



## Revelation Class notes #9: Revelation 13:9-18

### *Who do you Worship?*

**Goal:** In continuity with the rest of the New Testament, to love Revelation as God's last Biblical, trans-historical and even cosmic "*revelation of Jesus Christ*," rather than a spooky book of obscurity or speculation.

### Revelation 17:14

They will **wage war** against the Lamb, but **the Lamb will triumph over them** because He is Lord of lords and King of kings—and **those who are with Him** are His called, chosen and **faithful followers**.

This is our **3<sup>rd</sup> week at the heart** of the book [Rev 12-14], located between the full-sweeps through Christian history done by Sections 1-3 [7 churches, 7 seals, 7 trumpets] on one side; and on the other: the 2 final sections of God's judgment on the maturation of evil and His vindication/redemption with His people; **plus Scripture's fullest snapshot of eternity!**

We will stay here in the heart of Revelation in our final week as well, for a careful look at **God's final appeal and warning** to the *inhabitants of the earth* in Rev 14. This week, **Revelation's portrayal of evil cuts close to us all**—and need our careful assessment. **Let's start with Jesus:**

### Matthew 24:24

For **false Christs** and **false prophets** will arise and they will show signs and wonders, so as to **deceive, if possible, even the elect**.

The main point of Jesus' main teaching on the end of times is **not to fear suffering; it is, rather, to fear seduction, to beware of deception** (7 x)—a deception that will be *of a distinctly religious nature* (Matt 24:24). Remember: Satan himself is not irreligious. **His main lie**—his dream fantasy—does not say there is no God.

Rather, it is to worship some extension[s] of what we see in the mirror as god, rather than God. Satan works in every way possible to fan our fantasy that we (or some extension of us) *can be "like God" or "as God"*—autonomous, self-sufficient, always protecting and promoting our lifestyle and image with no real reference to God's will (Isaiah 14:12-14; Romans 1:25: the lie - Genesis 3:5]). Still religious—but a religion proud as hell itself.

Satan creates Babylon, the pseudo-city of God. This place is portrayed as the woman who leaves God's protection in wilderness, riding on the beast of political power, to become a harlot dressed in the scarlet of human pomp and pride. In the end, evil in Revelation is the perverting of religion

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

2

to promote ultimate allegiance to political power. It is a lie that promises unending personal comfort and prosperity to those who give the beast their worship and align with his goals; thus supporting or at least ignoring his oppression.

It is the proud and coercive spirit of Satan endorsed by apostate Christianity: perverted religion intoxicated by proximity to (and becoming an image of) self-serving power. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4 Paul personifies this spirit in humanity as “the man of sin” and says of him:

### **2 Thessalonians 2:4**

He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God’s temple [*naos*], proclaiming himself to be a god.**

### **2 Thessalonians 2:8-10**

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the LORD Jesus will overthrow with the **breath of His mouth** and destroy by the splendor of **His coming**. The coming of the lawless one will be aligned with **how Satan works**. He will use all sorts of **displays of power** through signs and wonders that serve **the lie**, and all the ways that wickedness **deceives those who are perishing**. They perish because they **refused to love the truth** and so be saved.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**

For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will **believe the lie** and so that all will be condemned who have **not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness**. (see Acts 20:28-30)

### **Revelation 13:1-2**

The **dragon** stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a **beast coming out of the sea**. It had **10 horns** and **7 heads**, with **10 crowns** on its horns, and on **each head** a **blasphemous name**. The beast I saw resembled a **leopard**, with feet like those of a **bear**/a mouth like that of a **lion**. **The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.**

### **Revelation 13:3-4**

**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**. People **worshiped the dragon** because he had given **his authority** to the beast, and they also **worshiped the beast** and asked, “**Who is like the beast? Who can ‘wage war’ against it?**”

### **Revelation 13:5-7**

The **beast** was given a **mouth** to utter **proud words and blasphemies** and to exercise its authority for **forty-two months**. It opened its **mouth to blaspheme God**, and to slander His name and His **‘tabernacle’**: [*naos*: that is] **those who live in heaven**. 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.

### **Revelation 13:8**

**ALL** the 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*.

This “beast” (*therion*) is the **central character** in the drama of **Rev 13**. All activity focuses on him. He is Satan's primary agent to turn humanity from the Lamb's everlasting gospel; and from the worship of the true Creator. **ALL** who worship the beast and receive his mark will also drink the wrath of God unmixed with mercy in the hour of His judgment: 14:10.

Remember what these verses tell us:

- 1. The beast rises from “the sea” (13:1).**
- 2. The beast is the embodied incarnation of the dragon.**

Like **Sauron** in *LOTR*, Satan is a **spirit, a fallen angel** (Luke 10:18). He **needs human agencies through which to manifest himself** and to receive humanity's worship. The **beast** symbolizes those agencies. The important point is **the essential oneness of the dragon and the beast**. The **beast embodies in humanity** the nature and spirit of **Satan**. Just as Jesus and the Father are one, so the dragon and the beast are one.

- 3. The beast is a counterfeit parody of Christ's redemptive work; he is a counterfeit savior offering a counterfeit hope of salvation.**

The satanic purpose for the beast's existence is to counterfeit Christ. Just as a worldwide remnant gives single allegiance to the slain but resurrected Lamb (5:9-10), the beast's dominion knows no national boundaries but extends over “*every people, tribe, tongue and nation*.”

To escape the wrath of the beast all those who worship him receive the mark of his ownership upon their right hand or forehead (13:15-17). This stands in opposition to the seal of God placed upon the foreheads of those who follow the Lamb to preserve them from the final outpouring of His wrath (7:1-3).

The **total duration of the beast's authority** is **coterminous** with the entire time of Christ's **two witnesses** (13:7; cf. 11:3) and **God's protection of the woman** in the wilderness: the **symbolic second half of a broken 7** (see Daniel 9:24-27); the **length of Christ's own earthly ministry** (approximately three and a half years).

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

4

- 4. The beast is wounded unto death but healed. In all its particulars Rev 13:2-8, which pictures the enthronement of the beast as the world's savior: a direct challenge to Christ's enthronement as man's only Redeemer in Rev 5:5-12.**

The **beast's throne and authority are given by the dragon**: He possesses nothing apart from the dragon. The “beast” is the symbol for the visible incarnation of the blasphemous (self-worshipping) and persecuting (God-hating) spirit of Satan.

Therefore, whatever smites the authority or power of the dragon in his relation to the world, equally smites the beast. Whatever has befallen the “*ruler of this world*” (John 16:11), also affects equally his human incarnation.

Christ declared His substitutionary death on **the Cross was the judgment by which Satan as the “*ruler of the world*” was cast down** (John 12:31). His kingdom of darkness was destroyed through the dying of Christ (Hebrews 2:14-15. Rev 12:9-12 confirms heaven's recognition of this victory as an accomplished fact.

The “**slaughter**” of the **beast** (13:3), the “**slaughter**” of the **Lamb** (5:6, 9), the **casting down of Satan** (12:9-10) **all coincide at the Cross!** At the Cross, **Satan**, the “*ancient serpent*,” crushed the heel of the woman's seed; but the **promised Deliverer** crushed the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). The fatal wound of Satan and of his parasitical agent was inflicted by Christ on the cross.

**So remember:**

- 1. Satan is the true source of the beast's life (13:1-2).**
- 2. The 7-headed beast, a composite of all the idolatrous powers in Daniel 7:1-25). He is covered with blasphemous names. He cannot symbolize just one empire, organization or individual.** While the essential character of the beast remains the same, his composite nature *describes a spirit which resurrects itself* in various forms throughout history.
- 3. The beast's influence and authority is worldwide. “All who dwell on the earth” follow the beast and worship him, that is, all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life (13:4, 8).**
- 4. The reign of the beast is coterminous with that of Christ's witnesses (11:3) and God's watch-care over His church (12:14); that is, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming--the whole Christian dispensation from its beginning to its close (13:5; 17:12-14).**
- 5. The beast is both a political power and a religious power—in the sense that he desires**

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

**worship** (absolute allegiance), and so **supplants the primacy of Christ as he promises a false redemption through the creature and his works** (13:14-17).

As the human incarnation of Satan (the true antichrist), the beast was already visible during the era of the Apostolic church (John writes: “*even now many antichrists have come*”: READ: 1 John 2:18, 22; esp 4:3-4; 2 Thess 2:7). [The word “*antichrist*” is not found in Rev!]

The beast is resurrected in history wherever any individual or system of autonomous self-righteous humanity declares itself the true “center” or hope of humanity. The beast is “*the man of sin*”: the myriad attempts to cast aside or push to the periphery God’s authority and grace. The beast is Satan’s self-worshiping spirit incarnated in *proud, rebellious* hearts (9:20-21; 16:14).<sup>1</sup>

Whenever one manifestation of the beast is “*slain*” the **essential reality does not perish**. It reemerges from the sea of unregenerate mankind in new forms. Thus, the allusion is maintained in the minds of those who “worship” human pride, power, beauty, or achievements that the **works of men are sufficient--and unending** (Rev 18:7-8; cf. Dan 4:30; 5:22-23; Isa 47:10).<sup>2</sup>

### **William Milligan, Book of Revelation, p. 225**

“The beast is the embodied spirit of Satan *in all its forms*. The influence of the beast cannot be confined to one person, party, or sect, or age. It is found within the Church or State, in every society, in every family, *or even in every heart*, for **whoever is ruled by the pride and power of man, there 'the beast resides.**”

In light of the crucified and risen Savior (Acts 4:12), humanity has only 2 options: to hope in the redemptive work of the *Creator* and worship Him alone (14:7), or to hope in the claims and power of some extension of the *creature* (13:12)—and worship, in some form, the works of man. Both are religious in nature, for when the **great God goes**, invariably **lesser “gods” come**—and they are legion.

---

<sup>1</sup> Yates believed the “Man of Sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2 represents the intensification throughout history of mankind’s revolt against God. Similarly, **the “antichrist[s]” identified in 1 John 2:18-23 and 4:3-6 points to all philosophies and false Christian doctrines championed by human systems in opposition to Christ alone as Savior and Lord**. Yates (pg. 44) noted these systems are usually backed by the weapons of coercion and persecution.

<sup>2</sup> Ezell’s remarks suggest a warning against oversimplifying the beast into just one historical manifestation of evil and thus being ignorant (and therefore vulnerable) to its deceptive spirit seeking to secure allegiance to the dragon through other avenues: **“How often we have thought that the removal of a particular evil person or group would remove evil itself, only to discover that evil has the resilience to raise [resurrect] its ugly head in another form and place. It is not flesh and blood against which we contend, but principalities and powers. The removal of those who are promoting evil will not remove the evil. Evil will only be thwarted for a moment and then it will manifest itself in another form”** (Ezell, *Revelation on Revelation*, p. 79).



**So here is our key question: Who or what do we truly worship?**

**The key issue is worship—there are only 2 real options:**

And all who dwell on the earth **worshipped the dragon**, because **he gave his authority to the beast**; and they **worshipped the beast**, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with Him? (13:4).

Fear God and give glory to Him because the hour of His judgment has come; and **worship Him who created the heavens and the earth and the sea and all the fresh waters!** (14:7).

And another angel . . . [declared] “If anyone **worships the beast** and his image and receives his mark upon the forehead or right hand, **they also will drink the wine of the wrath of God. . .**” (14:9-10; **but see 15:3-4**).

This is the issue in the final judgment. Revelation presents the choice dramatically: Faith in Christ's all-sufficient salvation brings the wrath of Satan (13:15-17), but it also provides the seal of God's eternal protection (14:1; cf. 7: 1-3). To push Christ aside by worshipping the beast and his image promises the personal and economic security of the beast's “mark” (13:16); but it brings God's wrath in the hour of His judgment (14:7-10).

The verb *proskyneō* [to worship] occurs **24 times** in Revelation, and **8 in Revelation 13** (4 [twice], 8, 12, 15) and **14** (7, 9, 11).<sup>3</sup>

### **The Endurance of the Saints (13:7-10)**

The beast is allowed to make war on the saints and to overcome them (13:7; cf. 11:7). Yet even in this picture the sovereignty of God remains. Six times John affirmed the authority of the beast is not autonomous but “**was given**” (i.e., allowed by God, 13:5 [twice], 7 [twice], 14, 15). The beast's authority will continue no longer than God will permit (13:5).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the first conflict on earth concerned the issue of worship (Gen 4:3-11; cf. Heb 11:4). This incident becomes a type of the final conflict in Rev 13 when, worldwide, the spiritual descendants of Cain (those worshipping the fruits of their own hands) seek to destroy the spiritual heritage of Abel (that remnant who approach God through the Lamb and determine to obey God's commands). As the deed of Cain illustrates (cf. 1 John 3:12), *ungodliness* (creature worship) *results in lawlessness* (setting aside the commandments of God). The lack of this double apostasy in the is affirmed by John in two statements which in effect bracket the beast's challenge of God's authority and God's response to that challenge (Rev 12:17; 14:12). These two verses offer descriptions of the remnant in which they are identified according to the focus of their worship (“the testimony of Jesus”) and their determined obedience (“keep the commandments of God”).

<sup>4</sup> There is no authority except that which comes from God (John 19:10-11) and the abuse of political power is a perversion of a God-ordained institution (Rom 13:1). Satan, working through the beast, represents a perversion of

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

### Revelation 13:9-10

Whoever has ears, let them hear: “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.

Verse 10 is a significant reminder to the saints that God is sovereign, and whatever their fate it is He alone who can righteously wield the sword of vengeance. The church is not to use the weapons of violence to defend itself. Barclay wrote: “It is an intolerable paradox to defend the gospel of the love of God by using the violence of men.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet even in martyrdom, we live with this freedom from fear or futility which those who worship the creature-based system of the dragon can never fathom. Those who worship God do not live under the anxiety of having only a “short time” (12:12) which, as Schick said, “gives all the victories of Satan the stamp of transitoriness.”

In summary the saints are temporarily conquered, yet are more than conquerors for eternity (13:8, 10). We endure in love, and this endurance is rooted in our understanding that in Christ our victory is assured (see John 11:25-26).<sup>6</sup>

### The Beast from the Earth: The False Prophet (13:11-14)

#### Revelation 13:11-12

Then I saw a second beast, *coming out of the earth*. It had two horns **like a lamb**, but it **spoke like a dragon**. 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.

---

those systems originally established for man's welfare into instruments of oppression. Wilcock stated: “It is God's will that there should be law and order. It is the devil's achievement that there should so often be bad law and tyrannical order” (Wilcock, p. 124). Thus, the Christian needs to recognize the great difference between the state upholding the law *under* divine authority, and the state acting blasphemously as divine authority. In the case of the latter the Christian must resist in loyalty to a higher power. Christ alone is King of kings (Rev 17:14).

<sup>5</sup> Barclay, 2:127.

<sup>6</sup> See the discussion on passive endurance by the saints in Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9, Missoula, Missouri, 1976), pp. 166-70. Even in the final battle their adversaries are defeated by the risen and glorious Christ (19:11- 18). Likewise, the last resurrection of evil is extinguished by fire from heaven (20:7-10). The only verse which perhaps hints at an active role for the saints in the eschatological warfare is 17:14, but such interpretation is doubtful when 17:14 is compared with 19:11-21. In the final warfare scene, it is clear that the sword of the incarnate Word of God is the all-sufficient weapon for vindicating the saints and judging their enemies (19:20).

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

Instead of *coming up out of the sea*, this second beast **ascends from the earth**.<sup>7</sup> This 2<sup>nd</sup> “beast” is everywhere else in Revelation referred to as the “**false prophet**” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). It **completes the counterfeit trinity** of Revelation 13 through its parody [counterfeit] of the role of the **Holy Spirit**.

Jesus declared the great work of the Holy Spirit was to *magnify the Son* (John 14:26; 16:12-15). Likewise, the whole purpose of the false prophet is to magnify and cause men **to worship the first beast**.

In Revelation, the genuine “*spirit of prophecy*” is our “*testimony of Jesus*” (19:10; 12:17; 22:9; **Acts 2:17-18**) – our proclamation of God’s salvation/restoration through the crucified and resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ (**1 John 5:10-13**).

This **false prophetic power points to the beast** as humanity’s **true hope**. Even so, **this false prophet has the appearance of a lamb**, but **the mind of the dragon**, which makes him more deceptively dangerous to the Christian community. Lamblike denotes an appearance like Christianity, yet it speaks the dragon’s heart. This is the **2<sup>nd</sup> half of Jesus’ prediction in Matt 24:24**: that “**false prophets**” would inevitably follow in the wake of the “**false Christs**”.

### **Revelation 13:13-14**

And it performed **great signs**, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 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.

If the 1<sup>st</sup> beast symbolizes the political/military power of kingdoms and leaders who demand ultimate allegiance and claim they are man’s true hope; then the literal meaning of the “false prophet” is not difficult to interpret. **Using the verbiage and external appearance of the Lamb (Christianity)—but imbued with the spirit of Satan; this “false prophet” represents apostate religion finding its identity and hope in the pompous political claims of human power systems.**

This “false prophet” symbolizes the apostasy of overtly religious systems who, in their bid for proximity to power, *reinforce the proud claims of the beast of their day* and surrender their integrity in Christ to his demands.

---

<sup>7</sup> In light of James 3:15, key to the identity of both of the two beasts in Rev 13 is that **both ascend from the lower regions coming through the mediums of sea and earth** (13: 1, 11), **rather than descending from above** (cf. 18:1; 20:1; 21:2). This **clearly signifies demonic as opposed to heavenly origin** (9:1-3; 11:7; cf. 1 Sam 28:8-15; Col 3:2, 5). They arose from hell and are destined to return to the lake of fire (Rev 17:11; 19:20; cf. 2 Pet 2:4).



# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

Hendriksen calls the 2<sup>nd</sup> beast “the lie of Satan dressed up like the truth [of God]. It is Satan masquerading as a shining angel, 2 Cor 11:14.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus told us there would be many; and these false prophets are corrupted spiritual leaders using Christian verbiage to back their false messiahs who offer ultimate hope in political power in place the “blood of the Lamb” (7:14; 12:11; cf. Galatians 1:3-9; see **1 John 4:1-3**).

**Whenever the church looks to something, anything, other than Jesus Christ and His saving work on the Cross for power and identity, then it will invariably become a gutted “image to the beast”.** Under the guise of religious devotion every pseudo-gospel fuels our all-too strong tendency to worship the power and achievements of human pride and rebellion embodied in the blasphemous activities of the first beast, and create in the religious community an “image to the beast”.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, the work of the false prophet is to deflect attention away from trust in the grace of God in Christ to some aspect of human greatness or power as our functional security and identity. **By this preoccupation with proximity to political power the church becomes an image of the beast who is the image of the dragon** (Rev 9:20-21; cf. Isa 14:12-14; 47:10; Gen 3:4-5).<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Hendriksen, p. 180. Jesus' warning to the Christian community seems appropriate: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matt 7: 15, NIV). See also Paul's similar prophecy concerning false prophets, “savage wolves,” who would arise from within the church and seek to destroy it (Acts 20:28- 30).

<sup>9</sup> Thus, the false prophet could denote false revivals of a religion which professes to be biblical, but which **displaces as central the very essence of a biblical faith--the perfect life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection of Christ--in order to exalt as central, the righteousness of man.** Thus, a holy thing replaces the holiest, the partial goodness of man in place of the perfection and atonement of the God-man. In that role man's goodness is indeed blasphemous. Said Preston and Hanson: “**Man is made to worship some absolute power, and if he does not worship the true and real Power behind the universe, he will construct a god for himself and give allegiance to that**” (Preston and Henson, *Revelation*, pp. 96-97).

<sup>10</sup> “The true Lamb also offers a sign to lead men to embrace salvation. . . but that true sign is himself, Christ's own miraculous life embodied in his church today, and the true salvation to which its points is also himself, the living Christ. All other signs and systems are the voice of the beast” (Wilcock, p. 128). **Christ's servants must realize that miracles are not, in themselves, conclusive evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit** (1 John 4:3). Scripture is clear that false prophets inspired by Satan can perform deceiving miracles to seduce mankind (Rev 16:14; 19:20; cf. Deut 13:1-5; Matt 7:22; 2 Thess 2:9). **The identifying mark of God in the life is not the miraculous, but a clear testimony to Jesus Christ which yields the fruit of obedience to the commandments of God** (12:17; 14:12). **Such lives the false prophet never produces, nor does the first beast tolerate.** In the book of Revelation God does not use signs to convince men of the truth. He has already offered His great sign in the life and death of Christ and based on that men are called to worship Him by accepting the “everlasting gospel.” Said Neall: “God's ultimate weapon in the battle for men's minds is not signs, but truth. He sends out, not three foul spirit working



## The Judging of the Saints by the Beast (13:15-18)

### Revelation 13:15-17

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. 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**, 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**.

This **union of beast and false prophet pictures the union of civil authority and apostate religion** into a monolithic system that demands absolute allegiance and execute a pogrom of economic exclusion against all who deny their supremacy and defy their dictates.

The description of this crisis is **modeled on Daniel 3** where the **idolatrous king** of Babylon, urged on by his false prophets, builds a **blasphemous image to himself** (measuring 60 by 6 cubits) and orders all to **worship his image** upon pain of death.<sup>11</sup> This was happening already in John's day, in Emperor-worship, as Preterist interpreters rightly point out.

The **trial and crucifixion of Christ is also a model**. There the Jewish leaders (**religion**), pagan Rome (**civil authority**), and Judas (an "**apostate Christian**" disciple) united under the **sway of Satan** (cf. John 8:44; 13:27) to pass a **death decree against Christ**. The events of Rev 13:13-18 repeat again the theme that **as Christ, the Head, goes**—so will go the faithful church as **His body**., thus reenacting the events of **Passion week on a worldwide scale**.<sup>12</sup>

The mark is sign of allegiance on the **right hand or forehead**. Like the false trinity which enforces it, the law requiring the mark; and the mark itself, are **counterfeits of the seal of God**, which symbolize more than a mere physical inscription, but a blasphemous challenge both to the

---

signs, but three mighty angels proclaiming the everlasting gospel (14:6-12). Their message is a powerful appeal to worship the Creator (v. 7) rather than the beast (vv. 9-11), to keep His commandments (vs. 12; cf. 12:17), and to have faith in Jesus (vs. 12). The **test of truth is not miracles, but 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus'** proclaimed by the great multitude who gain the victory over the beast and its image (20:4; cf. 12: 11, 17; cf. 1:9; 6:9). 'The word of God and the testimony of Jesus' must be understood as the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection (1:18), His power to save from sin (1:5; 12:10-11) and transform men into His likeness (14: 1) through the blood of the Lamb (7:14; 12:11)" (Neall, p. 158).

<sup>11</sup> It is encouraging to note in Dan 3 that though God allowed the 3 Hebrews to be cast into the furnace of persecution the only thing the flames ultimately consumed were the cords of Babylon binding them. See Dan 3:23-27.

<sup>12</sup> This culminates a long biblical tradition of persecutions for God's people where a death decree was passed on them for their worship of the true God and loyalty to His commandments (e.g., Cain and Abel, Esther, Daniel [chaps. 3 and 6], and Stephen).

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

redemptive work of God and His call to obedience (see Exodus 13:8-9).<sup>13</sup>

The **long drama** of humanity's fall and redemption **began** when one man and one woman in one place had to choose between loyalty to God based on faith in His word (Gen 2:15-17) or *allegiance to the "serpent" based on his deceitful promises* of human deification, immortality, and sensual pleasure (Gen 3:4-6).

**That drama closes** when every man and woman everywhere on earth must make essentially the same choice. Obedience to God, even at the risk of death, will then be the outward manifestation of an inward sealing of heart and mind to the Lamb which characterizes the remnant.

Thus the beast and his prophet **unite raw power** and **religious persuasiveness** with the **seductions of comfort** (the harlot Babylon, as Rev 17-18 emphasizes), all at their greatest possible intensity. The **final intensification** of this *persuades earth's self-deceived multitudes* to reject genuine Christianity and to attempt the destruction of those who proclaim it.<sup>14</sup>

This is the *judgment of the saints by the beast--for death--* to which **God responds in chapter 14** with His own verdict concerning the saints as well as **His judgment on the beast and the multitudes who bear his mark.**

### The Number of the Beast: 666

#### Revelation 13:18

Here is **WISDOM**. Let the person who has insight **count** the number of the beast, for it is **man's number** (humanity's number [NIV margin]). That number is **666**.

Rev 13 offers one final clue as to the true identity and nature of the beast and his religious minions. We are told the mark, the name, and the number of the beast are all synonymous: "**It is humanity's number. that number is 666**" (NIV Margin).

---

<sup>13</sup> In John's day the expression "to receive the mark" of someone denoted ownership by, or allegiance to, that master, but not necessarily physical branding. In Rev both the mark and the seal are symbols identifying who a man worships (13:7; 14:9; cf. esp. 15:2-4). They represent the Spirit of Christ or antichrist as the controlling force of the mind. Concerning the forehead or right hand Hendriksen suggested: "The forehead symbolizes the mind, the thought-life, the philosophy of a person. The right hand indicates his deeds, actions, trade. . . . Hence receiving the mark of the beast indicates that the person so characterized belongs to the company of those who persecute the church; and that--either pre-eminently in what he thinks, says, writes; or more emphatically in what he does--this anti-christian spirit becomes evident" (Hendriksen, pp. 181-82).

<sup>14</sup> Schick believed these events portray Satan's gathering up of all he has learned through his successes and failures into one last despairing attempt as the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) to remain at the helm of earth's history. See Schick, 2:18.

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

Through the centuries **multitudes of commentators** have approached the number as a **mathematical puzzle** to be deciphered by **gematria**, the ancient custom of *assigning letters their numerical values*, especially in Greek, to send secret messages. The first commentator to attempt this approach, **Irenaeus**, gave a **prophetic warning** that such scholarship was doubtful and dangerous *“in as much as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned.”*<sup>15</sup>

Centuries later (after legions of commentators **ignored** Irenaeus' warning), Johnson concurred with the ancient church father, stating: **“The sheer disagreement and confusion created through the years by the gematria method should have long ago warned the church that it was on the wrong track.”**<sup>16</sup>

The most popular attempts usually succeeded by switching from the original Greek of Revelation *to some other language*, either more ancient or modern, to make their suggested name equal the numerical value of 666. The most common of these attempts is the Preterist interpretation of **Neron Kaiser** (Emperor Nero). Yet to achieve the necessary total of 666 Nero's title must be translated into an unusual and variant Hebrew spelling.<sup>17</sup>

If John intended to give Christians who followed after him insight into the nature of the beast by

---

<sup>15</sup> *Irenaeus Against Heresies* 30.3 (ANF, 1:559).

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, “Revelation,” EBC, 12:534. Ruhle (TDNT 1:464) concurred in his summary of gematria as the key to understanding John's intent and stated: “. . . all the solutions proposed are unsatisfactory” (ibid.). For perhaps the best attempt at 666 via gematria, see: Farrer, *Revelation*, p. 158.

<sup>17</sup> Ladd, *Revelation*, p. 186. Before any interpreter who feels sure he has found the correct interpretation of this mysterious number goes public, he perhaps should be required to read at least a dozen equally convincing but variant interpretations in other published works, as well as several articles on the history of the interpretation of 666 such as: Brady, pp. 219-40. Richard Baxter is one seventeenth century author surveyed in Brady's article. Baxter, who wrote the *Paraphrase on the New Testament* (1685), was uneasy with the multitude of interpretations given to the various symbols of evil in the Apocalypse as all identifying the papacy and nothing but the papacy. Yet he made it clear he abhorred the papal doctrines and stated: “It is far more dreadful to the Pope, and all his flatterers, and followers, to be plainly condemned by the known laws of Christ, than to be under the dread of a dark and controverted prophecy [referring to Rev 13:18] (ibid., p. 232). After summarizing the multitude of intricate methods for “proving” that 666 pointed to the Papacy which were given currency in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, many of which now seem ludicrous, Brady ends with this note of caution against rejecting such interpretations in toto: “I would like to ask the further question whether those who followed the historical method of interpretation did not have the root of the matter in a very practical sense? In other words, was the historical approach altogether wrong? Were not their interpretations right and good for themselves in their own day, even if they now prove to be outmoded? *Perhaps we have swung too far away from historicism to the opposite extreme which rejects out of hand all applications of the Apocalyptic visions to current events.* No doubt we are right in rejecting interpretations of the Apocalypse which require us to believe that John had in view these present days and only these days, but if we may not dogmatize that ‘This is that,’ may we not say, ‘This is remarkably like that which John had in mind when he wrote the visions?’ *We should retain the historical approach as supplementary to the contemporary analysis*” (ibid., pp. 238-39).

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

gematria, he obviously failed. But John simply called **666** the “*arithmos anthropou*” (i.e., **the number of man**), and he never elsewhere used gematria. His frequent use of numbers was to express symbolic *qualities*, not arithmetic puzzles, with the goal of spiritual discernment and edification, not mathematical ingenuity.

For the ancient Jew or Jewish Christian, familiar with the symbolic use of numbers, the number 6 was a symbol of imperfection or rebellion which fell short of the sacred number 7. A trinity of sixes following one another, 666, would indicate the unity and persistence of such evil.<sup>18</sup>

It also a number that **persistently and repeatedly fails to attain to the divine fulness**, and so signifies “the number of humanity”: *of all people outside the sphere of God's redeeming and restoring grace*. In light of this symbolic meaning for the number six, Morris suggested John's intent in offering 666 as a clue was to reveal that “**Civilization without Christ is necessarily under the dominion of the evil one.**”<sup>19</sup>

The core issue of the mysterious number is **worship**: either worship of the creature *from the sea* and *reflecting his image*; or worship of the Creator who *made the sea* and *reflecting His image*.

**God created man** (male and female) in **His image** on the **6<sup>th</sup> day**, then invited them to **enter into the rest of His finished work on the 7<sup>th</sup> day**, even so **Jesus Christ, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day would finish His work on the Cross of re-creating fallen humanity—then He invites us all to enter into the rest of His finished work by our trust in—and worship of—Him as Savior and LORD** (Matt 11:28; John 19:30; I Cor 5:17, 21). Thus, 7 symbolizes the fullness and perfection of God's work for His creation; and the fullness of Christ's recreating work in salvation. But the **fullness of the creature and all his achievements apart from God, symbolized by 6, or endless 6's, cannot attain to perfection and rest.**

Man—even religious man—cannot look inward, or to any human organization, for salvation. In **Romans 12:21-25**, Paul warned that humanity, apart from God, inevitably worships as ultimate some manifestation of human power. Professing to be wise, humanity is blinded by its own pride, fear or lust, and descend into the degradation of sin. **Neall stated:**

**Six is legitimate when it leads to seven**, it represents man on the first evening of his existence entering into the celebration of God's creative power. *The glory of the creature is right if it leads to the glory of God. Six hundred sixty-six however, represents the refusal of man to proceed to seven, to give glory to God as Creator and Redeemer. It represents man 's fixation with himself, man seeking glory*

---

<sup>18</sup> Milligan, *Revelation*, p. 234.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, *Revelation*, p. 174. **Babylon is mentioned six times** by John (14:8; 16:19; 17:15; 18:2, 10, 21).

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

**in himself and his own creations.** It speaks of the fulness of creation and all creative powers without God--the practice of the absence of God. It demonstrates that unregenerate man is persistently evil. The beasts of Revelation 13 represent man exercising his sovereignty apart from God, man conformed to the image of the beast rather than to the image of God. **Man, apart from God becomes bestial, demonic.**<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Rev 13 climaxes the work of Satan's counterfeit trinity. The **deceptive spirit of the false prophet** leads to the **worship of the beast**, the **incarnation of the dragon**. This ominous "*trinity*" of 666 ends in men and women under the control of the serpent, all three creatures of the 6<sup>th</sup> day and, apart of God, never capable of attaining to 7. Their persistent refusal to honor God alone as God "*ripens*" the rebel for wrath in **the hour of God's judgment** (14:7-10, 18-20; 18:2-8).

### Summary

Revelation 13 describes a **false religious system** supporting a counterfeit plan of redemption. It presents a **false trinity** of the **dragon**, who provides **authority**, the **beast, who demands worship**, and the **false prophet who glorifies the beast**, using miracles and persecution to compel men to worship him.

The beast represents any human system or leader which *denies the centrality of Christ* by demanding absolute allegiance to itself and submission to its purposes in ways that subvert the will of God.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> member of the trinity, the counterfeit "spirit" of this counterfeit "savior," **erects a religious image to the beast** and compels others to accept it as their object of worship. Those who **refuse, due to their loyalty to God and the Lamb**, are **marked for death**. In Revelation 13 the saints are judged by the beast-system and condemned to death. This sets the stage for the divine response, **the vindicating and judging work of God in the visions of Revelation 14**.

---

<sup>20</sup> Neall, p. 154 (emphasis supplied).