should we be aware of?
6. The mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16-18) is associated with worship and allegiance. What are some modern-day temptations or systems that pressure us to compromise our worship and loyalty to Christ?
7. Re-read Revelation 13:10 and Matthew 24:13. What does it practically look like to "endure with patient faithfulness" in our daily lives? How can our group encourage one another to stand firm?