

The Beast And His Mark

Revelation 13:11–18

Revelation 13:11–18 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Truth Proposition: Be faithful and discerning in the increasingly evil days.

Introduction

Revelation 13 is really the story of two kingdoms. Each has a monarch who rules. One monarch rules with grace, mercy, and truth, while the other monarch rules with fear, lies, and manipulation. John records for us the culmination of Satan's attempt at supporting his feeble kingdom with the coming of both the first beast (antichrist) and the second beast (the false prophet).

I. The Beast's Wicked Characteristics

A. The Second Beast's Origin

1. Whereas the first beast described in Revelation 13 came up out of the sea, the second beast raises up out of the *earth*. Why is he described as coming from the earth while the first one arises out of the sea? Clearly, John understands that what Christ is revealing to him is *symbolic*. In other words, if these are in fact individual characters, they will not originate from the sea and from the earth as if they are spontaneously regenerating.
2. Who is this beast?
 - a) Later in the book of Revelation we read that he is the "false prophet."
 - (1) **Revelation 16:13** And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, *and out of the mouth of the false prophet*.
 - (2) **Revelation 19:20** And the beast was taken, *and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him*, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.
 - (3) **Revelation 20:10** And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast *and the false prophet* are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

- b) This beast could represent a non-personal entity (e.g., a government, false worship system, etc.). However, it seems better to consider this “false prophet” as an individual (a particular person in the future who will work great wonders).
3. As Pastor Dickson has pointed out in his previous sermon on the first ten verses of this same chapter, many Bible scholars believe that the first beast rising from the sea indicates that he will come from the Gentile peoples. Thus, they surmise that the second beast rising from the land represents his rising from the Jewish people (*land* being a reference to the Holy Land, Israel).

B. The Second Beast’s Description

- 1. “Two horns like a lamb”
 - a) When Satan attempts to replicate what God has done he is not creative. Here we learn that the second beast has “two horns like a lamb” (v. 11). Of course we know that this character is far from being the innocent lamb he wishes to be portrayed.
 - b) The Lamb hearkens back to the ultimate Lamb, Jesus Christ, who died to take away the sins of the world. This “lamb” is here only as a wolf in sheep’s clothing.
- 2. “He speaks like a dragon”
 - a) While this beast might try to appear before the world as a harmless lamb his words betray his true character. He is a dragon with evil intentions, seeking to do the bidding of his true master: Satan. Satan is the father of lies and this second beast will utter great deceptions that would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect of God.
 - b) The words he speaks are “of his father the devil.” These words he speaks are meant not to exalt the Sovereign Creator-God. Rather, they are meant to lift up the one who wishes to exalt his throne above the heavens.

C. The Second Beast’s Actions

- 1. He has the same power and authority as the first beast (v. 12)
 - a) The fountain of power supplied to the first beast (the ultimate antichrist) is given also to this second beast (the false prophet). Both beasts have as their source of power the great red dragon (Satan).
- 2. He causes the earth to worship the first beast (v. 12)
 - a) This is the false prophet’s goal: to get the world to worship the first beast (and ultimately, the dragon—Satan).
 - b) This worship is what Satan has wanted from the beginning.
 - (1) **Isaiah 14:12–15** How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.
 - (2) **Matthew 4:8–10** Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, *if thou wilt fall down and worship me*. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

- c) This is the ultimate end goal of Satan. He does not want the God of heaven to be worshipped. Rather, he yearns to experience the same worship which belongs exclusively to God.
3. Deceives the whole world with his “miracles” (v. 13)
 - a) The powers which Satan possesses come with limitations. While he does possess great power (for he is, after all, the prince of the power of the air) Satan’s power is limited. (e.g., Job 1–2)
 - b) Satan’s miracles will be an attempt at creating and performing miracles which duplicates the workings of Creator God and even the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
 - (1) The beast will be able to “make fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (v. 13).
 - (2) Fire coming down from heaven reminds us of Elijah (2 Kings 1). Satan attempts to make his prophet perform the same miracles which the true prophet of God did—all to validate his message.
 4. Makes the image of the beast “come alive” (v. 14–15)
 - a) This image will come alive (or so the world will be led to believe) by the power of this second beast. Not only does this egregiously violate the first commandment (“You shall have no other gods before me,” Exod. 20:3) it demonstrates the end goal of Satan: *the eradication of the worship of the One True God, the Holy One of Israel*. He does not want the world to worship the one true God. He wants all the worship directed towards himself.
 - b) I am convinced that the “miracles” which the false prophet will perform will be nothing short of parlor tricks. Even in the ancient days it is recorded that temples to pagan gods performed “miracles” by employing sleight of hand to deceive their followers. The work of the false prophet will be similar. We do not know how he will make this image come alive but he will employ something which will cause all people to believe that the image is actually alive.
 5. Enforces capital punishment on those who refuse to worship the image of the beast (v. 15)
 - a) The direct purpose of the false prophet is to enforce the exclusive worship of the beast. Anything less than the worship of the beast will be met with capital punishment.
 - b) We know throughout church history that governments and cultures have persecuted Christians for their exclusive worship of Jesus. Here we find that the dominant religion of the time will be the exclusive worship of the first beast.
 - (1) This practice (namely, calling all peoples to worship the ruling authority) is not something that was foreign to John or his readers. Roman emperors would demand their subjects to offer sacrifices to them. They would also demand a confession that “Caesar is lord” (identifying the ruling power as a deity).
 - (2) Many of the first century Christians endured the severe persecutions of Roman emperors. Some Christians were commanded to both offer a sacrifice to Caesar as well as publicly renounce Jesus as Lord and instead proclaim “Caesar is lord.” For this cause many early church Christians lost their lives.
 - (3) What we once believed to be ancient beliefs will be exactly what the false prophet will demand of the beast before the coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
 6. Enforces a mark of loyalty/ownership on those who worship the beast (v. 17–18)

- a) The “Mark of the Beast” is perhaps the most widely speculated teaching in the book of Revelation than any other teaching from the book. Countless books and movies have references this mysterious mark. Yet what did John mean when he said that only those who have the mark of the beast will be able to buy and sell? In order to answer that question we must first answer the question: what is the purpose of the mark of the beast?
- (1) The word *mark* in the original has a wide range of meanings, from “telltale snake bite” to “brand or etching” to “image.” Because the word itself is ambiguous many Bible scholars have had “open season” on its interpretation.
 - (2) John’s point could not be made clearer: *the mark of the beast is meant to be an economic “passport” of sorts which restricts any kind of economic dealings to those who have this mark.*
- b) There are countless interpretations about what the mark could be. Some suggestions have included microchips, others have suggested tattoos, still others have surmised it might be the Covid Vaccine. At the risk of sounding sarcastic, I humbly suggest that attempting to identify the mark of the beast is fruitless. John did not see fit to tell us anything more than “it is the number of a man” and the numbers 666.
- (1) The number 666 itself is subject to widespread speculation. Some have suggested that the number is a calculation of the name of the antichrist. They employ a technique commonly known as *gematria*. Ancient languages often did not have numerical numbers so people would assign a number value to each letter in their alphabet (think Roman Numerals). Gematria would take the letters of a name and calculate what the some of its matching numbers would be. Many people have had a field day attempting to determine the identity of the first beast through this means. The most prominent argument (particularly amongst preterists) is that the number refers to Emperor Nero (taking the name “Caesar Nero” in Hebrew one can calculate the total of the numbers in the name to 666). However, I do not believe that this is John’s point.
 - (2) I believe that the significance of 666 is not in the precise identification of the Antichrist as it is to the symbolism of his ultimate shortcomings.
 - (a) The number six is one less than the number seven (“duh” statement of the day). In Revelation, we see before the throne the “seven fold Spirit of God” (Rev. 1:4). Earlier, I preached that John was describing the completeness of Holy Spirit. He is perfect in the beauty of holiness.
 - (b) The number 6 signals a sort of “incompletion.” The Lord did not complete his creation on day six, He completed it on day 7. Mankind if not complete in and of himself. He must be made complete in Christ and by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. If the number of the antichrist is symbolic (as I believe it is) then it is symbolic of utter failure of Satan’s attempt at creating his own “evil trinity” with himself, the antichrist, and the false prophet. Each member is not complete, pure, and holy like the seven “spirits of God” before the throne of God. Each member falls short of completion—hence the reference to 666 instead of 777.
 - (c) Regardless, the mark of the beast has one clear purpose: the identify those who are Satan’s. We already know that the Lord marks those who are His (cf. Rev. 14:1). In the same way, Satan wishes to employ a counterfeit mark which will identify those who are his.

D. In the end, we do not know with absolute certainty what the mark of the beast is. But we do know this: Satan will seek to mark those who are his and demand loyalty and worship which alone belongs to God. So what ought to be our response?

II. The Believer's Godly Discernment

A. Be Biblically Informed

B. Employ the Use of the Armor of God

C. Do Not Fear

D. Reflect on the Power and Sovereignty of God (Trust Him)

E. Strive to be Faithful to Your King