

**REVEALED**

**Part Ten: Vision of the Two Beasts**  
**Revelation 13:1-18**

*Daniel; Revelation 2:27, 3:21, 7, 9, 14:1 16:16*  
*John 14:16-27, 16:14; 1 Kings 10:14-15*

	GOD	DEVIL
1st Beast		
2nd Beast		
The Mark		

Pastor Casey Wilkerson  
7/31/16

**Revealed:**  
**Uncovering the Mystery of Revelation**  
**Part Ten: Revelation 13:1-18**  
**Vision of the Two Beasts**

**Intro**

Last week in chapter 12 we heard about, the cosmic drama production of good versus evil, where the dragon (devil) loses the war in heaven against God's army, so he's thrown to earth and takes out his anger on God's children (us). All the past sermons are online if you have been gone or you know you will miss one. Check it out on [westvalleychurch.com](http://westvalleychurch.com). Chapter 13 is like part two to the fight scene between God and the devil that started in chapter 12. Chapter 13 shares with us the Dragon's strategy for continuing to wage war on God's children. The dragon is comparable to a suicide bomber or a kamikaze pilot. He has a mission to defeat God and his children. He won't win, he can't win, and has already lost that war. So in the meantime he is going to make things as bad for God's children as possible. He's going to lie to us, accuse us, and do whatever he can to keep us from trusting and obeying God. He is going to be destroyed, but in the meantime he's hoping to take us with him.

Revelation 13 is also one of the more famous passages in Revelation because it contains the mark of the beast. Throughout history, people have tried to name the beast and determine the meaning of the "mark." Which by itself is an interesting study and we will spend some time discussing it some more detail a little later. If you are interested in studying chapter 13 beyond what we have time for today, study the book of Daniel. About two-thirds of all the Old Testament references in Revelation 13, come from the book of Daniel.

Today is going to seem like "opposite day" today. In your notes you can write down certain things you hear that are distinguished as being opposite of God. It's on purpose that you have more space in your notes to write about the Devil, than God, because the Scripture today focuses mainly on the Devil. You don't typically take notes in church on the devil, but it is important for us to understand who we are fighting against, and how they are trying to draw us away from God. As you see opposites, or parodies, write them down. Hopefully that will help as we head into battle when we leave here today.

**Prayer**

Revelation 13 has two beasts connected to the Dragon that we will study today. You will notice as we read that the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast form a competing trinity with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As the Son receives authority from the Father (Revelation 2:27; 3:21), so the first beast receives authority from the dragon, and as the Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14), so the second beast does with respect to the first beast (Revelation 13:12–15). Though the Satanic beasts appear to fake the truth successfully in their attempts to deceive, they remain evil and never achieve the divine character that they mimic.

## Beast 1

Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads. There as a crown on each horn. A name against God was written on each head. This beast looked like a leopard, with feet like a bear's feet. He had a mouth like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave the beast all of his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast looked as if it had been wounded and killed. But this death wound was healed. The whole world was amazed and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given his power to the beast. And they also worshiped the beast. They asked, "Who is as powerful as the beast? Who can make war against him?" (Revelation 13:1-4, niv)

For John, the beast called up from the sea by the dragon combines Daniel's four beasts into one, part leopard, part bear, part lion, with ten horns and seven heads. Like the plagues of Revelation 9 that were super-sized versions of the plagues of Moses on Egypt, this new beast is not just a new animal, but it is the greatest combination of powers the world had ever seen.

The beast from the sea is the parody of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. The name alone is opposite-beast and lamb. Christ and antichrist. Christ came from heaven – the beast from the sea. Jesus suffers for the sake of others – the beast causes people to suffer. The Lamb shares the authority and is a reflection of the One who is seated on the throne – the beast shares the authority and is the reflection of the dragon. The purpose of the Lamb is to set people free – the mission of the beast is to place people into deeper bondage. The beast has a deadly wound that was healed, which compares to Jesus and his death and resurrection.

Most commentators think it is clear that the beast for John and his readers is Rome, which describes a dark power of a pagan empire claiming to be eternal, its ruler claiming to be a god, and demanding complete allegiance from its citizens. In John's eyes, Rome rose up as a reflection of the beast. The Roman emperors in the first century claimed to be gods and were given honorific titles and declared "divine" at their deaths. Does being declared "divine" at their death, sound silly to anyone else? The "blasphemous names" that appear on the heads of the beast could be referring to previous Roman Emperors – Julius Caesar, Augustus, Claudius, etc. For John and the early Christians, Rome was the beast, but this vision is bigger than that. Last week we started this vision with the word semeon mega, or a great spectacle in Revelation 12:1, telling us that this vision has meaning beyond itself. Rome isn't a huge threat to us now, so what; ignore this passage till they are? No. This vision encompasses all anti-God forces throughout history. The Roman Empire represents both past wicked kingdoms and potential future manifestations of evil.

If the heads do represent Roman Emperors, the head with the wound is most likely symbolizing the past emperor Nero. It is likely that much of this chapter hints at the most dangerous emperor the early church had faced – Nero. We know from other ancient sources the hideous and violent ways that he persecuted the church. Although he had died, everyone lived in fear that he would be back to carry out Satan's plan. The reference to the death wound being healed is likely a direct reference to Nero and the rumors that he had raised to life. Many rulers like Nero, Stalin, or Hitler would be prime historical examples of people that are expressions of

this beast. The healed wound also would represent the resilience of evil that is defeated but continues to make war.

Satan is seen as the authoritative source behind the Roman Empire. Though it is true that God is ultimately the Sovereign that gives all kings and rulers their power (Romans 13:1–7), those who would pour out such wrath and fury on God’s innocent children have no other source than Satan. John understood that when one worshiped the Emperor, they were worshiping Satan (the dragon) who gave the beast his power. We live in a time where Rome is not the evil power it once was. For us, this first beast could be anything concerning religious, economic, and social aspects of the idolatrous culture we live in.

The adoring public was enamored with the beast’s power and lusted after the empire’s war machine and impressionable might. The people who worship the beast ask “Who is like the beast?” which compares to the Old Testament question of praise, “Who is like God?” The public worshipped the beast and his power. “Who can make war against Him?” they would ask. These rhetorical questions are interesting when we know what previously happened in chapter 12. Michael led God’s army into battle and beat the Dragon who later gave power to the beast. Michael’s name means “Who is like God?” Can you imagine Michael hearing these questions being asked? All through history powerful civilizations have had such questions asked of them. Michael and all of God’s army is probably baffled that the earth has forgotten how the Dragon lost the war. It shouldn’t totally surprise us when we remember how often the nation of Israel forgets what God did for them or led them through, when they face trials. How often do we forget what God has helped us through the minute we face trials?

Verse 11 tells us about the second beast.

## **Beast 2**

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he talked like a dragon. This beast stands before the first beast and uses the same power that the first beast has. He uses this power to make everyone living on earth worship the first beast. The first beast was the one that had the death wound that was healed. The second one does great miracles. He even makes fire come down from heaven to earth while people are watching. (Revelation 13:11-13, niv)

This beast tries to look like the Lamb, but it speaks like the dragon (Revelation 13:11). It is the beast that offers people life, yet it turns out to bring death, compared to the Spirit of God who invites and gives people eternal life of the kingdom. Looks can be deceiving. This second beast is a false prophet. True prophecy moves people to worship the true God, not deceiving them to worship a false god. Anything in life that entices us to idolize our humanity or the things of earth can be an expression of this beastly power that wants to appear Lamb-like.

The role of this second beast was to support the first beast and deceive people by making everyone on earth worship the first beast (Revelation 13:12). This second beast, the false prophet, draws people towards the first beast, similar to the relationship between Jesus and

the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-27). As the Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus, the second beast draws others to the first beast. And if you are drawn to the beast, you will get the mark.

## The Mark

The second animal also forced all people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to have a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. No one could buy or sell without this mark. This mark is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Whoever has understanding can find the meaning of the number. This requires wisdom. This number is the number of a man. His number is 666. (Revelation 13:16-18, niv)

The number 666 first appears in the Scripture in 1 Kings 10:14-15. Each year 666 talents was the weight of the gold Solomon brought into the kingdom. The point of the Kings narrative is that Solomon was moving the heart of the people away from the LORD and toward wealth and idolatry. This narrative shows how a number can symbolize the perversion of kingship through idolatry and economic evil. 666 is an intensive symbolic expression of incompleteness, idolatry, judgment, non-fulfillment, and evil itself raised to the third power.

Because the mark, we are told, is actually the name of the beast (Revelation 13:17) via a number, many have attempted to calculate the name. Verse 18 says tells the reader they will need wisdom to figure out who the beast is, so I'll share what I have learned and you can decide if you have enough wisdom or not to figure it out. Scholars go in two basic directions when trying to solve this mystery: (1) finding a formula that when applied to a person or name derives the number 666, or (2) understanding the number 666 to be a symbol in and of itself.

The first approach is related to the ancient practice of gematria, a type of riddle where letters of the alphabet are assigned a number in order, and then all of the letters of the name are added together. In this case, the Greek letters in Caesar Nero add up to the number 666. If this was to be a mere coincidence, it should be noted that some manuscripts were found with the number 616, the sum of all letters if Nero's name is written in the Latin alphabet. This lends great support to the beast of Revelation being thought of as Caesar Nero. Nero, as the Church's first imperial persecutor, had an infamous reputation for horror and bloodshed. Nero becomes the prototype for all subsequent evil rulers.

Attempts to identify 666 with the literal calculation of an individual's name encounter difficulty because of the metaphorical manner in which language and numbers are used in Apocalyptic writings. Gematria is questionable because there are so many names, ancient and modern, that come to 666. I found three rules if you want to make a particular name equal 666: "1), if the proper name by itself will not work, add a title; 2), if the sum cannot be found in Greek, try Hebrew, or Latin or any other language; 3) when all else fails, do not be too particular about the spelling. See the difficulty? Sounds silly, but this is how people could get the answer they were hoping for.

The other complication, is that there is no evidence of any other number in the book of Revelation being subject to Gematria calculations. (e.g., twenty-four elders, seven seals, the 144,000, three and a half years, two witnesses, seven heads, ten horns). If a Hebrew or Greek

gematria system of literal calculation were being used here, then John would have likely alerted his readers by writing something like “and the number of his name *in Hebrew (or Greek)* is 666.” Which is what he does other places in Revelation when he needs to specify a particular language “in Hebrew” or “in Greek” (see in Revelation 9:11 and 16:16).

You can search the Internet and find lots of people and places that equal 666. One website, said that because the Hebrew “w” represents 6, www equals 666....as in the World Wide Web. Ironic that I found that on the internet itself? Someone created a webpage saying webpages are evil? Therefore, scholars say, that because the numbers can be stretched to mean just about anyone in particular, the concept of literally calculating to identify only one historical individual must be rejected.

The number 6 is incomplete and imperfect, just shy of 7. This means, if we are taking the second approach that 666 is to be a symbol, the number represents a type of false God, or antichrist. This would still give room for Nero, Hitler, or many other evil powers in the history of mankind who attempted to draw people to them and away from God.

Importantly, in the end, we are told that the number of the beast is the number of a person (Revelation 13:18), meaning, it is a “human” number. The beast is discernable to human beings through human processes because the beast will never obtain the divine status that it seeks. The beast’s power will always remain in the province of human activities and human failures, failures, failures.

One interpretation is that because the number six is one less than the perfect number seven, the threefold repetition of the six would indicate that for all their pretensions to deity, Satan and the two beasts were just creatures and not the Creator. That six is **man’s number** is illustrated in many instances in the Bible, including that man should work six days and rest the seventh, and that we were created on the 6th day.

The beast as an oppressive and unjust force has been historicized throughout the years as it was in the first century. It symbolizes anyone or any power that seeks absolute allegiance, oppresses the church, or introduces theological error, or ethical compromise. Sadly, many individuals throughout history could be correctly identified, even if just in partial, as the “beast”.

The mark being put on everyone suggests branding or tattooing which was often used as a way of marking prisoners, criminals, or slaves. To be identified with someone’s name is equivalent to partaking of that person’s character. Earlier in Revelation [7:2-4; 14:1], Ch. 7 we hear of God’s Seal on their foreheads which is in contrast to the mark of the beast. Those who belong to the Lamb were marked by his life (through baptism). This is God’s Mark on our lives, the mark we want. Now John sees those who belong to the beast as marked by its life. There is no in between for John, you are marked by and belong to one entity or another: The Beast or the Kingdom of God. The bad news, is you have to choose. The good news, is you get to choose. God or the Beast. By not choosing, you have made your choice.

## **Closing**

All of this raises the question of how we think about the beasts today. If the power of ancient Rome is gone and the cultic worship practices with it, do these two beasts still exist today? Sadly for us, YES. The first beast still lives in the various aspects of empire, culture, principalities and powers that destroy and enslave people.

And the beast that looks like the lamb but speaks like the dragon is the constant barrage of anything that tricks people into believing that real life can be found in the values, purposes, and goals of the culture. God is looking for a people who in the midst of the empire, in the midst of this battle against the Dragon, live as people marked by the Lamb. How do we fight against this Dragon and his beasts? Love Jesus, Love others. Live as People with Purpose.

Live with God's Mark.