

## **Revelation XIII: Enter the Beasts- Part II**

[Read Revelation 13]

### **Introduction:**

The dragon, satan, having failed to destroy the church at her inception, then makes war with the rest of her offspring, namely, every individual who keeps the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17). Last time, we were introduced to one of the primary means the dragon uses for contending with the people of God, namely, the beast from the sea. And this beast, being a compilation of the four beasts from Daniel 7, represents every form of blasphemous, empirical power, which opposes Christ and His true Church, throughout the entire duration of the church age. By means of violent persecution and constant threat to the welfare and security of living souls, this beast commands the worship of all people. He has been given his authority, throne and power from the dragon himself. Again, his primary means of attaining his goal is by empirical force. During the time of John's day, this beast was manifested in the Roman Empire. And yet, the reality of the beast itself, which is demonic and spiritual, actually travels throughout all of history, warring against Christ's church in every age, by the use of rising empires and governing powers.

Well, this morning then, we move on to consider another one of the dragon's key allies, namely, the beast from the land/earth. And while this beast generally cooperates with and seeks to glorify the first beast, its method of attack is a bit more subtle and far more deceptive.

### **I. The Beast from the Earth/Land**

Let us then consider some key observations, given us in John's description of the second beast:

1) This beast had "two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon" (vs. 11). Unlike, the first beast, which was outwardly ferocious, and having no desire to cover that ferociousness, this beast looked like an innocent little lamb, from the outward standpoint. Its primary means of attack was by means of its mouth and its words. Its poison was primarily in its speech. It "spoke

like a dragon." And so, while it posed in a very non-threatening way outwardly, it deceived and destroyed by the words, which came from its inward reality.

As we might already begin to suspect, this beast is a false prophet of some sort. It spews forth lies that contend with the truth of God's Word and the Gospel. It is a living picture of the very warning that Christ Himself had given in Matthew 7:15, where He stated, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." Later on, the apostle John confirms our suspicion in the most literal sense, when he actually calls this beast "the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13; 19:20 & 20:10).

2) This beast "exercises all of the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (vs. 12). This false prophet, taking its authority from the empirical powers, stands before the presence of those powers, even as true prophets have stood before the presence of God. It speaks in the name of the first beast, seeking to draw the world to worship it, even as true prophets, standing before God, receive Word from God, and proclaim His Word, seeking to draw people to worship the true and living God. This beast is pictured by the Old Testament false prophets of baal and asherah...etc. But he also seeks to imitate the Holy Spirit, Who goes on behalf of Christ, convicting the world of sin, while seeking to draw all men to Christ. Even as the Holy Spirit exalts and proclaims Christ, this false prophet; this spirit of false prophecy, strives to exalt and proclaim the empirical powers as the gods and saviors of the day. The Holy Spirit exalts and proclaims the resurrected Christ, while the false prophet proclaims and exalts the counterfeit, resurrected antichrist.

3) This beast "performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (vs.13). As a false prophet, this beast seeks to authenticate his speech by the performing of different signs...only his signs are lying, deceptive signs. His so-called miracles, such as calling fire down from heaven (imitating Elijah, and attempting to confirm his idolatrous teachings as the true prophets and apostles did their true teachings) are actually counterfeit miracles...magic tricks, as it were, in keeping with the magicians who served in Pharaoh's court, when Moses' performed true miraculous signs.

The enemy will always do his best to imitate God and His divine power, but everything he does is a counterfeit sham. Nevertheless, he deceives the whole unregenerate world by means of these counterfeit signs, leading people to worship the first beast. His work is all "smoke and mirrors." Needless to say, many throughout history have laid claim to miraculous workings in order to promote their demonic causes. By such means, the imperial cult of Rome in the first century; the local cult priests (from their own land) confirmed the deification of the Roman rulers (over seas). And such counterfeit miracles have made their way through all ages, confirming the so-called divine authority of governing rulers, religious cult leaders and popes...etc. All of these are subtle, deceptive means of "wowing and wooing" the world into worshipping the empirical beast. You see, the devil uses all means to deceive the world and to contend with the church, both aggressive persecution, and "arm around the shoulder" poisonous doctrinal influence.

4) "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (vs. 14-15).

This beast comes out of the earth; he is a counterfeit divine; a lying prophet, who deceives those *who dwell on the earth*. And he further makes an image of the beast; and by his lying words and wonders, he gives the image life, leading all to worship the beast through this image. The picture here reminds us of the great, golden image of himself that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up (in Daniel 3), which everyone was to fall down and worship, when various musical instruments were played at various times. And when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, had refused to obey this command, some of the Chaldeans had reported it to the king.

Especially during, but not limited to the time of the imperial cult, this practice has been ongoing. Individual local cities had fought hard to gain the right to set up temples and statues, representing living and non-living rulers of the time. And the local priests and governors pressed the people to worship and offer incense/sacrifices to the Roman rulers in this way. In many cases, you could be barred from the benefits of trade guilds or obtaining societal status, if you

refused to participate in these idolatrous practices. And at various times, and in various places you could be killed for failing to participate (see chapters 2&3---remember Antipas of Pergamos). Having these statues and temples in your city was often a coveted benefit, because it helped gain the favor of the distant Roman king. And furthermore, it brought in people from all over the world, which helped boost up the economy. And so, the false prophet beast of John's day included the propagandist local priests, who worked hard to bring about the local worship of the distant Caesar. In fact, one brother stated, "John and his readers knew what this imperial cult meant since it was better organized and enforced in Asia Minor than in any other part of the Roman Empire. It was composed of deputies whose duty was to build images of Domitian, altars at the images, and legislate in any way they considered best to enforce the state religion" (Ray Summers).

5) Lastly, this beast, "causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666" (vs. 16-18).

No small amount of debate has come about over the meaning of these few verses, probably more than every other verse in the whole Book! Everyone is trying to solve the "mark" issue and the "666" issue. Is it a physical mark (some microchip in the head/hand) or is it spiritual...etc. Does the number "666" identify Nero, Hitler, Ronald Reagan, Barrack Obama or some later president or ruler? Well, let's work through this together, to the best of our ability.

So, there are two main issues here. First, is this mark physical; some kind of a micro-chip, to be put in the body at some later point in time, or is it a spiritual mark of some sort? And then, secondly, what does the "666" signify?

a- I believe that this mark of the beast is not physical, but rather spiritual, for at least two main reasons:

\*First, this mark is not used *only* for some future generation. The context does not allow for us to transfer this one element of the text to the time of some future generation. This has

been used and will continue to be used throughout the entire duration of the church age. This mark of the beast had relevance for the church of John's day.

\*Secondly, this mark is meant to contrast the seal that is placed upon the foreheads of Christ's people. [Read verse 14:1; 7:3]. The mark of the beast is no more physical than the Father's (and the Lamb's) Name being written on the foreheads of God's people.

Well, what then is this spiritual mark? This mark signifies ownership. When the Father's (and the Lamb's) name is put upon the foreheads of the people of God, it indicates, that they are subject to His authority, and they conform their thoughts to His will. Likewise, when the rest of the world, receives this mark of the beast, it means that they willfully subject themselves to the will of the beast, rather than God. The beast brands them, as it were. And this mark is placed on the head or the right hand, indicating the beast's control over the conscience/thought life, and the actions that come out of the thought life (the right hand). [See also Ex. 13:9, 16; Deut. 6:4-8; Ezek. 9:4]. [Also, slaves were marked by owners...etc].

b) And what of the number "666," which is the number of the beast (the first beast) that is placed on the forehead or right hand (read Rev. 13:16-18 again).

\*Explain gematria (Take Nero Caesar and convert into Hebrew, and add up numerical value...). But would the churches of Asia Minor have known Hebrew?

Again, I do not believe that one individual is implied here. Many gymnastics have been done to come up with a definite name. Should not be so confusing. If literal name, at best, the people of John's day alone would hold the key to this mystery.

However, the emphasis on being wise here, is not to solve this as some mathematical riddle. Even the unregenerate could do that then. This wisdom involves recognizing that the beast is not who he says he is; he is not divine. One must be willing to lose all economic privileges and possibly physical life itself, to remain faithful. This wisdom involves recognizing what the unregenerate will not see, namely, that the dragon and the beasts are frauds. They pretend to be divine and to retain all sovereignty, but the living God alone (and His Christ) has this true power. "666" always falls short of "777." Every government proclaiming self-divinity can never escape the fact that it is mere man at its core. It never reaches perfection, though it

proclaims to do so. Having wisdom, sees the "666" as the reality that exists behind the proclaimed "777." The evil triumvirate always misses the mark. And they mark the minds and right hands of their followers with a lie, but the people of God, bearing the name of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads, see the lie. They have wisdom and see through the lies of the already conquered beast, in every generation.

### **Conclusive Thoughts Concerning the Second Beast and Chapter 13 as a Whole**

Suffice it to say then, brethren, that this beast; this false prophet, is a demonic spiritual influence, who, in the name of religion, cooperates with and serves to exalt the first beast, contending with the work of the Holy Spirit, who seeks to exalt the true divine, Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is active in all ages, and especially in those countries where imperial rule persecutes and contends with authentic Christianity (Islamic nations, Hindu nations, Buddhist nations, Communist regimes and all heathen systems of religion and philosophy that contend with Christ and His Church).

You might summarize these two forms of demonic opposition this way: The dragon uses the first beast as an *outward* attack, seeking to control the world and destroy the church by aggressive, blatant, brute force and persecution. And the dragon uses the second beast as an *inward* attack, seeking to subtly deceive the world and the church into serving and worshiping the first beast. One is very obvious, and obtains victory by threat and pressure. The other obtains victory in a very crafty and deceptive way, with persuasive words and counterfeit signs.

[Consider example in Nehemiah: Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite, two major contenders with the Jerusalem rebuilders---first outward, oppressive threats, then inward--Tobiah married into Jewish family/related to high priest, later staying in a large chamber in Temple; Sanballat's daughter marries grandson of Eliashib, the high priest...infiltration of Temple takes place while Nehemiah is away---first outward and then inward attacks]

We must be ready to:

1: Protect our doctrine

2: Receive and stand firm in times of persecution

3: Remember the sovereignty of God and the ongoing grace of the Gospel

4: Fix our minds on eternal things

5: Recognize enemy's attacks

6: Not look to our government for salvation and world change

7: Remember that the righteousness of Christ will only fill this world when He returns

8: Constantly remind ourselves of what "really is" in light of what "seems to be"

Amen!!!