

REVELATION 13

Rev. 13:1-3

- Chapter 12 introduced us to the activity of Satan; Chapter 13 provides us with more detail about his activity.
- “A beast rising out of the sea” – Here we see how Satan tries to mimic the Triune God. The first beast he brings out of the sea mimics the Son, for the dragon (Satan mimicking the Father) gives this beast his power and throne (the Father gives the Son His power and throne). We can also see this beast mimicking the Son in that it is the object of worship and it suffers a fatal wound but lives, just as the Son (Jesus the Christ) is our object of worship and suffers a fatal wound (death by crucifixion) but lives (resurrection and ascension).
- The first beast bears “blasphemous names,” another parody of the Son, who bears the Divine Name. This probably refers to the beast claiming to be God and thus bearing the Divine Name, but because he is not God, nor one of God’s saints, he blasphemes by claiming the Divine Name upon himself.
- This beast is not distinct from Satan, but is Satan taking a form, in the attempt to imitate the incarnation of the Son.
- Just as the Lamb is seated on the throne of God and shares God’s authority, so the beast shares Satan’s throne and authority.
- The description of the beast, “leopard, bear, lion, etc.,” comes from Dan. 7:3-8. There, Daniel depicts four beasts, referring to successive evil empires; here, they are condensed into one. This probably includes a connotation to Rome as being the fourth beast. As John saw this, he understood what he was seeing in relation to Daniel 7.

Rev. 13:4-8

- “They worshipped the dragon for giving his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast and who can fight against it?’” – The Lamb is worshipped because the Father has given Him His authority and no one is like the Lamb or can make war with Him – He is the One who is able to make war with the beast and to conquer him – In fact, He already has through His death and resurrection.
- “Blaspheming against God” – The beast testifies that the dragon is the true God, which is great blasphemy; also against the saints, showing Satan’s contempt both for God and for God’s people.
- “. . . forty-two months” – the beast’s blasphemous activity and evil assault on the Lamb’s Church will be intensified at the End, for “it will be allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them” (refers to Satan’s “little season” when he is unbound to deceive the nations – cf. Rev. 20). Things will be bad during this time, for “all who dwell on earth will worship it [the first beast], everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world.” There is no middle ground; either you are with the Lamb or you are with the beast. All unbelievers, by their denial of the Lamb, worship the first beast and belong to Satan. Believers, on the other hand, can be assured of their salvation, for their names have been written in the Lamb’s “book of life” since “before the foundation of the world.” Thus, even during Satan’s “little season,” believers can be comforted to know that their salvation is secure through faith in the Lamb.
- **TEXTUAL NOTE:** The ESV wrongly translates the last half of v. 8 as “everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb that was slain.” The phrase “before the foundation of the world” goes with “the Lamb who

was slain,” not with “the names written.” The reason why these translators went to this incorrect translation is because it didn’t make sense to them that Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. But, the Bible is clear that the Atonement of Christ transcends time – the OT saints were saved through faith in the crucified Christ. Though the crucifixion took place in time, its effects are eternal and were applied even before the historical event took place. However, the ESV translation, though incorrect here, is not incorrect theologically. The names of the elect have been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (cf. Rev. 17:8). Thus, we can say that both the elect and the atonement were accomplished facts from the foundation of the world, from God’s point of view. From our point of view, they happen in time. But, God is outside of time.

Rev. 13:9-10

- Here the emphasis is on the endurance of the saints, who, though persecuted and killed, are conquerors through Christ. It is also a warning not to be led into the world’s ways of captivity and murder by the sword.

Rev. 13:11-14

- The second beast comes out of the earth – this is a parody of the Holy Spirit, for this beast directs worship to the first beast, just as the Holy Spirit directs worship to Christ.

THE UNHOLY TRINITY

DRAGON (FATHER)	1ST BEAST (SON)	2ND BEAST (HOLY SPIRIT)
Gives authority	Object of worship	Directs worship to
	Fatal wound is healed	the 1 st beast

- The great signs produced by the second beast causes people to make an image of the first beast and worship it. The second beast does all he can to bring attention to the first beast. An example of the manifestation of this beast in the first century is seen in the emperor worship and its temple cults, in which the images of the emperors were worshipped. Luther saw this manifestation as the papacy. The point is that this beast manifests himself in different ways in every generation. The papacy is still a manifestation, but there are surely many other manifestations in our day and age (Church Growth Movement; American “Evangelicalism”; Decision Theology; Denial of Sacraments, etc.), as there have been throughout history.

Rev. 13:15-17

- This beast is trying hard to mimic the Holy Spirit, for he comes upon the first beast so that he could speak and make people worship him (The Holy Spirit came upon Christ and filled Christ throughout His ministry); also, those who don’t worship the first beast will be killed (Those who deny Christ suffer eternal death). Further, this beast gives a mark (the name of the beast) to all who worship the first beast (Believers in Christ are marked, sealed with the Divine Name in baptism). Not a literal mark, but a spiritual mark, just as believers do not receive a literal mark, but a spiritual mark – the Divine Name is upon them; it is a spiritual reality and Christ knows who are His. In the same way, the Dragon knows who are his by the spiritual mark on them (they are his children). This is telling us, again, that there is no middle ground – either one is a believer and bears the Divine Name or one is an unbeliever and bears the name of the beast (Satan). (cf. Ezek. 9 for the background of the marking of the saints)

Rev. 13:18

- 666 - “It is a number of a man, and his number is 666” – There is so much mystery and confusion about this number. But, there needn’t be. St. John is told that the number of the beast (666) can be calculated and that it is the number of a man. Thus, St. John and those Christians living in his day are told that they can identify the historical identification of the beast in time. As it turns out, they can, for the numerical value of Nero Caesar comes out to 666. Using the Hebrew numerology of *gematria* (which was a popular way in which Jews and Christians could speak against the Roman emperor without his knowing), Nero Caesar, which, in Hebrew is נֶרֹן קֶסֶר (neron cesar), comes out to 666 when you add together the numerical value for each of the seven Hebrew consonants (א=200; ב=60; ג=100; ד=50; ה=6; ו=200; ז=50). Thus, here St. John is told that the ruthless emperor of Rome, Nero Caesar, who had ruled from 54 to 68 A.D., and had brought horrific and terrifying persecution upon Christians, was a manifestation of the beast. The Christians of St. John’s day would’ve understood this well. Interestingly, the Greek word for beast, θηρίον (thay-ree-on), when transliterated into Hebrew and calculated, also has a numerical value of 666. This does not mean that Nero Caesar is the only manifestation of the beast, but only that he is a manifestation of the beast at that time. There will be many other manifestations of the beast throughout history. Satan manifests himself in the form of this beast in many and various ways throughout history. Nero was just one example. Each generation will witness further activities of the beast. We see the activity of the beast in the papacy with its denial of justification by faith alone and the plethora of other false doctrines it practices. But, again, the beast’s manifestation is not limited to the papacy. Satan manifests himself in many different ways. But, this is key: The number 666 has no relevance for us today! It was the number of Nero and was given to St. John in this vision so that he, and we through his testimony, would know what Satan looks like when he is manifesting himself as the beast in the world.
- More on 666: We should note before leaving this subject the significance of the number itself, beyond what was said above. In other words, why 666? Because this shows that Satan, as hard as he tries to mimic the Triune God, always falls short. The number of God is 3 (the Holy Trinity). But, God’s perfect number, which symbolizes His relationship to the world, is 7 (3 for the Holy Trinity + 4 for the number of the world – 4 directions, 4 winds, 4 corners of the earth, etc.). So, Satan, in his attempt to mimic God, tries to get to 777, but falls short at 666. What is very interesting is that when Ἰησοῦς (Jesus in Greek) is calculated, it is 888. We might think it should be 777. But, 888 symbolizes the truth that Jesus brings about the fulfillment of all things, for He is the One who brings in the 8th day, the eschatological and eternal kingdom.