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Revelation

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# Introduction

## Revelation 13:1-10 ESV

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" <sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. <sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear: <sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Revelation 13 is one of the most challenging and debated chapters in Scripture. This chapter introduces us to two beasts that will dominate the final period of human history before Christ returns.

These events will unfold during the seven-year Tribulation period, specifically during the second half, known as the Great Tribulation. God will be dealing primarily with Israel and the unbelieving world.

Before we dive into the text, I want you to notice something critical. [Revelation 13](#) presents what we call the "counterfeit trinity" or "unholy trinity." Just as God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Satan creates his own perverted imitation:

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

The Satan is a counterfeiter. He cannot create, so he imitates. He offers a false system of worship that mirrors the true worship of God. This will become clearer as we work through both lessons.

Today we'll focus on the first beast, the one from the sea. This is the Antichrist, the political and military leader who will dominate the world during the Tribulation.

## Verse 1: The Beast Rises

**Revelation 13:1 (ESV):** *"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads."*

John sees a beast rising from the sea. The sea in prophetic literature often represents the Gentile nations in turmoil. We see this in [Daniel 7:2-3](#), where Daniel writes, *"I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another."*

[Isaiah 57:20](#) tells us, *"But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt."* The sea represents the restless masses of humanity, particularly the Gentile world in chaos.

This beast has **ten horns and seven heads**. The horns represent power and authority. The heads represent kingdoms or rulers. The **ten diadems** (crowns) on the horns tell us this is royal, kingly power. These ten horns match the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in [Daniel 2](#) and the ten horns of the fourth beast in [Daniel 7](#).

[Daniel 7:7](#) says, *"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. And it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns."*

Later, in [Daniel 7:24](#), the angel explains: *"As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings."*

These ten horns represent a future confederation of ten kings or kingdoms that will align with the Antichrist during the Tribulation. This is possibly a revived Roman Empire, a political alliance of nations from the territory of the ancient Roman world.

The **blasphemous names** on the heads show this beast's character. He opposes God. He claims titles and honors that belong to God alone. Roman emperors called themselves divine. They demanded worship. This future ruler will do the same, but on a global scale.

## Verse 2: The Composite Beast

**Revelation 13:2 (ESV):** *"And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority."*

Here's where John shows his deep knowledge of the Old Testament. This beast is a composite of the beasts Daniel saw in [Daniel 7](#). But notice the order is reversed.

In [Daniel 7:3-6](#), the beasts appear in this order:

1. **Lion** = Babylon ([Daniel 7:4](#))
2. **Bear** = Medo-Persia ([Daniel 7:5](#))
3. **Leopard** = Greece ([Daniel 7:6](#))
4. **Terrible Beast** = Rome ([Daniel 7:7](#))

John sees them in reverse: leopard, bear, lion. The beast of [Revelation 13](#) combines all the characteristics of previous world empires.

The **leopard** speaks of speed and agility. Alexander the Great conquered the known world with incredible speed. The **bear's feet** speak of crushing strength and stability. The Medo-Persian Empire was massive and powerful. The **lion's mouth** speaks of royal authority and devouring power. Babylon was the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

This composite nature tells us something important: the Antichrist's kingdom will embody all the evil, power, and glory of every previous world empire. He will be the culmination of Gentile world dominion.

But here's the key phrase: **"And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority."**

The dragon is the Satan. We know this from [Revelation 12:9](#), which says, *"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world."*

The Satan gives this beast three things:

- **His power** (dunamis) = miraculous ability, supernatural strength
- **His throne** = the seat of his authority, his right to rule
- **Great authority** (exousia) = the legal right to exercise power

This is where the counterfeit trinity becomes clear. Just as the Father gives authority to the Son ([Matthew 28:18](#)), the dragon gives authority to the beast. Just as Jesus said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* ([Matthew 28:18](#)), the Satan grants all his earthly authority to this man.

The Antichrist will be the Satan's man, empowered by the Satan, doing the Satan's will. He will be the most satanically empowered individual in human history.

## Verse 3: The Fatal Wound

**Revelation 13:3 (ESV):** *"One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast."*

One of the seven heads receives what appears to be a fatal wound, but the wound is healed. This is a very debated detail in [Revelation 13](#).

Some believe this refers to the death and resurrection of one of the previous empires (like Rome being "revived"). Others believe this is a literal death and resurrection of the Antichrist himself. The text, in my opinion, seems to support the latter view.

The word "mortal" literally means "slaughtered" or "killed." It's the same word used of Christ in [Revelation 5:6](#), where John sees *"a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain."* This parallel is intentional. The Antichrist experiences what looks like death and resurrection, mimicking Christ's death and resurrection.

Whether this is an actual resurrection or a spectacular healing that deceives people into thinking he died, the result is the same: **the whole earth marvels**. They are astonished. They are in awe. They follow the beast.

This counterfeit resurrection will be the Satan's greatest deception. It will convince the world that this man is divine, that he has power over death, that he deserves worship.

Think about the impact of Christ's resurrection on the early church. It validated everything He claimed. It proved He was who He said He was. Satan will use this same principle. The beast's "resurrection" will validate his claims to deity and convince billions to worship him.

## Verse 4: Worldwide Worship

**Revelation 13:4 (ESV):** *"And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?'"*

Here we see the goal of the counterfeit trinity: worship. The Satan has always wanted what belongs to God alone. In [Isaiah 14:13-14](#), we read his original desire: *"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"*

The Satan wanted to be worshiped. He still does. When he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship ([Matthew 4:8-9](#)). Jesus refused. The Antichrist will accept.

Notice the people worship both the dragon and the beast. They recognize that the beast's power comes from the dragon. By worshiping the beast, they worship the Satan.

Their words are telling: **"Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"**

This is a parody of [Exodus 15:11](#), where Moses sings after crossing the Red Sea: *"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"*

The language of worship that belongs to God alone is now directed toward this man and his master. This is blasphemy at the highest level.

The question "who can fight against it?" reveals their reason for worship. It's not love. It's not gratitude. It's fear and pragmatism. The beast appears invincible. He seems to have conquered death itself. Who could possibly stand against him?

But we know the answer. The Lamb who was slain can fight against him. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords will return and destroy him with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

## Verses 5-6: The Beast's Blasphemy

**Revelation 13:5-6 (ESV):** *"And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven."*

The beast is **given** a mouth and **given** authority. This is passive language. Someone else is granting these things.

The time period is **forty-two months**. That's three and a half years. This matches the "time, times, and half a time" in Daniel 7:25 and the 1,260 days mentioned in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6. This is the second half of the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation.

Daniel 7:25 tells us about this ruler: *"He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."*

The beast uses his mouth to speak **haughty and blasphemous words**. He exalts himself. He speaks against God.

Look at what he blasphemes:

1. **God Himself**
2. **His name** (God's character and reputation)
3. **His dwelling** (heaven itself)
4. **Those who dwell in heaven** (the saints and angels)

This connects to Daniel 11:36, which says, *"And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the*

*God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done."*

And 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 tells us, *"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."*

At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will enter the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. This is the "abomination of desolation" that Jesus warned about in Matthew 24:15. This is when the Great Tribulation begins.

## **Verse 7: War Against the Saints**

**Revelation 13:7 (ESV)**: *"Also it was given to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,"*

Again, the beast is **given** authority. God is in control. But what he's given is terrifying: the power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.

Who are these saints? These are people who come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation. Some will be Jews who recognize Jesus as Messiah. Others will be Gentiles who believe the gospel preached by the 144,000 (Revelation 7) and the two witnesses (Revelation 11).

Daniel 7:21 describes the same scene: *"As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them."*

The word "conquer" means to overcome physically. Many believers will be martyred during this time. Revelation 20:4 tells us, *"Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls 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 notice the scope of his authority: **every tribe, people, language, and nation**. This is global dominion. The Antichrist will rule the entire world. He will be the first truly global dictator.

This worldwide authority was the Satan's to give because he is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31) and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). When he offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, he wasn't lying about his ability to give them. Jesus didn't dispute his claim.

## Verse 8: The Book of Life

**Revelation 13:8 (ESV):** *"And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain."*

Here's the dividing line. **All who dwell on earth** will worship the beast, except those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

"Those who dwell on earth" is a technical phrase in Revelation. It appears repeatedly ([Revelation 3:10](#), [6:10](#), [8:13](#), [11:10](#), [13:8](#), [13:14](#), [17:8](#)). It refers to unbelievers whose citizenship and affection are bound to this earth. They have no heavenly hope. They love this world.

By contrast, believers are called "strangers and exiles on the earth" ([Hebrews 11:13](#)) and citizens of heaven ([Philippians 3:20](#)).

The Book of Life is God's record of those who belong to Him.

And look at the title: **the Lamb who was slain**. This refers to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Even though Christ's crucifixion was a historical event in time, it was planned in eternity past. [1 Peter 1:19-20](#) says we were redeemed *"with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you."*

The protection from worshiping the beast is not human willpower or intelligence. It's having your name written in the Lamb's book. It's belonging to Christ. Those who are truly His will not be deceived. They will not worship the beast, no matter the cost.

## Verses 9-10: A Call to Endurance

**Revelation 13:9-10 (ESV):** *"If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints."*

**"If anyone has an ear, let him hear."** This phrase appears seven times in [Revelation 2-3](#), addressed to the seven churches. Now it appears here, calling for special attention. This is important. Don't miss this.

Verse 10 is a call to accept God's will, even when it includes suffering. **"If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain."**

This echoes [Jeremiah 15:2](#), where God tells Jeremiah: *"And when they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.'"*

And [Jeremiah 43:11](#): *"He shall come and strike the land of Egypt, giving over to the pestilence those who are doomed to the pestilence, to captivity those who are doomed to captivity, and to the sword those who are doomed to the sword."*

The point is this: They must not compromise to save their lives.

**"Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints."**

Endurance (hupomonē) means patient steadfastness under trial. It's not passive resignation. It's active, courageous perseverance. Faith here means faithfulness, loyalty to Christ no matter what.

Jesus said in [Matthew 10:28](#), *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

And in [Matthew 24:13](#), speaking about the Tribulation, Jesus said, *"But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*

The saints during the Tribulation will face a choice: worship the beast and live, or refuse and die. Those whose names are in the Book of Life will choose death. They will trust God. They will endure.

This is not a call to take up arms against the Antichrist. It's not a call to political revolution. It's a call to faithful witness, even unto death.

## **Connection to Nebuchadnezzar and [Daniel 3](#)**

Before we close this lesson, I want you to see the parallel between [Revelation 13](#) and [Daniel 3](#). The story of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image is not just ancient history. It's a preview of what will happen during the Tribulation.

## The golden image

Daniel 3:1 sets the scene: *"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."*

The dimensions are interesting: 60 cubits high, 6 cubits wide. That's about 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Some scholars see the repeated use of six (60 and 6) as significant, foreshadowing the number 666 associated with the beast in Revelation 13:18.

Whether or not that connection is intentional, the image itself is clearly meant to be imposing. This was a monument to Nebuchadnezzar's glory, possibly modeled after the dream statue in Daniel 2, but made entirely of gold instead of mixed materials.

The king set it up on a plain where everyone could see it. Visibility was important. This was public worship, enforced worship.

## The universal command

Daniel 3:4-7 records the decree: *"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.' 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."*

Notice the phrase **"peoples, nations, and languages."** This is almost identical to the language in Revelation 13:7: "every tribe and people and language and nation." Both passages describe empire-wide (or worldwide) enforcement of worship.

Nebuchadnezzar's command had several elements:

1. **Universal scope:** Everyone in the kingdom must obey
2. **A signal:** Musical instruments announce when to worship
3. **Required action:** Physical bowing down
4. **Immediate punishment:** Death by fire for refusal

## 5. **Public compliance:** Everyone worships together

Every one of these elements will appear again under the Antichrist's reign. In our next lesson, we'll see that the False Prophet makes an image of the beast and requires everyone to worship it ([Revelation 13:14-15](#)). Those who refuse will be killed.

The parallel is intentional. John wants us to see that what happened in Babylon is a pattern for what will happen in the end times.

### **The faithful three**

But not everyone bowed. [Daniel 3:12](#) tells us: *"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 refused. They were high-ranking officials in Nebuchadnezzar's government. They had everything to lose. But they would not compromise.

When brought before the king, they made one of the most courageous statements in all of Scripture. [Daniel 3:16-18](#): *"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's break down their response:

**"We have no need to answer you in this matter."** They're not being disrespectful. They're saying the matter is already settled. There's no need for deliberation or negotiation. The answer is no.

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

**"And he will deliver us out of your hand, O king."** This is confidence in God's ultimate deliverance, whether in this life or the next.

**"But if not..."** Here's the key phrase. Even if God chooses not to deliver them from the fire, even if they die, they will not worship the image.

Their faith was not dependent on getting the outcome they wanted. They trusted God's goodness whether He rescued them or not. They were willing to die rather than compromise.

This is exactly the kind of faith [Revelation 13:10](#) calls for: *"Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints."*

## **God's deliverance**

In the case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God chose to deliver them miraculously. [Daniel 3:25-27](#) records: *"He answered and said, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.' Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!' Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them."*

God sent a fourth person into the fire with them, likely a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. They walked through the fire unharmed. They came out without even the smell of smoke.

This demonstrates God's power to deliver His people. When He chooses to intervene, no human authority can stand against Him.

## **The pattern for the Tribulation**

Now, here's how this connects to [Revelation 13](#):

In [Daniel 3](#), we see:

- A powerful ruler (Nebuchadnezzar) who demands worship
- An image set up for worship
- A command that applies to all people in the empire
- A death penalty for refusing to worship
- Faithful believers who refuse despite the cost
- Some delivered miraculously, but all willing to die

In [Revelation 13](#), we will see:

- A powerful ruler (the Antichrist) who demands worship
- An image of the beast set up for worship (13:14-15)
- A command that applies to all people worldwide (13:7-8)
- A death penalty for refusing to worship (13:15)
- Faithful Tribulation saints who refuse despite the cost
- Some may be delivered, but many will be martyred (13:10, 20:4)

The story of [Daniel 3](#) is a preview. It shows us how God's people should respond when a government demands idolatrous worship.

But there's a critical difference: Nebuchadnezzar eventually repented and acknowledged the true God ([Daniel 4:34-37](#)). The Antichrist will never repent. His system will only be destroyed when Christ returns.

## Lessons for Tribulation saints

What should believers learn from [Daniel 3](#) as they face the Antichrist?

First, **determine in advance that you will not compromise**. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't need time to think about their answer. They had already decided they would serve God alone. Tribulation saints need the same settled conviction before the test comes.

Second, **trust God's power to deliver, but don't demand it**. God can save you from any situation. But He may choose to save you through death rather than from death. Both are deliverance.

Third, **remember you're not alone in the fire**. The three Hebrew men had each other, and they had the presence of God with them in the furnace. Jesus promised in [Matthew 28:20](#), "*I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" Tribulation believers will have Christ's presence even in their suffering.

Fourth, **your faithfulness has an impact beyond yourself**. The courage of these three men led Nebuchadnezzar to praise God and protect His people ([Daniel 3:28-29](#)). When Tribulation saints choose martyrdom over compromise, they give a powerful testimony. Faithful witness often leads others to God.

## A preview of the end-time scenario

The story in [Daniel 3](#) is not allegory. It really happened. But it also serves as a prophetic picture of what's coming.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar set up his image in Babylon, the False Prophet will set up an image of the beast. Just as music signaled when to worship, some trigger will initiate the command. Just as refusing meant death by fire, refusing the mark of the beast will mean execution.

And just as a faithful remnant refused to bow in Babylon, a faithful remnant will refuse to worship the beast.

The pattern has been established. The choice will be the same: worship the image and live, or refuse and die.

But those who know their God will stand firm. They will endure. They will keep the faith.

[Daniel 11:32](#) says, *"But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action."*

That action might not look like military victory. It might look like dying well. It might look like going to prison without resistance. It might look like losing everything for the sake of Christ.

But it will be action rooted in faith. And God will honor it with eternal reward.

## Conclusion and Application

What does this passage mean for us today?

First, **be aware that Satan is a counterfeiter**. He imitates God's truth with lies. He offers false worship systems that look attractive but lead to destruction. Don't be deceived by what looks powerful or popular.

Second, **cultivate endurance now**. We may not face the Antichrist, but we face spiritual battles every day. We need the same patient faithfulness, the same willingness to obey God no matter the cost. Start building that spiritual muscle now.

Third, **make sure your name is in the Book of Life**. The only protection against deception and apostasy is belonging to Christ. Have you trusted in the Lamb who was slain for your sins? That's the only security that matters.

Next week, we'll study the second beast, the one from the earth, who will point the world to worship the first beast. We'll look at the image, the mark, and the number 666.