

Revelation 13

The First Beast

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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 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?"

5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 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, 8 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. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

10 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.

The Second Beast

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 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. 13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 And it was allowed 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. 16 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, 17 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. 18 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.

The Great Counterfeiter

“Falsehood flies and the truth comes limping after it...” – Jonathan Swift

There is one important truth that defines the Book of Revelation: God is victorious in the end. The reason we must keep this in mind is because Satan is the great father of lies and his falsehoods seem to carry the day for a very long time.

This should come as no surprise to anyone acquainted with humanity.

- Marriages are wrecked by total breakdowns of trust.
- Employers cannot give their employees the benefit of the doubt.
- Investors lose their life savings to banking schemes and credit ratings that were built on lies.
- Parents have to discipline children who can tell a lie as easily as they tell the truth.
- Teachers have to remind students not to trust all the information they read on the internet.
- Voters try to make important decisions without the ability to trust much of what they read or see in the media.

We don't have to look very far to see the effects of the reign of Satan in the world around us.

People replace the truth and goodness of following Christ with the false experiences of Satan. The specifics of what Satan offers will follow in weeks to come. But, the focus of Revelation 13 is to identify the source of all of falsehood and counterfeiting in the world.

Sinful man will always be willing to pursue an idolatry that imitates God, but doesn't demand the absolute allegiance that God demands.

We need to note that Satan is ultimately trying to offer an alternative to God. He will never be successful in this mission because there is only one God with ultimate sovereignty and majesty.

Satan will, however, be successful in deceiving men. This is possible because men, blinded and cursed by sin, do not have the desire or the ability to know or understand the true God.

Wherever there is an absence of the knowledge of God, it will always be replaced with an idol.

The idolatry in Revelation 13 even goes so far as to counterfeit the Son and the Holy Spirit. Satan will mimic the cross and resurrection of Christ and mimic the supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit.

We live in a day and age where many Christians are deceived into thinking that because something is spiritual or supernatural then it must be from God. We must be careful to also understand that Satan is a spiritual being who has the ability to do great signs and wonders in the spiritual world. Only knowing and trusting God for who He truly is (having one's name written

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in the Lamb's Book of Life) and pursuing Him daily can offer protection from being deceived into worshipping idols.

One way that we can identify the beast is that he is at war with the church (those who confess Jesus as Lord). He will use the economic systems of the day to exert pressure on faithful Christians to either renounce Jesus or be killed. But rest assured, all who truly belong to Christ will persevere in the faith, even if it costs them their lives.

- Have you noticed that people are far more willing to follow a lie than the truth? Why do you think that is? Does Revelation 13 give clues to explain why that is the case?
- What clues from the text lead you to see that Satan is trying to offer an alternative to God?
- Why is the world so willing to accept Satan's alternative?
- How do you understand the mark of the Beast? (use sermon notes)
- Does being a follower of Jesus bring us closer to the world economic system or drive us away from it?
- How can we be faithful followers of Jesus while working in a fallen world economic system?
- How can the believers in Revelation 13 trust in God for sustenance instead of the beast, given that they are shut out from the economic system?