

## Introduction

Last week we studied the first beast, the one who rises from the sea. We saw him as the political and military leader who will dominate the world during the Great Tribulation. He receives his power directly from the Satan. He performs a counterfeit death and resurrection. He demands worship from the entire world.

Tonight we meet the second beast, the one who rises from the earth. This is the False Prophet. He completes what we've been calling the counterfeit trinity.

Let me remind you of this structure because it's critical to understanding [Revelation 13](#):

- **The Dragon** (the Satan) functions as the counterfeit Father
- **The Beast from the Sea** (Antichrist) functions as the counterfeit Christ
- **The Beast from the Earth** (False Prophet) functions as the counterfeit Holy Spirit

Think about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. What does He do? Jesus told us in [John 16:13-14](#): *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

The Holy Spirit doesn't draw attention to Himself. He points to Jesus. He glorifies Christ. He performs miracles that validate the gospel message. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The False Prophet will do the same thing, but for evil purposes. He won't exalt himself. He'll point the world to worship the Antichrist. He'll perform miracles that validate the beast's claims. He'll lead the world into spiritual darkness while appearing to offer spiritual light.

This is one of the most chilling passages in Scripture because it shows us how religious deception will partner with political power to create the most oppressive system the world has ever seen.

Let's work through this text verse by verse.

## SECTION 1: THE SECOND BEAST DESCRIBED

### Verse 11: Two Horns Like a Lamb, Voice of a Dragon

**Revelation 13:11 (ESV):** *"Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon."*

John sees **another beast**. This is a different individual from the first beast, but they work together. The word "another" (allos in Greek) means another of the same kind. Both are beasts. Both serve the Satan. Both oppose God.

But notice where this beast comes from: **out of the earth**. Last week we saw the first beast rising from the sea, which represents the Gentile nations in turmoil. The earth often represents stability, the land, and in prophetic literature, it can specifically point to the land of Israel.

Some scholars believe this means the False Prophet will be Jewish, arising from the Promised Land. Others think "earth" simply contrasts with "sea" to show these are two distinct individuals from different backgrounds. Either way, the distinction matters. The first beast comes from the chaos of Gentile nations. The second beast comes from the earth, possibly suggesting religious legitimacy or connection to the land.

Now look at his appearance: **two horns like a lamb**. This is crucial. Horns represent power and authority, but these horns are like a lamb. Throughout Revelation, Christ is called the Lamb ([Revelation 5:6](#), [12](#), [13](#); [6:1](#), [16](#); [7:9](#), [10](#), [14](#), [17](#)). Jesus is the true Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ([John 1:29](#)).

This beast imitates a lamb. He appears gentle, religious, harmless. He looks like he represents Christ. His exterior is Christian or at least religious. He comes across as a spiritual leader, a man of peace, a voice of reason and faith.

But here's the deception: **he spoke like a dragon**. His message doesn't come from God. It comes from the Satan. His words are lies. His teaching leads to destruction. Beneath the lamb-like exterior is a dragon's voice.

Jesus warned about this in [Matthew 7:15](#): *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*

The most dangerous deception doesn't look dangerous. It looks religious. It sounds spiritual. It quotes Scripture. It performs miracles. But it leads people away from the true God toward a false christ.

This is the False Prophet. We know this is his title because he's called by this name three more times in Revelation:

- Revelation 16:13: *"And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs."*
- Revelation 19:20: *"And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image."*
- Revelation 20:10: *"And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

He's not called the False Prophet casually. This is his identity. He's the culmination of all false prophets throughout history.

The Old Testament warned repeatedly about false prophets. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 says, *"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."*

Did you catch that? A false prophet can perform real signs and wonders. The miracles can actually happen. But if he leads you away from the true God, he's false. The test isn't the miracle. The test is the message.

Jeremiah 23:16 warns, *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.'"*

The False Prophet of Revelation 13 is the final, most powerful false prophet in human history. He will have a global platform. He will have miracle-working power. He will have religious credibility. And he will use all of it to point the world toward worshiping the Antichrist.

## SECTION 2: THE FALSE PROPHET'S MISSION

### Verse 12: Exercising Authority

**Revelation 13:12 (ESV):** *"It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed."*

The False Prophet **exercises all the authority of the first beast**. These two work together. The Antichrist gives the False Prophet full authority to act on his behalf. They form a partnership. Political power and religious authority unite to control the world.

We've seen this pattern throughout history. Pagan priests validated the claims of kings and emperors. In ancient Rome, the emperor was worshiped as divine, and the religious system enforced this. In medieval Europe, the church and state formed alliances that led to both political and spiritual corruption. Whenever religious authority partners with political power for the purpose of control and coercion, the result is always oppression.

But notice the False Prophet's mission: **he makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast**. He doesn't seek worship for himself. He directs all worship toward the Antichrist. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit does for Jesus. The Spirit doesn't say, "Worship Me." He says, "Behold the Lamb of God."

The False Prophet acts as the Antichrist's propaganda minister, his religious spokesperson, his high priest. He gives spiritual legitimacy to the beast's political claims.

And look at what he emphasizes: **"whose mortal wound was healed."** The beast's resurrection (or apparent resurrection) is the central miracle that validates his claim to deity. Just as Christ's resurrection proves He is the Son of God ([Romans 1:4](#)), the beast's resurrection will convince the world that he is divine.

The False Prophet will point to this again and again. "Look at what he did. He died and came back to life. Who can do that? Only God can do that. Worship him."

### Verses 13-14a: Great Signs and Deception

**Revelation 13:13-14a (ESV):** *"It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth."*

Now we see the method: **great signs**. The False Prophet will be a miracle worker. These aren't tricks or illusions. These are supernatural acts that appear to be from God.

The specific example given is **making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people**. This is a direct imitation of what Elijah did. In 1 Kings 18, Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The test was simple: whichever god answered by fire was the true God.

1 Kings 18:38-39 tells us, *"Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, 'The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.'"*

Fire from heaven validated Elijah's message. It proved the God of Israel is the true God. The False Prophet will perform the same miracle, but for the opposite purpose. He'll use it to convince people that the Antichrist is god.

This shows us the Satan's strategy. He doesn't create new tricks. He counterfeits what God has done. He takes the miracles that should point to the true God and twists them to point toward his false christ.

But we've seen this before. In Exodus, when Moses performed miracles before Pharaoh, the Egyptian magicians imitated them. Exodus 7:11-12 says, *"Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents."*

They couldn't do everything Moses did. Their power was limited. But they did enough to harden Pharaoh's heart and keep him from believing.

Paul refers to this in 2 Timothy 3:8: *"Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith."*

The point is this: the Satan can perform miracles. His agents can do signs and wonders. Demons have supernatural power. Just because something is miraculous doesn't mean it's from God.

Jesus warned about this. In Matthew 24:24, speaking about the end times, He said, *"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."*

Paul warned about it too. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, describing the coming of the lawless one (the Antichrist), Paul writes, *"The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*

Did you catch that last part? People will be deceived **because they refused to love the truth**. The problem isn't that the signs are so convincing that no one can resist them. The problem is that people don't love truth. They want to believe the lie. They prefer the spectacular over the scriptural.

Look at verse 14 again: **"by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth."**

Notice two things. First, the False Prophet is **allowed** to work these signs. God permits it. This is within God's sovereign control. The Satan can only do what God allows.

Second, those deceived are **those who dwell on earth**. We talked about this phrase last week. It's a technical term in Revelation for unbelievers whose hearts are bound to this world. They have no heavenly citizenship. They have no love for God. They're earth-dwellers, and they will be deceived.

But believers, those whose names are written in the Book of Life, won't be fooled. Why? Because we test everything by Scripture. We don't follow signs and wonders. We follow the Word of God.

Acts 17:11 describes the Bereans this way: *"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."*

That's our model. Don't be impressed by miracles alone. Test them by Scripture. Does the message align with God's Word? Does it glorify Christ? Does it lead to holiness and truth? If not, reject it, no matter how spectacular the signs.

## **SECTION 3: THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST**

### **Verse 14b: Making the Image**

**Revelation 13:14b (ESV):** *"...telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived."*

The False Prophet commands the people to **make an image for the beast**. This image will honor the Antichrist, specifically commemorating his apparent death and resurrection: **"the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived."**

An image is an idol. This is a direct violation of the second commandment. Exodus 20:4-5 says, *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them."*

God forbids idolatry. He will not share His glory with another. Isaiah 42:8 declares, *"I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."*

But here, at the end of human history, the world will erect an idol to worship. They will create an image of a man and bow down to it. This is humanity's final, most blatant act of rebellion against God.

Where will this image be placed? Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 gives us the answer: *"Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."*

The Antichrist will enter the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem at the midpoint of the Tribulation. He will sit in the holy place. He will declare himself to be God. And the image will be set up in the temple.

This is what Jesus called the "abomination of desolation." In Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus said, *"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."*

Jesus references Daniel. Let's look at those passages.

Daniel 9:27 speaks of a future prince (the Antichrist) who *"shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."*

The Antichrist will make a seven-year covenant with Israel. At the midpoint (three and a half years), he'll break it. He'll stop the sacrifices. He'll commit the abomination that makes the temple desolate. This is when the image is set up.

Daniel 11:31 says, *"Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate."*

Daniel 12:11 adds, "And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days."

The image in the temple is the abomination of desolation. It's the Satan's ultimate act of blasphemy. He places an idol of his false christ in the holy place where only the true God should be worshiped.

## **Verse 15: The Image Comes Alive**

**Revelation 13:15 (ESV):** "And it was given to it to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."

The False Prophet is **given** power to give breath to the image. The image begins to **speak**. And it causes those who refuse to worship it **to be slain**.

The word for "breath" here is pneuma, which can mean breath, wind, or spirit. It's the same word used in Genesis 2:7 when God breathed the breath of life into Adam. This suggests the image appears to come alive.

Let's be clear about what this doesn't mean. This is not true life. The Satan cannot create life. Only God can do that. The Satan is not omnipotent. He's a creature, a fallen angel with limited power.

So what's happening here? There are several possibilities.

**First possibility: Demonic power animates the image.** A demon could indwell the statue and cause it to appear alive and speak. We know demons can possess people. Could they possess an object? The Bible doesn't give us a clear example of this, but it's not impossible given the Satan's abilities and God's permission during this unique period.

**Second possibility: Advanced technology creates the illusion of life.** We live in an age of artificial intelligence, robotics, and holographic images. It's not difficult to imagine technology that could make a statue appear to speak and move. The people of the Tribulation might see this as miraculous when it's actually technological.

**Third possibility: A combination of both.** Perhaps advanced technology provides the mechanism, but demonic power provides the intelligence and speech. The Satan could speak through the image using technology as the means.

The text doesn't tell us exactly how this happens. What matters is the effect: the image appears alive. It speaks. It's convincing enough that people believe it's supernatural. And it has the authority to identify and execute those who refuse to worship.

How does an image cause people to be killed? It could speak commands to enforcers. It could have surveillance capabilities to identify non-worshippers. It could be connected to a system that tracks who bows down and who doesn't.

The point is this: worship of the image is mandatory, and refusal means death.

## **The Daniel 3 Connection: Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image**

This is where we need to spend significant time because the parallel between Revelation 13 and Daniel 3 is striking and intentional.

Daniel 3 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar erecting a massive golden image and commanding everyone in his empire to worship it. Let's walk through the account and see how it foreshadows what will happen in the Tribulation.

**Daniel 3:1 (ESV):** *"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."*

Notice the dimensions: 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. Some scholars see significance in the number six appearing here, connecting it to the number 666 in Revelation 13:18. Whether that's intentional or not, the pattern of six does appear in connection with human pride and idolatry.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king on earth at that time. He ruled the Babylonian Empire, the first world empire. But his power had gone to his head. Earlier, in Daniel 2, God had given Nebuchadnezzar a dream of a great statue representing world empires, with Babylon as the head of gold. But in Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar makes an entire statue of gold. He's not content to be the head. He wants to be everything.

This is the pride of man. This is humanism at its core: man exalting himself to the place of God.

**Daniel 3:2-3 (ESV):** *"Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices,*

*the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."*

Everyone who is anyone in the empire is required to attend. This is a state-sponsored religious ceremony. Political power and religious worship combine. Attendance is mandatory.

**Daniel 3:4-6 (ESV)**: *"And the herald proclaimed aloud, 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.'"*

Notice the phrase "**peoples, nations, and languages.**" This is the same language used in Revelation 13:7 to describe the Antichrist's authority. Nebuchadnezzar's decree went throughout his empire. The Antichrist's decree will go throughout the entire world.

The signal for worship was music. When the instruments played, everyone was to bow down. Worship was synchronized, public, and compulsory.

The penalty for refusal was death: **the burning fiery furnace**. There was no middle ground. Bow or burn. Worship or die.

**Daniel 3:7 (ESV)**: *"Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."*

Everyone complied. The pressure was overwhelming. Survival instinct kicked in. Social conformity took over. Who wants to be the only one standing when everyone else is bowing?

But three young men refused.

**Daniel 3:12 (ESV)**: *"There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego wouldn't bow. They wouldn't compromise. They knew the second commandment. They knew idolatry was sin. They feared God more than they feared the king.

Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He gave them one more chance. Look at his words in Daniel 3:14-15: *"Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of*

*the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"*

That last question reveals his arrogance. "Who is the god who will deliver you?" He thinks he's more powerful than any god.

But listen to the response of these three men. This is one of the greatest statements of faith in all of Scripture.

**Daniel 3:16-18 (ESV):** *"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.'"*

Let me break down their response because it's so powerful.

"We have no need to answer you in this matter." They're not being disrespectful. They're saying, "We don't need to think about this. We don't need to deliberate. Our answer is already settled."

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." They believe in God's power. They know He can save them if He chooses.

"And he will deliver us out of your hand, O king." They have confidence that God will act, one way or another.

"But if not..." Here's the key phrase. **But if not.** Even if God doesn't save us from the fire, even if we burn, even if we die, "be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image."

This is faith. This is real, biblical faith. It's not presumption. It's not claiming God must do what we want. It's trusting God's wisdom and goodness even when the outcome is death.

They were willing to die. They trusted God's sovereignty. They refused to compromise.

Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the furnace, heated seven times hotter than normal. And God delivered them. [Daniel 3:25](#) says Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and saw four men walking around unharmed, and the fourth looked like a son of the gods. Most scholars believe this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

They walked out without even the smell of smoke on them. God was glorified. The king praised the God of Israel. The faithful were vindicated.

Now, let's connect this to Revelation 13.

### **The Pattern:**

- Nebuchadnezzar made an image (Daniel 3:1) / The False Prophet commands an image to be made (Revelation 13:14)
- All peoples, nations, and languages commanded to worship (Daniel 3:4) / All tribes, peoples, languages, and nations under the beast's authority (Revelation 13:7-8)
- Music signaled the time to worship (Daniel 3:5) / The image can speak and identify non-worshippers (Revelation 13:15)
- Death penalty for refusal: the furnace (Daniel 3:6) / Death penalty for refusal: execution (Revelation 13:15)
- Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego refused (Daniel 3:12) / Tribulation saints will refuse (Revelation 13:8, 10)
- God delivered them from the fire (Daniel 3:26-27) / Some will be martyred, but all will be vindicated (Revelation 20:4)

### **The Escalation:**

Daniel 3 was localized to Babylon. Revelation 13 is global.

Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king who didn't claim to be God himself. The Antichrist will sit in God's temple and claim to be God.

The image in Daniel 3 was lifeless metal. The image in Revelation 13 appears to live and speak.

Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship of his image. The Antichrist demands worship of himself through his image.

### **The Theological Significance:**

This is the final conflict between true worship and false worship. Throughout history, the Satan has tried to get humanity to worship anything except the true God. In the garden, he tempted Eve to question God's word. At Babel, he inspired humanity to build a tower to make a name for themselves. Throughout Israel's history, he led them into idolatry again and again.

At the end of history, the Satan makes his final move. He sets up his false christ. He places an image in God's temple. He demands the worship that belongs to God alone.

And believers will face the same choice Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced: bow or die.

Many will choose death. Revelation 20:4 speaks of those *"who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands."*

But here's the promise: they will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). Their faithfulness will be rewarded. Their suffering will not be in vain.

God is looking for people who will say, "Even if not, I will not bow."

## SECTION 4: THE MARK OF THE BEAST

### Verse 16: Everyone Must Receive the Mark

**Revelation 13:16 (ESV):** *"Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,"*

The False Prophet **causes all** to be marked. This is universal. It crosses every boundary:

- **Small and great** = social status doesn't matter
- **Rich and poor** = economic class doesn't matter
- **Free and slave** = legal status doesn't matter

Everyone must take the mark. No exceptions. No exemptions.

The mark is placed **on the right hand or the forehead**. These are the most visible parts of the body. The hand represents action and labor. The forehead represents thought and identity. The mark on either location signals complete allegiance to the beast, both in mind and deed.

This should immediately remind us of Deuteronomy 6:4-8, the Shema, the central confession of faith in Judaism:

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and*

*when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."*

God commanded Israel to bind His word on their hands and foreheads. This was a symbol of complete devotion—thinking about God's word and living it out.

Jewish men today still practice this literally through phylacteries (tefillin), small leather boxes containing Scripture verses that are strapped to the hand and forehead during prayer.

The mark of the beast is the Satan's counterfeit. Just as God's people are marked with His word and His truth, the beast's followers are marked with his name or number.

But there's another important contrast. In Revelation, believers are sealed on their foreheads.

Revelation 7:3 says, *"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

Revelation 14:1 describes the 144,000: *"Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads."*

And in the eternal state, Revelation 22:4 tells us, *"They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."*

There are two marks. Two masters. Two destinies.

God's people bear His name. They belong to Him. They are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

The beast's followers bear his mark. They belong to him. They are identified with his rebellion.

The mark is not just a economic tool. It's a spiritual declaration. It's a public statement of allegiance. It's choosing sides in the cosmic war between God and the Satan.

## **Verse 17: Economic Control**

**Revelation 13:17 (ESV):** *"so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name."*

Here we see the practical function of the mark: economic control. **No one can buy or sell** without the mark.

Think about what this means. You can't buy food. You can't purchase medicine. You can't pay rent. You can't sell your labor. You can't engage in commerce of any kind. You are completely shut out of the economic system.

The mark functions as both identification and authorization. It proves you belong to the beast's system. It grants you access to participate in society.

And notice there are three options for what the mark could be:

1. **The mark itself** (the physical sign)
2. **The name of the beast**
3. **The number of his name**

These may all refer to the same thing, or they may offer different forms of identification that all serve the same purpose. The key is that you must have one of these to function in society.

This is total economic coercion. The pressure to take the mark will be overwhelming. How long can you survive without food? How long can you watch your children go hungry? How long can you endure being an outcast, unable to work, unable to provide?

This is where faith will be tested at the deepest level. This is where we'll see who truly trusts God and who trusts in themselves.

We see a parallel to this in ancient times with Joseph in Egypt. When famine struck, Joseph controlled all the grain. Genesis 41:55-57 says, "*When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.'* So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth."

Joseph used his control of resources for good, to save lives. But the principle is clear: when someone controls the food supply, they control the people.

The Antichrist will use the same strategy for evil. He will control all commerce. He will use economic power to force compliance. He will make survival dependent on worship.

But here's what believers need to understand: **taking the mark is not just a practical decision**. It's not simply a matter of economic survival. It's a spiritual choice with eternal consequences.

Look at what [Revelation 14:9-11](#) says about those who take the mark:

*"And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.'"*

This is one of the clearest statements of eternal judgment in all of Scripture. Those who take the mark will drink the wine of God's wrath. They will be tormented forever. There is no repentance. There is no second chance. Taking the mark seals a person's eternal destiny.

Why is this? Because taking the mark is not just a practical choice. It's an act of worship. It's an open declaration of loyalty to the beast and rejection of God. It's choosing the Satan over Christ. And once that choice is made publicly and deliberately, there is no going back.

This means believers during the Tribulation will have to trust God completely. They will have to believe Jesus' words in [Matthew 6:25-33](#):

*"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

God will provide. He fed Elijah by ravens. He multiplied the widow's oil. He rained manna from heaven for Israel. He can sustain His people during the Tribulation without the mark.

But many will die. And that's where faith in the resurrection becomes critical. If this life is all there is, then taking the mark makes sense. But if there's eternal life with Christ, then losing this life to gain that life is the wisest choice anyone could make.

Jesus said in [Matthew 16:25-26](#), "*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?*"

## **Modern Implications and Technology**

Now, I want to address something many people wonder about: How could this system work? How could the beast track and control all economic transactions globally?

Until recently, this seemed impossible. But today, with digital banking, cryptocurrency, biometric identification, and global networks, we can easily imagine how this could function.

Think about it:

- Most transactions are already digital
- Cash is becoming less common
- Smartphones can serve as payment devices
- Biometric scanners (fingerprints, facial recognition) are everywhere
- Central banks are developing digital currencies
- Social credit systems already exist in some countries that restrict people's ability to travel or access services based on their behavior

I'm not saying any current technology is the mark but we can see how the infrastructure is being put in place. The technology exists right now to implement exactly what [Revelation 13](#) describes.

Some people worry, "What if I accidentally take the mark? What if it's in a vaccine or a credit card?" Listen carefully: you will not accidentally take the mark. It will be a deliberate choice. It will involve worship of the beast. It will be a public declaration of allegiance. You will know exactly what you're doing.

The mark is not something that can be tricked onto you. It's a conscious decision to reject God and follow the Antichrist.

## SECTION 5: THE NUMBER 666

### Verse 18: Wisdom and the Number

**Revelation 13:18 (ESV):** *"This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."*

We come now to one of the most famous and misunderstood verses in the entire Bible. Everyone has heard of 666. It's become a cultural symbol of evil. But what does it actually mean?

First, notice the call for **wisdom** and **understanding**. This isn't something immediately obvious. It requires discernment. It requires careful thought.

Second, we're told to **calculate the number**. The word "calculate" (psēphizō) means to count or reckon. It suggests some kind of computation.

Third, we're told **it is the number of a man**. This is not an abstract symbol. It's connected to a specific individual, the Antichrist himself.

Fourth, **his number is 666**. Six hundred sixty-six. Triple six.

So what does this mean? There are several approaches to interpreting this number.

### Gematria: The Name-Number Connection

In ancient languages, Hebrew and Greek, letters had numerical values. Hebrew aleph = 1, bet = 2, and so on. Greek alpha = 1, beta = 2, etc. This meant every name could be calculated as a number.

Throughout history, people have tried to identify the Antichrist by calculating names to equal 666. The early church suggested Nero Caesar (in Hebrew: Neron Kaisar = 666). During the Reformation, some calculated the Pope's title "Vicarius Filii Dei" to equal 666. In modern times, people have calculated Hitler, Kissinger, Reagan, Obama, and dozens of others.

The problem with this approach is that with enough manipulation, you can make almost any name equal 666. Add a title, use a different language, spell it differently, and you can get whatever number you want. This method has produced more speculation than clarity.

### Symbolic Meaning: The Number of Man

A better approach is to understand the symbolic significance of the number six.

In Scripture, seven is the number of completion, perfection, and divine fullness. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Seven appears repeatedly as the number of God's perfect work.

Six falls short of seven. It's incomplete. It's imperfect. It's human, not divine.

Man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-31). Six is the number of man. It represents human achievement, human effort, human glory, but always falling short of God's perfection.

Triple six (666) is the intensification of this. It's man exalting himself to the highest degree, trying to be God, but never achieving it. It's humanity's final, ultimate rebellion, reaching for deity but remaining merely human.

Think about the counterfeit trinity again:

- God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the true Trinity, 777 if you will)
- The Satan, Antichrist, and False Prophet form the counterfeit trinity (666)

They imitate God's structure but fall infinitely short of His glory.

The beast represents man at his pinnacle of power, wisdom, and authority, but still just a man. He can perform miracles, rule the world, demand worship, but he's not God. He's 666, not 777. He's fallen humanity reaching for heaven and grasping only dust.

## Historical Patterns: Six in Scripture

Look at these interesting patterns involving the number six:

**Nebuchadnezzar's image:** Daniel 3:1 says it was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide.

**Goliath's dimensions:** 1 Samuel 17:4-7 tells us Goliath was six cubits tall, had six pieces of armor, and his spear point weighed 600 shekels of iron.

**Solomon's gold:** 1 Kings 10:14 says, "*Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.*"

All three examples involve human pride and human glory. Nebuchadnezzar's image represented his pride. Goliath represented human strength opposing God's people. Solomon's gold represented wealth and wisdom, but led to his heart turning from God.

The pattern of six connects to human achievement that opposes or replaces God.

## What We Can Know

Here's what we can say with confidence:

1. The number identifies a specific individual. It's "the number of a man," meaning the Antichrist will be identifiable by this number.
2. Those living during the Tribulation will understand. The call for wisdom suggests believers at that time will have the discernment to recognize who the beast is by this number.
3. We may not know now, and that's okay. We're not meant to identify the Antichrist before he's revealed. Our job is to understand the principles and be watchful.
4. The number represents human rebellion at its peak. It's man claiming to be God, reaching for deity, but revealing his fallen nature.
5. The number is a mark of imperfection. It falls short of divine perfection (seven). It's the ultimate "missing the mark," which is the definition of sin (hamartia).

Don't get caught up in speculation about who the Antichrist is or trying to calculate names.

What matters is understanding that 666 represents humanity's final rebellion, man's ultimate attempt to replace God, and the definitive proof that human wisdom and power, no matter how impressive, will always fall short of the divine.

## SECTION 6: PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

### The Warning for Today

We've covered a lot of ground tonight. We've seen the False Prophet, the image, the mark, and the number. We've seen how religious deception will partner with political power to create a system of total control. We've seen how economic coercion will pressure people to compromise their faith.

Now let me bring this home to where we live today.

**Economic pressure:** How many people compromise their convictions for a paycheck? How many stay silent about their faith because they fear losing a promotion? How many go along with company policies they know are wrong because they need the job?

**Social pressure:** How many believers conform to cultural values that contradict Scripture because they want to be accepted? How many hide their faith because they fear mockery or rejection?

**Religious pressure:** How many follow teachers who sound good but don't preach the truth? How many are impressed by big churches, charismatic personalities, and spectacular experiences without testing the message by Scripture?

The same tactics the Satan will use in the Tribulation, he's using now. He just doesn't have to be as obvious about it yet.

So let me ask you some questions:

**What would you give up for your faith?** Your job? Your reputation? Your comfort? Your life?

**Are there areas where you've already compromised?** Where you've chosen economic security over obedience? Where you've valued human approval over God's approval?

**Are you building spiritual muscle now?** Because if you won't stand for small things now, you won't stand for big things later. If you compromise when the stakes are low, you'll compromise when the stakes are high.

Start practicing faithfulness now. In your workplace. In your family. In your church. In your private life when no one is watching.

God is looking for people who will say, "Even if not, I will not bow."

## **The Danger of Religious Deception**

The False Prophet looks like a lamb. He sounds spiritual. He performs miracles. He uses religious language.

This is the most dangerous form of deception.

Outright atheism is easy to identify and reject. But false teaching that sounds like truth? That's where people get trapped.

How do you guard against it?

**Know the Word of God.** You can't identify a counterfeit if you don't know the real thing. A bank teller doesn't study fake money. She studies real currency so thoroughly that when a fake comes across her desk, it feels wrong immediately.

Study your Bible. Read it daily. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Let it saturate your mind. Then when false teaching comes, you'll recognize it.

**Test everything by Scripture.** Acts 17:11 tells us the Bereans *"received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."*

Don't just accept what a preacher says because he's charismatic or popular. Test it. Check it against God's Word.

**Don't be impressed by signs and wonders alone.** Miracles don't validate a message. The message must align with Scripture. If someone performs miracles but teaches false doctrine, reject them.

**Watch for fruit.** Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, *"You will recognize them by their fruits."* False teachers may talk about grace, but their lives show pride, greed, and immorality. True teachers demonstrate humility, holiness, and love.

## The Gospel Hope

Let me close with the most important question: Whose mark do you bear?

There are only two options. You either belong to Christ or you belong to the world. You're either sealed by the Holy Spirit or you're headed toward the mark of the beast.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you've been sealed. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."*

But if you're not a believer, you need to understand something. You're headed toward a choice. You'll have to choose between Christ and the Antichrist, between eternal life and eternal death.

Choose Christ now.

The gospel is simple: You're a sinner. Your sin separates you from God. You deserve His judgment. But God loves you. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins. Jesus took the punishment you deserve. He died in your place. He rose from the dead three days later, proving He is God and that His sacrifice was accepted.

If you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, you will be saved. Your sins will be forgiven. You'll be sealed by the Holy Spirit. Your name will be written in the Book of Life. You'll have eternal life.

Romans 10:9 says, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Don't leave here tonight without settling this. Choose Christ now.