

Chapter thirteen continues the interlude between the introductory sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15) and the impending outpouring of the seven vials upon the unbelievers (ch. 16). The previous chapter records the beginning of Satan's long war against God and His people. This present chapter 13 describes that war's culmination through the arrival of the two beasts who Satan will use to try to prevent Jesus setting up His earthly Kingdom by establishing his own kingdom. The first beast is the Antichrist (v. 1-10; ¹ having seven heads *[obsessed with being in control, a despotic tyrant]* and *ten horns [strength]*, and upon his *[ten]* horns ten crowns *[oppressively autocratic]*, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard *[swift]*, and his feet were as the feet of a bear *[powerfull]*, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion *[regal]*. and *the dragon gave him his power, his seat, and great authority*) and the second beast is the 'false prophet' (v. 11-18); ¹¹ ... had *two horns like a lamb*, and he spake as a *dragon [i.e. the dragon's mouthpiece]*. ¹² 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. ¹³ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ¹⁴ 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). ... The first beast (Antichrist) rises out of the sea (v.1). The second beast (the false prophet) comes out of the earth (v.11).

The first beast receives his power, seat, and authority from 'the dragon', who is Satan (v. 2). The sea out of which this first 'beast', - the Antichrist, - rises is figurative language, ^{17:15} The waters which thou sawest ... are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. ... ^{Is. 57:20} the wicked are like the troubled sea. In other words, this first beast is a human being who rises to prominence out of the nations and whose power will be *given* to him by 'the dragon', Satan. His description begins with ¹ seven heads *[foreshadowed in the totalitarianism of the early Roman Empire, cf. Dan. 2:4-43 1]* and ten horns *[ten kings, cf. 17:12; Dan. 7:24]* And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; *'ten toes'*, and upon his horns ten crowns *[the fullness of his power]*, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy *[cf. Dan. 7:25]* And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out (afflict) the saints of the most High, and think to change *[alter]* times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time *[3 1/2 years]* ... ^{Mt. 24:15} ... the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand); ... ^{II Thess. 2:3} ... that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.¹ ² And ... was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.

This deification projected by Satan of the Antichrist has had precursors throughout history, including the Caesars who gave themselves the title, '*Dominus et Deus*'. More recently, Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "I believe I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator ... I am fighting for the work of the Lord." ... Such aspirations mimic the angel's agenda referred to in Isaiah's prophecy

regarding Lucifer, son of the morning (Is. 14:12) who declared his intent to take God's place, ^{Is. 14:13} I will ascend into heaven ... ¹⁴ ... I will be like the most High. Under Satan's direction, Antichrist will be presented before the unbelieving world and elevated to the status of Godhood, and his words and his ways will become irrevocable. As John described, this first 'beast' of the 'end-times', - the Antichrist, - will be a seemingly impregnable and invincible physical embodiment of wicked satanic evil, drawing his power, authority, and influence directly from the dragon, the devil.

In his own warped manner, Satan understands the successful impact upon the world of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and how God achieved the salvation of His people. Similarly, he will understand the powerful witness for God of the two witnesses, who after their testimony is completed, he will have killed by the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit (11:7) but who were resurrected 3½ days later. ... He will decide to make his own attempt at death and resurrection to 'gull the gullible', ³ And I [John] saw one of his [the first beast – Antichrist's] heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after [admired, marvelled at] the beast. ... He becomes, - 'as it were', - 'wounded to death', assassinated by a sword, v.14, but 'miraculously' he will be 'healed' and 'resurrected' from the dead ... just like Jesus. He will seemingly defeat death and the grave ... just like Jesus! It's a 'con' though, for Paul explains how Antichrist's activities are after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (II Thess. 2:9).

And when Antichrist is 'spectacularly' restored, he will be stronger and more popular than ever, and ⁴ *they worshipped the dragon* which gave power unto the beast: *and they worshipped the beast*, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? ... He is amazing! He is incredible! ... However, he is a sham and a charlatan, nevertheless, the world is 'drawn in' by his deception. He will gain increased notoriety and applause on the world stage. ... In the eyes of the people, God has been obliterated, and society has become completely Godless! ... With bedazzled infatuation, as directed by the false prophet, they will worship the first beast (Antichrist), which in essence is worshipping his master, the dragon, Satan. The world will increase in its aggressive seemingly unrestrained godlessness, ⁵ *And there was given unto him [the Antichrist] a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [3½ years, which is the entire period of the persecution of the Church, particularly at the end, known as 'the great tribulation']*. ⁶ *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against [to violate God's glory] God, to blaspheme [desecrate] his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

Antichrist will become so powerful, none dare question his authority for he will convince the world of the futility of resisting him, ^{II Thess. 2:9} *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders [in the struggle for the souls of men and women],* ¹⁰ *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* ¹¹ *And*

for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. To further confirm his ‘kingdom’, *Rev. 13:7 it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ... The chief objects of his wrath are the saints, Rev. 12:17 the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. ... He will usher in a time of great tribulation upon the Church, Dan. 7:21 the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ... and a worldwide power was given him [the Antichrist] over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:7).*

And they *will* worship him for it is given to him to unite the world under his authority, ⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, *whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb* slain from the foundation of the world. ... At the same time though, there will be those who *refuse* to worship him, the saved whose names *are written in the book of life of the Lamb* slain from the foundation of the world. ... In their allegiance to the King of kings, many of them will pay the ultimate sacrifice in the greatest wave of tribulation ever! And that is why John sounds the solemn note, ⁹ If any man have an ear, let him hear. It is serious, and he calls on them to be patient and faithful in their suffering (v.10) ... for as Jesus promised, *Mt. 24:13 he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

The second beast (the ‘false prophet’) then rises out of the earth. He is the servant of the first beast (the ‘Antichrist’), who is the servant of the dragon, Satan (= the unholy triumvirate of Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet). It is the task of the second beast (the ‘false prophet’) to persuade every unbeliever to worship the first beast (the ‘Antichrist’). ... The aim for the false prophet’s new religion of is to bring every member of humanity to worship the Antichrist, similar to how Nebuchadnezzar decreed all must worship his image, *Dan. 3:4 To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*

This second beast sets out to imitate Christ for he had two horns like a lamb (Rev. 13:11) for he wanted to project himself as being innocent, pure, approachable ... but when he spoke, ¹¹ he spake as a *[fiercesome]* dragon. ¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth *[compelled]* the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ... The first beast (the Antichrist) exercises satanically inspired power in the secular realm, and the second beast (the false prophet) supports the first beast and leads the world to worship him. The second beast is the henchman of the first beast for he derives his power from his association with the Antichrist (the first beast).

With his great wonders (v.13), - his pseudo-miracles, - he will mesmerise the unbelieving world and he will duplicate miracles in the way Pharaoh's magicians imitated Moses and Aaron (Ex. 7:8-12). This satanically-aided and inspired second beast will replicate such miracles as Elijah performed on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:38) so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. He will be *so* convincing, and the people will be *so* gullible he will deceive them, and he will get them to make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live (v.14). ... The second beast will convince them to build an image to the first beast which all must worship, - a one world religion to the glory of the Antichrist!

The false prophet is then given the power to make the image of the beast 'live', and 'speak', and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed (v.15). ... The conflict is not between religion and no religion for anyone who dares not to believe in this image will be put to death. Instead, the conflict is between Christ and Antichrist, between God and Satan, ⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [*Antichrist and his image*], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And the followers of Antichrist, from ¹⁶ small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, [*must*] receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, a graven 'mark' (χάραγμα, a stamp) indicating their loyalty and worship of the beast. Again though, this is imitating how God commanded His people in the Law of Moses, ^{Dt. 6:8} thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes [*phylacteries, Mt. 23:5 ... also Ex. 13:9,16l.* ... Both the believer and the unbeliever are *marked*, for the believers have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev. 7:3). These 'marks' may or may not be an actual physical mark for believers *already* have a 'mark' which is not visible, ^{Eph. 1:13} in whom also after that ye believed, *ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise [cf. Is. 44:5l.* ... Also, without this mark of the beast, ¹⁷ no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ... Satan's authority demands *total allegiance* in every arena, including politics, religion, economics, ¹⁷ 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.

Finally, to aid the Christians alive at that time, John provides the name of the beast in symbolic format, using a device in the ancient world known as *gematria*, ¹⁸ 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. ... To try and decipher the number 666 can lead into all kinds of conundrums. Therefore, the best we can say is that since the number of the beast is a prophecy, its meaning will become clear *when the time arrives!*