

Revelation Chapter 13

An Interpretation

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Revision of 10/2017 Printed 1/10/2026

Introduction:

1. Chapters 4 to 11 showed the interaction between the church (the Lord's people), and the governments. This was largely a physical conflict.

The Woman With the Stars in Her Crown		
Persecuted by Judaism	AD 34—70	In Acts
Persecuted by Pagan Rome	AD 64—315	Rev. 12
Persecuted by mainline church	AD 315 - 1793	Rev. 12
Protected by God for 1260 years	AD 533 - AD 1793	Pope is "Lord of the Church" Freedom to follow the Bible

(1) 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.



Verse 1: In chapter 12, John reported seeing a dragon making war with the woman. In this chapter John shows just how Satan got his job done.

First, there was a **beast** that came up from the **sea**.

Hinds: The sea, as John saw it, denotes troublous times when people were greatly disturbed. This is always the case when a nation rises on the ruins of others. So this beast is a symbol of a kingdom that would arise when peoples would be disturbed like the waves of the sea.

In the symbol (12:3) Satan himself is represented as a dragon with seven heads and ten horns; here the agency through which Satan operates appears as a terrible beast with seven heads and ten horns; the same beast is mentioned in 17:3 with a like description.

(2) 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. (3) 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; (4) 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?"

Verse 2: Just as animals had been used by Daniel to describe ruling kingdoms, so here the very same animals are in view. World governing systems were incorporated into the Roman Empire, the fourth beast of Daniel, and was in command when John was seeing and writing it down. But Satan was behind it all. The Empire of Rome was merely Satan's agent to destroy the true church.



The black-and-white drawing is from *Daniel* by Paul Butler, published by *College Press*. It illustrates Daniel 7. Color added by Amy Kubow for her grandfather.

Discussion: Try to name these beasts that ruled at an earlier time. Daniel 7:4-7 reveals the same animals.

Verse 3: One head of the beast (top creature in the graphic) received a death blow when the western part of the pagan Roman Empire fell to barbarians from the north in AD 476.

Hinds describes:

The most probable view here is that this part of the symbol was fulfilled when barbarian hordes from the north swept down upon the country and city and the empire came to an end in A.D. 476. This was begun by Alaric, king of the Goths, in A.D. 409 and finished by Odoacer at the date given. Thus ended the western part of pagan imperial Rome. The imperial form of government had received its deadly blow.

So the Empire recovered. **His fatal wound was healed.** By 476 the church had evolved from individual congregations governed by a group of elders (A.D. 50s) to a pyramid form of government with a ruling bishop (Pope) at the top.

John Hinds writes:

Rome as a secular power, doubtless, would have been consumed; permanently blotted out, like Babylon and Nineveh, had not the papacy healed her wounds by using her as the medium through which the true church was to be continually persecuted. It is an amazing thing that a persecuting power could receive such a blow and still survive in another form with its persecuting power unabated. It is no surprise that the whole world wondered after the beast.

Verse 4: So the Dragon, the Devil was being **worshiped** because he was behind this resurgent government that now had a religious appearance. It was Satan who empowered this beast from the sea and people were ascribing total power to the recovered **beast**.

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

Verse 5: The emerging religious government talked big and claimed to be God (a form of blasphemy) for forty-two months. (42 months times 30 days per month = 1260 days or 1260 years if a day for a year rule is used.)

- We have met this same number as the time the holy city will be trod down by the nations (11:2) and
- the time the two witnesses will prophesy clothed in sackcloth (11:3).
- It is also the time the woman was in the wilderness, protected from the dragon (12:14).

Verse 6: These **blasphemies** are against the true church and the believers. The **tabernacle** may point to the true church and those **who dwell in heaven** are in the place of God's rule. This beast is a major problem.

(7) 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. (8) 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. (9) If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Verse 7: During the 1260 years, the dragon was winning. Everyone on earth was subject to the dragon.

Verse 8: An exception to this universal rule and worship was the true church.

Verse 9: Those who are willing to be instructed must give heed to what has been said about this beast that was controlled by Satan. True believers would be encouraged by the truth that the 1260 days will come to an end.

(10) 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.

Verse 10: This statement is designed to encourage true believers. It speaks of the final outcome of those who have worshiped the beast. Captivity and death are ahead for that system. For saints: Hang in there.

(11) 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.



Verse 11: While the first beast came from the raging sea, the second **beast** came from **the earth**. It imitated the slain **lamb** but talked like **a dragon**. This beast describes the newer form of the Roman Empire revealed in the mainline Catholic Church.

Discuss: Why is it necessary for believers to examine what is being taught in the church?

(12) 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.

Verse 12: To exercise all of the authority of the first beast indicates that the first beast approved. They were very similar. In fact, they are difficult to distinguish.

Hinds: The imperial pagan head or form of government had received a death stroke, but was healed through a papal kingdom arising within its borders. Such a union of church and state was necessary to preserve the empire and protect the religious apostasy.

(13) He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

Verse 13: The second beast specializes in signs that claim to be miracles. Healings, weeping paintings and other supposed miracles. Changing the Loaf of the Lord's Supper into the actual body of Christ, and worshipping.

(14) 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.

Verse 14: The so-called miracles convinced the earth dwellers.

Gibbon:

The credulity or the prudence of (Pope) Gregory was always disposed to confirm the truths of religion by the evidence of

ghosts, miracles, and resurrection.

For further background, Google for "Catholic Church miracles."

(15) 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.

Verse 15: Death was foretold for God's men and women on the earth. It was not a pretty sight.

In history, the second beast finally claimed authority over the first beast.

Gibbon says:

On the festival of Christmas, the last year of the eighth century, Charlemagne appeared in the church of St. Peter; and, to gratify the vanity of Rome, he had exchanged the simple dress of his country for the habit of a patrician. After the celebration of the holy mysteries, Leo suddenly placed a precious crown on his head, and the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people, 'Long life and victory to Charles, the most Augustus, crowned by God the great and pacific emperor of the Romans.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 43.)

In Gibbon's quote, the Pope of the Catholic Church crowned Charlemagne, the emperor of the Roman Empire, in the leading Catholic Church building.

Discuss: What is the significance of the pope crowning the emperor?

(16) 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,

Verse 16: The "he" traces back to the dragon of verse 4. The devil, Satan, is behind all of these events. The events may not seem to be from one common source, but they are.

(17) 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.

Verse 17: Are we to look for a physical number or numbers?

Hinds does not think so:

This is evident from the fact that the Catholic Church refuses permission for her own members to hear others preach, but believes that she is the authorized custodian of divine things, and that all teachers should come to her for authority. In this the demands of the symbol are fully met.

This rule has been greatly relaxed in recent years, but this writer can remember when it was still in effect.

(18) 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.

Verse 18: So the number of the beast is the number of a man. In the Greek language, letters had numerical value. A common solution is this:

L	A	T	E	I	N	O	S	
30	1	300	5	10	50	70	200	= 666

Hinds writes:

. . .the Catholic Church arose in the Latin kingdom and is known as the Latin church, even its services being conducted in the Latin. As the number must represent a religious empire that was to exercise a power practically universal for 1,260 years, there is none known to history that will fit the requirements of the symbol except the Latin Church — the Roman Catholic. This conclusion is completely vindicated by the fact that the Roman Church still believes that universal dominion rightly belongs to itself. It cannot then be successfully denied that it was the church which did exercise that power during the period indicated.

Plainly naming the institution would doubtless have increased persecution. Telling those who had understanding to count the number of the name implies

that some Christians would be able to do it. Such saints then would understand what was meant, and it was better that their enemies did not know.

With their experience as history before us, we should be able to understand also. Even if the expression, "six hundred and sixty and six," remains an unsolved puzzle, we know that in some way it describes a false religious power that was an enemy of the true church for the symbolic period of 1,260 days. This phase of the matter is definitely fixed by the language of the text.

Alexander Campbell, in his famous debate with Bishop Purcell of the Roman Catholic Church advances the same meaning of 666. *Campbell Purcell Debate*, Page 287.

Critics have tackled the problem of making 666 mean something else, and that may be possible, but it does point to the Latin of the Roman Empire and so conveyed information to John's readers.