

# REVELATION

## Chapter 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.**

**13:1–10**† There is no doubt that this passage teaches two truths: (1) The beast receives his power from the devil and serves the devil's purposes; (2) the beast is a powerful enemy of the church, but he will not be able to do any permanent damage to the elect. (CSB)

**13:1** *beast rising out of the sea.* First mentioned in 11:7. According to some, the beast symbolizes the Roman Empire, the deification of secular authority. According to others, he is the final, personal antichrist. The background seems to be Daniel's vision of the four great beasts (Da 7:2–7). See 17:8–11 for the interpreting angel's explanation of the beast. (CSB)

First of two beasts appearing in this vision (cf v 11). This terrifying creature seems to be something of a composite of the four beasts described in Dn 7:2–7. Because the four beasts in Daniel's vision represented four world powers, this first beast is best taken as an embodiment of broad political authority, particularly the Roman Caesar. (TLSB)

The first "beast" or evil creature that the dragon conjures up in his warfare against the woman and her seed comes up "out of the sea" (13:1). In 11:7 "the beast" (τὸ θηρίον) which comes "out of the abyss" (ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου) makes war with the two witnesses (representing the Christian church) and kills them. The use of "beast" here in 13:1, the same term as in 11:7, suggests that these two beasts are related, though they are not the same. The beast "coming up out of the abyss" in 11:7 is to be identified with "the angel of the abyss" in 9:11, who in turn is to be identified with the "dragon" of Revelation 12: all three are Satan. Here in 13:1 the beast is not the dragon (the angel of the abyss), but it is under the control of the dragon (Satan himself). (CC)

The “sea” in 13:1 is, then, similar to “the abyss” (hell) in 9:11 and 11:7. Just as Satan is the “beast” from “the abyss,” that is, hell (11:7), similarly the “beast” here in 13:1, which is under Satan’s control, is from “the sea,” which is a place of chaos and evil on earth. The sea as the origin of this beast points to a sinister origin. This is indicated in 12:18 (ET 13:1), for the dragon (Satan) stands on the shore of the “sea” in anticipation as he awaits the beast to come forth at his bidding. If one faces out toward the Aegean Sea from Patmos (the island off the coast of Asia Minor where John wrote Revelation according to 1:9) or west from Israel’s shore on the Mediterranean Sea, one is looking in the general direction of Rome, which was for John and for the Christians of his time the epitome of evil worldly power, just as Babylon was for ancient Israel. (CC)

In the OT the “sea,” especially in its boiling rage, is frequently portrayed as the place of the fearful chaos and destruction caused by mankind’s sin and rebellion against God. As such it is the dwelling place of the sea monsters Leviathan and Rahab, which terrorize the human race. In Is 57:20–21 the wicked are likened to “the tossing of the sea” which has no rest or peace and whose waves are always casting up sludge and filth. Only God himself can control the fury of this sea—as exhibited in Jesus’ stilling of the tempest (see Ps 74:13–14; Mt 8:26). (CC)

At the call of the dragon, the beast comes from such a tumultuous sea. This beast from the sea is the first monster which will plague the people of God on earth. Similarly Daniel in a vision saw four beasts come up out of the raging sea (Dan 7:2–3). Especially the fourth beast (Dan 7:25) would terrorize the saints of God on earth. (CC)

*ten diadems on its horns.* See 17:12. (CSB)

The first beast has “ten horns and seven heads” (Rev 13:1), exactly like the dragon (12:3). This identifies the beast, and what it represents, as the instrument and agent of the dragon. The beast, like the dragon, also has “diadems” (13:1). However, the diadems—the sign of royal authority and dominion—are not upon the monster’s heads, as was the case with the dragon, but on its horns. The dragon, and not either of the two beasts he conjures up, has diadems on his heads, because *the dragon* is the supreme mastermind of evil who will motivate and inspire the beasts. The head is the seat of intelligence, so through the *heads of the beast the dragon will motivate the beast to carry out his craftily devised schemes*. The beast may think these schemes are its own inspired thoughts for action. But in reality they are implanted by the dragon, for the *dragon’s heads* wear the diadems while just the *beast’s horns* wear the diadems. (CC)

The horns of the beast symbolize earthly power which it exercises in and over human affairs through individual authorities. The fact that the beast, like the dragon, has *ten* horns means that it will be the dominant earthly power before whom no other worldly authority can stand. (CC)

*crowns.*† See note on 12:3. (CSB)

The diadems on the horns of the beast suggest that once its heads are inspired by the dragon, the individual authorities whom the horns represent will act on their own power. God will allow them to carry out their actions by their own royal authority. While the horns of the beast wear diadems, its heads wear name(s) or title(s) of “blasphemy.” The heads of the beast—that is the minds of the rulers controlled by the dragon—are directed for the purpose of blaspheming God and his saints. Blasphemy is the defaming and abusive speech by which God and all that belongs to him are ridiculed and mocked (see Mt 12:31). (CC)

*blasphemous names.* Roman emperors tended to assume titles of deity. Domitian, e.g., was addressed as *Dominus et Deus noster* (“Our Lord and God”). (CSB)

When John recorded Rv, the caesar was demanding divine titles and honors, arrogating names for himself in blasphemous ways (e.g., “divine,” “lord,” “god”). (TLSB)

**13:2** *leopard ... bear ... lion.* John’s beast combined characteristics of Daniel’s four beasts (Da 7:4–6). (CSB)

In appearance the beast looks “like a leopard,” but has “feet ... like [those] of a bear” and “its mouth was like the mouth of a lion” (Rev 13:2). This beast appears to be a composite of the four beasts Daniel saw in Dan 7:2–7. In Daniel’s vision, the beasts came out of the sea (Dan 7:2) in succession, and each took the place of the one before it. After the first three had come and gone, the fourth beast continued on alone to “devour all the earth” (Dan 7:23). This fourth beast had “ten horns” and then another horn which supplanted three of the ten; all of the horns represent kings through whom the beast exercised his destructive power (Dan 7:7, 24–25). The additional horn would also war against the saints and (temporarily) defeat them, for they are given into his hand for a length of time: “a time and times and half a time,” probably indicating a figurative three and a half years (Dan 7:21, 25; cf. 11:36–45; 12:7, 11–12). This horn also spoke “great/arrogant/boastful things” against God, perhaps referring to blasphemies (Dan 7:8, 20, 25; cf. 11:36). (CC)

Thus the description of the beast from the sea in Rev 13:1–2 suggests that it resembles the fourth beast from the sea in Dan 7:7. John sees only one beast because by his time in history the first three had come and gone. For after the fourth beast which Daniel prophetically saw had taken the place of the first three, it would remain active throughout the whole time period designated by “a time, times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25)—three and a half figurative years. This is the same time period that the beast in Rev 13:1–2 would be active, but in 13:5 that period is designated as forty-two months, an equivalent expression. While the fourth beast in Daniel 7 had not yet come into existence during the lifetime of Daniel, it had by John’s time. For in Revelation 12 the casting out of the dragon from heaven and the initiating of his warfare against the woman on earth took place at the ascension of Christ into heaven (12:5, 7–9, 13). Because the dragon could not destroy the woman, he summons the beast to carry on his warfare against the woman, the Christian church. And this warfare by the dragon, through the beast, began at or shortly after the ascension of Christ. The time period during which the beast would be active, designated and symbolized by 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), and three and a half years (“a time and times and half a time,” 12:14), would be the whole period of church history, from Christ’s ascension up to the end of this present world at Christ’s return. (CC)

John sees only one beast from the sea. While it resembles the fourth beast of Daniel 7, it also carries forward into its own royal authority and power the prerogatives and trappings of the first three beasts in Daniel 7. The beast John sees has characteristics of (1) the leopard, (2) the bear, and (3) the lion (Rev 13:2). Those same three animals are mentioned by Daniel, but in the opposite order: the first beast was like a lion, the second was like a bear, and the third was like a leopard (Dan 7:4–6). This reversed order suggests that *through the one beast from the sea which John sees, John looks backward in time toward the first three beasts in Daniel 7, which are now incorporated in this one beast.* Like the fourth beast in Dan 7:7, the beast which John sees also has “ten horns” (Rev 13:1), clearly associating it with the ten-horned dragon of 12:3 and also the ten-horned fourth beast seen by Daniel. For that fourth beast seen by Daniel in the sixth century B.C. has now come into its reign and power, bearing all the trappings of the first three, which at John’s time (the first century A.D.) are no longer in existence. However, unlike the fourth beast of

Daniel 7, the beast from the sea which John sees has “seven heads” (Rev 13:1), which provide further evidence that it is to be identified as a minion of the seven-headed dragon (12:3). A connection to the Roman Empire is supported by the links (discussed immediately above) between this beast and the fourth beast in Daniel 7, for it is during the era of the fourth beast in Daniel 7 that the “one like a Son of Man” comes, receives power and glory from the Ancient of Days, and establishes his kingdom, which will last forever (Dan 7:13–14, 18, 22, 27). The “Son of Man,” of course, is Christ Jesus who established the kingdom of God, which indeed will last forever. Christ’s life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation in glory took place during the era when the Roman Empire was the dominant world power. (CC)

Many commentators today identify the beast of Rev 13:1–2 with the Roman Empire. In John’s day, and long after, the beast of 13:1–2 did indeed represent Rome. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Rome continued to serve as the type and model of such tyrannical powers that would arise in the future. In light of this history, the interpretation includes Rome but also must be broadened: *the beast represents and symbolizes every human authority and everything of the human nature that the dragon can corrupt and control and use in his warfare against the woman (the church) and her seed (individual Christians):* political, governmental, social, economic, philosophical, and educational systems, as well as individuals. No one entity or person at a given time in history will exhaust what the beast signifies. While a personage like Hitler or Stalin might for a time and in a particular region epitomize what the beast represents, that personage also would not exhaust such representation. Other human forces and people too would be at work under, beside, or apart from such typical fulfillments of what the beast symbolizes. And what the beast signifies will be *worldwide at all times*, and not present only where an epitomized human individual or human organization exists at the moment. During the lifetime of John and afterward the Roman Empire was at times so diabolical and terrifying in its opposition to Christianity and the church, it would become a model and type of all succeeding tyrannical governments and human powers and peoples, just as Babylon had been. (CC)

To this first beast “the dragon gave ... his [the dragon’s] power and his throne and great authority” (13:2). As Swete states, “The Dragon works through the Beast as his agent; the war is of Satan’s making, but the [Roman] Empire is his tool for waging it.” This beast is a vassal of Satan himself, for it owes its position to him and it rules by his authority and sanction. (CC)

*dragon.* Because Satan is intent on using this beast for his purposes, he endows him with his own power and authority. This empowerment is only possible because God allows it, however, since all authority ultimately comes from Him. (TLSB)

**13:3 mortal wound ... healed.** † Wound possibly could refer to the emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity and its becoming the established religion of the empire; the healing could be the resultant state-church system. Emphasizes the tremendous recuperative power of the beast. (CSB)

Possibly a cryptic allusion to the Roman emperors Caligula or Nero. Sulp: “According to that which was written regarding [Nero];—‘And his mortal wound was healed,’—to be sent forth again near the end of the world, in order that he may practice the mystery of iniquity” (NPNF 2 11:111). (TLSB)

“And one of its heads was as if it had been fatally wounded unto death, but its wound of death had been healed” (13:3). The heads of the beast represent kings or rulers of one kind or another, because the dragon’s schemes are carried out according to the intelligence he has given to the beast, which in turn the beast exercises through rulers and leaders in various spheres. The fact

that one head was killed indicates that any particular ruler will not remain forever. Rulers come and go. Some come near to death and then survive. For example, the Roman emperor Caligula (ruled A.D. 37–41) had once become seriously ill then unexpectedly revived and recovered. Perhaps for John this would have served as an example of one of the beast’s heads dying but then being healed. Caligula also attempted to set up a statue of himself in the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> This attempt could well have been for John an example of a name of “blasphemy,” as on each of the beast’s heads (13:1). (CC)

Closer to the time when John received the revelation, the emperor Nero (A.D. 54–68) could also have served as an example of one of the beast’s heads being mortally wounded. His reign was filled with wickedness; for example, he initiated a fearful persecution of Christians in Rome. Eventually, after being condemned to death by the Roman Senate, he committed suicide in order to escape the fate of dying shamefully as a public enemy. Though he was given a public funeral, the rumor was spread that he had not died but had escaped to Parthia. It was further rumored that he was attempting to raise an army and would return to Rome to regain his throne. In the years after his death several imposters claimed to be Nero. Near the end of the first century A.D. the rumor of his return eventually died, but it was replaced by the curious belief that he would rise from the grave and thus reclaim his imperial throne. (CC)

While Caligula and Nero can serve as examples of the mortally wounded head of the beast, and thus also as models or types of future tyrants, the overall picture in 13:1–10 is that at any given time, there will be many human powers that represent the beast. There always will be authorities which are overthrown and replaced by others. The longing for a former ruler or power (or at least one like him) to return, as if risen from the dead, may remain in the hearts of many people. (CC)

*whole earth marveled.* † See 17:8 for the same reaction. The world expects that the beast will be victorious (cf. v. 4: “Who can make war against him [the beast]?”) and that the church will finally suffer total defeat. Hence the astonishment at the wounding of the beast. But the prophecies in Revelation assure God’s people that such an outcome will not occur. (CSB)

The powerful and fearsome tyranny exhibited by the beast engages the attention of much of the human race, so much so that people in awe marvel at the beast in admiration. (CC)

**13:4** *they worshiped the dragon* – Satan shares his demonic power with the beast so that this monstrosity will induce his subjects to worship the age-old impostor. Cf v 11, when another beast joins in this coalition. Then, the devil and this pair of beasts form a counterfeit “anti-Trinity” (TLSB)

The powerful and fearsome tyranny exhibited by the beast engages the attention of much of the human race, so much so that people in awe marvel at the beast in admiration (13:3). They “worshiped the dragon,” the mastermind behind the beast, as “they also worshiped the beast” (13:4). Worship of the Roman emperors had been encouraged ever since the reign of Augustus, but it was not until the latter part of the first century A.D. that such worship was widespread. Wherever people actually engage in formal worship of the state and its leaders, or when they place their hope and trust in human institutions and affairs and resort to them in place of God, they are worshiping the dragon because he encourages such idolatry. So strong is the beast’s stranglehold on people that they are helpless in opposing it, even if they would desire to do so, for no one can “go to war with it” (13:4). No one “is like the beast” (13:4); no one can stand up to it. Christians also are not spectators but also suffer because of the dragon’s warfare against the woman of Revelation 12, who represents the church, but they never worship the beast. Though the church suffers oppression and even martyrdom as she obeys God rather than man (Acts 5:29),

she turns the other cheek (Mt 5:39; cf. Rom 13:1–10) because she is not called to wage an earthly war, but a spiritual war (Eph 6:10–22). (CC)

**13:5** *was given*. Four times in the Greek text of vv. 5–7 the passive “was given” occurs, emphasizing the subordinate role of the beast (see vv. 2, 4). (CSB)

While the whole human race (ὅλη ἡ γῆ, Rev 13:3) is afflicted by this henchman of the dragon, it is particularly the saints of God on earth who are the focus of the beast’s warfare and tyranny. It is for that reason that the beast is given a mouth by which it speaks “great things” (13:5)—arrogance, hybris—and blasphemes God’s name, his holy habitation, and all who are dwelling there (13:6; cf. Ps 23:6). And in its warfare, it sets out to conquer, to destroy God’s holy people by subverting their faith and outlawing their witness to the Lamb who was slain. As the beast exercises authority “over every tribe and people and tongue and nation” (13:7), the woman and her seed will be isolated and tormented to no end, for throughout the whole time period from Christ’s ascension up to the End at his return (the era symbolized by the forty-two months, 13:5), she will have no relief from the beast’s oppression. But the church will not perish, for the names of God’s people are indelibly “written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world,” and thus can never be removed from the heart and gracious care of God (13:8; see also 3:5; 17:8). (CC)

*forty-two months*.† The entire NT period. (CSB)

**13:6** *blasphemies*.† Against God’s name and God’s chosen people (here called God’s dwelling place, or tabernacle in Greek text). Paul calls them God’s temple (Eph 2:19–22), whose citizenship is in heaven (Php 3:20). (CSB)

The beast not only blasphemes God but also slanders heaven and the Church. If he could, this fiend would bedevil the elect beyond the grave! (TLSB)

**13:7** *make war*.† A possible reference to Christians being persecuted, killed and driven into the catacombs. (CSB)

Because of the authority Satan has lent the beast, he has great strength to inflict misery upon God’s people. (TLSB)

**13:8** *all ... will worship*. In Roman times, people throughout the empire were required to offer incense to images of Caesar. (TLSB)

*before the foundation of the world*. Paul likewise teaches that God chose the elect for eternal salvation even before the world began (Eph 1:4; Rm 8:28–30). This election was based on His grace, not on anything the recipient had done (Rm 11:5; 2Tm 1:9). (TLSB)

*book of life belonging to the Lamb*. Symbol of God choosing His people and their membership in His kingdom. (TLSB)

The “book of life” is a metaphor which symbolizes that the names of God’s saints are written in his mind and on his heart. God knows each of his people by name (see Jn 10:3, 27), and no one can pluck any of them out of his hand nor that of the Lamb (Jn 10:28–30). God’s saints belong to him because of the Lamb and his victory (Rev 5:5, 9; 7:3, 14). Thus “the book of life” is called “the book of life of the Lamb” here in 13:8 (and in 21:27). When John will see the new heaven and new earth, he will be told that only “those who have been written in the book of life of the

Lamb” will enter the heavenly city (21:27; cf. Lk 10:20). Their names have been recorded in “the book of life from the foundation of the world” (17:8). Because the Lamb of God, the Messiah, was chosen and ordained to be the slain and risen Savior of God’s people before the foundation of the world, God’s chosen people were written in the book of life “from the foundation of the world” (CC)

**13:9** *has an ear, let him hear* – “If anyone has ears, let him listen” (13:9) is an admonition by the Spirit of God for *anyone and everyone* to heed what is to follow. This was also Jesus’ admonition to all who heard him (e.g., Mt 11:15; 13:9, 43). The question of who is given ears that hear is bound up in the mystery of the doctrine of election (Mt 13:10–17). The admonition at the end of Revelation 13 (13:18) suggests that every Christian must seek and receive wisdom from God in order to understand the chapter (and indeed, all of Revelation and all of Scripture). Similar calls to the churches are given at the end of each of the seven letters in Revelation 2–3: “the one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the churches” (ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The purpose there is for the Word of God to call forth repentance and faith (e.g., 2:16–17). In 13:9, the admonition is more for the purpose of instilling patience and faith (13:10b) in view of the fact that the suffering of the saints will be of short duration, and since it is under God’s permissive will in Christ (13:7), they should not attempt to resist their “persecutors.” (CC)

**13:10** *if anyone ... slain*. This oracle is intended to instill confidence in the persecuted Christians. God is still in control, regardless of what they might be suffering. (TLSB)

*endurance and faith of the saints* – The beleaguered Church is encouraged to believe that, come what may, their eternal election is sure (cf. Rm 8:31–39). (TLSB)

While in God’s estimate the time is short, for the Christian undergoing persecution and suffering the time can seem endless. Especially then will Christians be tempted to take things into their own hands. But the Spirit of God warns the Christian not to do so. Rather, accept what God allows, even if it is cruel and unjust, and do not resist it. No human being can stand against the beast nor control it, since “on earth is not his equal.” For in God’s governance the woman is destined to suffer the warfare of the beast. To whatever degree “captivity” and being “killed” (Rev 13:10) come upon the Christian and whatever form imprisonment and martyrdom take, the Christian is to suffer them patiently in faith for the sake of the Gospel and the Lord Christ (see 1 Pet 2:18–25; 3:14; 4:14). “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (Rev 13:10) because it is in such suffering and trials that the faith of the saints shines forth to the world, and the saints realize what God is accomplishing in permitting the beast to conquer them. As stated in 11:7–13, their persecution will be used by God for the sake of the church’s Gospel mission and in view of her ultimate glory (cf. 15:2–4). For in such “patience” and “faith” the church entrusts her own care to God, knowing that in God’s own time he will also mete out justice upon her foes. (CC)

**13:1–10** In order to bolster his attacks against God and His people, the devil enlists the aid of a hideous beast, which represents worldly power and political authority run amok. This scenario invites us to consider some important questions: Have we ever allowed an authority besides God to determine what is right or wrong for us? Have we ever obeyed man rather than God? If so, seek God’s forgiveness in Christ. He invites us to believe that He chose us and wrote our name in His Book of Life before the world began. • Father, I thank You for making me Your own child through Christ Jesus. Grant me strength always to endure even difficult days, especially in these last times before the end. Amen.

*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.**

**13:11–18**† The beast out of the earth, which symbolizes apostate religion, as 13:1–10 refers to hostile civil government. (CSB)

**13:11** *another beast, rising out of the earth.*† According to some, he symbolizes religious power in the service of secular authorities. According to others, he is the personal false prophet (see 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). While the Lutheran confessions (S.A. II, iv, 10) identify the antichrist with the papacy, in a broader sense this beast represents all doctrine which undermines the gospel and promotes the purposes of the devil. (CSB)

In contrast to the first beast, which arose from the sea, this one arises from the earth. Thus, the two beasts stem from and hold influence over all the world. (TLSB)

The second beast or monster that the dragon enlists in his warfare against the woman and her seed comes “up out of the earth” (13:11). In Daniel 7 the four beasts come from the sea but they represent four kingdoms that “arise from the earth” (Dan 7:17). Here in Rev 13:11 this second beast is from the earth and thus is different from the beast from the sea in 13:1. While the beast from the sea, which is outside the usual realm of humanity, represents external oppression that forces its dominating tyrannical rule upon people and thus enslaves them, the beast from the earth and what it represents works from within and among people, springing up from humanity’s own native soil, as it were. The beast from the earth does not force itself upon people but rather insinuates itself into their confidence and then leads them astray. (CC)

*two horns like a lamb.* He attempts to appear gentle and harmless. (CSB)

This beast does not appear as fearful as the first one (vv 1–3). Jesus’ warning about the wolves in sheep’s clothing still applies (Mt 7:15). (TLSB)

This beast has “two horns resembling a lamb’s, but it was speaking like the dragon” (13:11). In contrast to the beast from the sea, which had seven heads and ten horns, this monster has but one head with two horns. A lamb suggests meekness and innocence. However, this is deceptive for its voice is like “the dragon,” that is, it speaks for the dragon of Revelation 12, who is the devil. Victorinus (third century) in his Latin commentary says that this beast from the earth is “a false prophet” (“falsum prophetam”) which “places in the temple of Jerusalem a golden image [idol] of the Antichrist” (“imago aurea Antichristi in templo Hierosolymis ponatur”). Oecumenius (sixth century) in his Greek commentary cites 2 Thess 2:9 and interprets the beast to be “the Antichrist,

whose coming is by the working of the devil” (ὁ ἀντίχριστος, οὗ ἔστιν ἡ παρουσία κατένεργειαν τοῦ Διαβόλου). The beast appears as if it were the Christ, the Lamb of God, but since it speaks for the dragon, it is in reality a false christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:13–14). *While the beast from the sea represents every tyranny by human power and enterprise (political, social, economic, educational, and so forth), the beast from the earth represents religious tyranny. In brief, the first beast can be called the “political beast,” while the second is the “religious beast.”* (CC)

This religious beast is the “false prophet” mentioned in Rev 16:13; 19:20; and 20:10 and is to be identified also with the “harlot” of Revelation 17–18. While Revelation retains the symbol of the beast from the sea (the political beast) throughout, (Cf. Rev. 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10,13; 17:3-17; 19:20; 20:4, 10) the symbol of the beast from the earth (the religious beast) appears only here, in 13:11–18. Later in Revelation “the false prophet” (ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) replaces it and then the “false prophet” in turn is finally replaced by and becomes “the harlot” (ἡ πόρνη) in Revelation 17–18. This suggests that while the religious beast at first represents all false religions and spiritual movements, including gross idolatry and pseudo-Christianity (13:14–15), as time goes on it develops and evolves into its more deadly form, that of the apostate Christianity of the pseudo-church, the Antichrist (see 1 Jn 4:1–3) (CC)

*spoke like a dragon.* See Jesus’ warning in Mt 7:15 about ravenous wolves who come in sheep’s clothing. (CSB)

**13:12** *exercises all the authority of the first beast.* The trinity of evil is now complete. The beast from the earth is under the authority of the beast from the sea. The latter is subject to the dragon. Satan, secular power and religious compromise (or Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet) join against the cause of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (CSB)

This second beast destroys the Church from the inside, by introducing false doctrines and errant practices (cf 1Jn 4:1–3). Cf Rv 19:20, where this second beast is explicitly called “the false prophet.” (TLSB)

The beast from the sea is the dragon’s prime agent in his warfare with the woman. The beast from the earth is a spiritual power which aids the first beast in its effort to destroy the church. This second, religious beast acts with and under the authority of the political beast in order to enhance and legitimize the stranglehold that the political beast has on the human race. He does this by inspiring the human population of the earth to “worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed” (Rev 13:12). The political powers come and go, as signified by the first beast’s head that died and returned to life, giving the impression that at times the political beast is weak or dead. But the second beast continually sanctions the first beast’s hold on the human race by moving all to stand in fear and awe before it. The fact that one of the first beast’s heads has revived from its mortal wound even adds to its mystique. And this mystique is encouraged by the second beast’s spiritual servitude to the beast from the sea. This service that the religious powers render to the state for its enhancement and legitimation in its tyrannical hold on the people was obvious under the Roman Empire. The state of Rome used religion to sanctify the fear and obedience of its subjects toward their government. The twentieth century has seen this same attempt in Germany under Hitler, who invoked the ancient Aryan culture and its pagan religion and attempted to use the church to support his regime. But this kind of endeavor is everywhere present (at least potentially), the endeavor of the political and social structures of each generation to garner support by calling upon religious powers and loyalties. (CC)

Is the harlot Babylon the Antichrist? While the term “Antichrist” (ἀντίχριστος) does not appear in Revelation, it does appear in two of the Johannine letters (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 7)—but

nowhere else in the NT. In 1 Jn 2:18 Christians are reminded that it is the “last hour” (or, “last moment,” ἐσχότῃ ᾠρᾷ) and that the Antichrist is coming. In 1 Jn 2:22 the Antichrist is described as “the liar” (ὁ ψεύστης) who denies that Jesus is “the Messiah/Christ” (ὁ Χριστός) and thus also denies God the Father. According to 1 Jn 2:18 there were also many “antichrists” (ἀντίχριστοι) already present when the epistle was written. But according to the same verse (1 Jn 2:18) there was one Antichrist who was coming very soon. Similarly in 2 Jn 7 we are told that there are many “deceivers” (πλάνοι) who have come into the world and who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. But in particular there is one deceiver, “the deceiver” (ὁ πλάνος), who is the Antichrist. (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

In Mt 24:24 (also Mk 13:22) Jesus said that one sign of the last times before his second coming would be the arising of “false christs” (ψευδόχριστοι) and “false prophets” (ψευδοπροφήται) who would deceive, if possible, even God’s elect people. Christ also speaks of “false prophets” in Mt 7:15; 24:11; Lk 6:26. In Revelation “the false prophet” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10) is a member of the unholy trinity, together with the beast and the dragon, who is the devil. But the Lord Christ does not speak of one single false Christ. Possibly the many antichrists of 1 Jn 2:18 are the same as, or are related to, the false christs mentioned in Mt 24:24. (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

If one were to identify someone or something in Revelation as the Antichrist, it would be the dragon, the ancient serpent—Satan, the devil (12:3–4, 9). For the dragon claims all spiritual power (as symbolized by the seven heads) and all earthly power (as symbolized by the ten horns). Thus the dragon stands opposite to the Christ and opposes him (12:3–4), as well as the church (12:13–18). He is the great enemy of Christ and of his church on earth, and he is the one who deceives the whole earth (12:9). *Strictly speaking, in the human plane on earth, that which offsets and stands opposite to the church of Jesus Christ, and thus opposes her, is the harlot of Babylon.* There are two women in Revelation. One represents and symbolizes the true church of Christ: the woman with Child in Revelation 12 (who is the bride of Christ in 19:6–9). The other woman symbolizes the false church: the harlot, who, together with the beast she rides (17:3, 7), comprises Babylon in Revelation 17–18. So in Revelation that which stands opposite *Christ* is the dragon in chapter 12, the Antichrist, and that which stands opposite *the church of Christ* is the harlot in chapters 17–18, the antichurch. However, since in 13:1–18 the dragon gives to the beast from the sea and to the beast from the earth his authority and power to act on his behalf (13:2), the harlot in Revelation 17–18—who is the beast from the earth, the beast that bears the number 666 (13:18), and who rides the beast from the sea (17:3, 7)—becomes and is (in the stead of the dragon) that entity which has come to be known as the Antichrist. (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

Though John himself in Revelation does not use the term “Antichrist” in reference to the harlot, some of the early church fathers implied that there was a connection. Irenaeus, in his great literary work *Against Heresies*, is among the earliest to do so. In speaking about the Antichrist he applies the “man of lawlessness” described in 2 Thess 2:1–12 as a prophetic description of the Antichrist. He also equates the “abomination of desolation” spoken of in Daniel (11:31; 12:11) with the Antichrist. And then Irenaeus relates the beast with the seven heads and ten horns in Rev 13:1–10 and Babylon in Revelation 17–18 to the same topic: the tyranny and deception fostered by the Antichrist. Since Babylon in Revelation 17–18 consists of the harlot and the beast, this may imply that Irenaeus thought of the harlot as the Antichrist. A similar example is Victorinus (third century), who in his Latin commentary on Revelation, when commenting on 14:6, 8, interprets Babylon to be the Antichrist. (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

Specific historical identifications of the Antichrist were also made. Nero seems to have been the first to be identified as the Antichrist. (Nero was also connected with the number 666) Nero was held to be the Antichrist not in his first lifetime, but when (according to legend) he would return

after his death. The papacy has also been identified with the Antichrist. Other identifications have been suggested, such as the Muslims and Turks, and in more recent times political leaders like Stalin and Hitler. But those latter identifications did not endure. While false religions, such as Islam, and persecutors of the church, such as Hitler and Stalin, can be counted among the many antichrists, *the Antichrist itself, as illustrated by the harlot, is Christian in outward appearance.* (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

The clearest identification of the harlot Babylon is that *she represents apostate Christianity and the false church.* She looks genuinely Christian to the extent that she might at times deceive even God’s own elect people (see Rev 17:6–7; cf. Mk 13:14–23). Since the harlot of Revelation 17–18 seems to be the same anti-Christian entity as the “abomination of desolation” in Dan 11:31; 12:11 and as the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thess 2:1–12, then whoever and whatever she is at any given time, she dwells right in the bosom of visible Christianity, right in the sanctuary of that which represents God’s presence on earth. For in 2 Thess 2:4 the “man of lawlessness” calls himself God and takes his seat right in the temple of God. And the “abomination of desolation” also is placed in the temple of God (Dan 12:11; Mk 13:14; cf. 1 Macc 1:54). (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

The description of the harlot in Rev 17:3, 7 as riding the beast (the political beast of 13:1–10) suggests that she is present especially when the apostate church employs political and economic powers in order to force participation in her false worship (cf. 13:15–17). She will continue her deceptive work throughout the time period of the Christian era until the present world’s end, when she will be destroyed by God at the second coming of Christ (2 Thess 2:7–8; Rev 19:11–21). In particular, she will be a terrifying threat to the true church of Christ in the last days just before the End (Mk 13:20–23). And this “Antichrist,” under the control of Satan, is able to perform all kinds of counterfeit miracles and works of wonder to deceive people (2 Thess 2:9–10; Rev 13:11–14). For that reason, John warns, “Children, guard yourselves against the idols” (1 Jn 5:21). (CC – Excursus pp. 481-483)

**13:13 great signs.** See the warning in Dt 13:1–3; see also Mt 24:24; 2Th 2:9; cf. Rev 19:20. (CSB)

This beast seems to wield divine power, but in fact only deceives. His are not true miracles because they are not done in conjunction with sound doctrine. Ironically, this beast imitates the miracle Elijah performed while proving that Yahweh is the only true God (1Ki 18:24–40). (TLSB)

The beast from the earth is capable of producing “great signs” (13:13) in its support of the political beast. The word “signs,” σημεῖα, suggests miraculous activities: pseudo-miracles. Genuine miraculous works accompanied and attended the true church in her mission (See John 14:12; Acts 3:1-10; 14:8-10; Rom. 15:17-19; 2 Cor. 12:11-12; Heb. 2:1-4). But false prophets also produced pseudo-miracles in order to demonstrate and to attempt to validate their spiritual authority (See Ex. 7:10-13; Deut. 13:1-4; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:9). These miraculous activities are trials for the saints on earth, by which even they could be deceived unless protected by God (see Mk 13:21–23). To “make fire to come down out of heaven onto the earth” (Rev 13:13) was a true miracle of God which attested the prophetic ministry of Elijah and demonstrated the heresy and idolatry of the priests of Baal (1 Ki 18:36–40; see also 2Ki 1:10–14; cf. Rev 11:5). In like manner this beast calls fire “down out of heaven” in the attempt to prove that it is the true spiritual power and authority. (CC)

It is significant that the beast spoken of as performing a supernatural work very similar to that of Elijah (prophets of Baal said their god was in the thunder). Occasionally there is some apparent similarity between the devil's displays and God's miracles. In our day this warning has special application to healing cults and various so-called miracles which lead the gullible masses astray. The mere fact that you cannot explain something, or even that it may be definitely supernatural, does not necessarily mean that it is of God (2 Thess. 2:8-12; Matt. 24:24) (Poellot p. 175)

*fire ... from heaven.* See 1Ki 18:24–39. (CSB)

**13:14** *make an image.*† Cf. Da 3:1–11; 2Th 2:4. Christians at times were given a choice between death or burning incense before an image of the emperor. In John's time there was in Pergamum a temple dedicated to emperor worship. (CSB)

Since Adam's fall, people tend to worship images of animals and personified natural forces (Rm 1:23, 25). (TLSB)

Much of the earth's population is deceived "by the signs" which the beast produces (13:14). Those who are deceived are moved "to make an image to the beast" which had been mortally wounded and had come "back to life" (13:14). The making of the image sanctifies the political beast and encourages a cultic worship of what it represents. Few can resist such cultic worship of the state and of other human powers and agencies because they are sanctioned by the religious powers and influences of the moment. The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah (4:1–14) gives a telling and graphic description of the pseudo-miraculous influence of this religious beast (called "Beliar"). "He will act and speak like the Beloved, and will say, 'I am the LORD, and before me there was no one.' And all men in the world will believe in him. They will sacrifice to him and will serve him, saying, 'This is the LORD, and besides him there is no other.'" This Beliar of the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah is the devil in human guise (4:2–3) and thus an apt example of this religious beast of Rev 13:11, which looks like a lamb but speaks for the dragon. (CC)

**13:15** *might even speak.* Belief in statues that could speak is widely attested in ancient literature. Ventriloquism and other forms of deception were common. (CSB)

The religious beast is granted the ability "to put a spirit/breath into the image" of the political beast so that it can "speak." Whoever did not heed the speech of the image and thus "worship" it would suffer the penalty of death (13:15). Andreas (sixth century) in his Greek commentary tells how at the time of Apollonius of Tyana (a friend of emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Nerva), spirits in witchcraft frequently "spoke through images [εικόνων] and statues and trees and water, as well as through Apollonius and through other demons, and I suppose also through the dead bodies" (νεκρῶν σωμάτων). Then Andreas makes a comparison with the "shield-bearer [τὸν ὑπασπιστήν] of the Antichrist who, when energized through demons," makes the image of the beast to speak and those who do not worship it "to be destroyed" (ἀναιρεῖσθαι). As Charles states, "The belief in speaking and wonder-working statues was a well established one in the ancient world." Another magician of the time was Simon Magus, who was believed to have brought statues to life. (CC)

Magical trickery, spiritism, and witchcraft were widespread and also influential at John's time. They could well be used in the dragon's attempt through the beasts to deceive even Christians (see 1 Jn 4:1–3). But all of this in a wider sense is a type that symbolizes the manner in which the world's religious systems align themselves with the secular powers in the effort to destroy the church and her witness to Christ. And as the church resists this pressure by refusing to deny her Lord, and as she steadfastly continues her witness, she will pay the price. (CC)

**13:16 marked†** Whatever its origin—possibly the branding of slaves or enemy soldiers, the sealing and stamping of official documents, or the sign of the cross on the forehead of a new Christian—the mark of the beast apparently symbolized allegiance to the demands of the imperial cult. In the days of the antichrist it is the ultimate test of loyalty (cf. v. 17; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). It imitates the sealing of the servants of God in ch. 7. (CSB)

Identifying marks sometimes served to signify ownership (cf Dt 15:17). These marks thus function as the demonic counterpart to the protective seal God places upon His people (cf 9:4). (TLSB)

The earth's populations are so under the control of the religious beast that they are forced to be branded. That is, they are marked so as to be identified as people who belong to the beast, for they are its property, its slaves. The "mark" (χάραγμα, Rev 13:16) could be any kind of "mark, stamp, brand, tattoo," or even an "image" or "representation" by which a person in his or her manner of dress and/or conduct declares that he or she belongs to a specific spiritual influence and cult. Slaves were branded or marked by their masters, and the wearing of religious tattoos was a common practice in the Graeco-Roman world. Worshipers of a particular god were often branded with a mark or tattoo to indicate their devotion to it. (CC)

John was probably aware of these practices, and they could have served for him as examples or types of the "mark" (χάραγμα) by which the people were branded and thus identified as adherents of the beast. Caird suggests that John "did not expect the mark to be visible to the eye, any more than the seal of the living God." The dragon and his two beasts know and recognize those who belong to them, even as God knows those who are his saints. The saints of God are sealed on their foreheads (7:3; 9:4), and that seal is spiritual and invisible; Holy Baptism does not leave a physical mark on the Christian (though it may be recalled by a physical gesture such as making the sign of the cross). The adherents of the beast may also be sealed on the forehead (13:16), for the forehead is the seat of knowledge. To wear a "seal" on the forehead means that the person's mind and intelligence belong to the one who is represented by the seal. (CC)

The seal may also protect the one who wears it. In the case of the people of God, the seal exhibits that they are protected by God from being destroyed by the warfare of the dragon and his beasts (see 7:1–3; 9:4). OT precedent is found in the Passover signing and in Ezek 9:3–6. In the case of the followers of the beast, the seal indicates that they will be protected by the beast during the warfare conducted by the dragon against the church. They can continue to live without the fear and harm which befall the Christians. As an alternative to the seal on their foreheads, the followers of the beast can have the seal on their "right hand" (Rev 13:16). Such a seal would signify that the activities of the person are done with the sanction of the beast and at his direction. Only those with the beast's mark can legally make a livelihood in commerce and transact earthly affairs. The saints of God on earth do not have such a seal, indicating that God will not necessarily protect their earthly affairs and their pursuits of livelihood, even when they abide by the state's laws. Rather, they will be hindered and even persecuted as they live in this world. (CC)

The mark or brand of the beast is identified with "the name of the beast or the number of its name" (13:17), that is, the name is represented by its number. Andreas (sixth century) thus identifies the mark of the beast with its counted number (τὴν ψῆφον). Ancient Hebrew and Greek used letters of the alphabet to represent numerals. Among the Jewish people in particular there arose the practice of representing the name of a person by the numerical value of the letters of his or her name. This practice was known as gematria. (CC)

A SCIENCE-BASED STUDY OF THE HEBREW LETTERS OF GENESIS  
THAT UNITES THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES WITH A RATIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF CREATION

Rabbinic tradition asserts that every letter of every word of the Torah is a word in itself. Author Stan Tenen demonstrates that each letter is also a hand gesture, and it is at this level that Hebrew forms a natural universal language. All people, including children before they speak and people without sight, make natural use of these gestures.

In *The Alphabet That Changed the World*, Tenen examines the Hebrew text of Genesis and its relationship to the alphabet. He shows how each letter is both concept and gesture, with the form of the gesture matching the function of the concept. There is thus an implicit relationship between the physical world of function and the conscious world of concept. Using over 200 color illustrations, Tenen demonstrates geometric metaphor as the best framework for understanding the deepest meaning of the text.

Such geometry models embryonic growth and self-organization and the core of many healing and meditative practices. Many subjects in contemporary science were derived from the methods and means available to the ancients; *The Alphabet That Changed the World* makes this authoritative recovery of the "science of consciousness" in Genesis accessible for the first time to the contemporary reading public.

**13:17** *buy or sell*. Economic boycott against all faithful believers. (CSB)

Economic activity is restricted to those bearing the mark of the beast. (TLSB)

*number of its name*. In ancient times the letters of the alphabet served for numbers. Riddles using numerical equivalents for names were popular. (CSB)

**13:18** *the calls of wisdom* – Rev 13:18 is perhaps the most perplexing verse in the whole of Revelation. However, for John the author this was evidently not so, for he says that just as anyone who has ears should hear (13:9), whoever “has the intelligence” should “figure out the number of the beast, for it is a human number” (13:18). Not everyone would have this intelligence and ability, but evidently some do or did. Those who were versed in gematria method of could “figure out the number of the beast” if that were the method John had in mind, but was it? Swete suggests that this intelligence, this “wisdom” (σοφία, 13:18), is “apparently the spiritual gift answering to the gift of ἀποκάλυψις [revelation].” In Eph 1:17 Paul, in his prayer for the believers in Ephesus, asks that God would grant them the “Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in their knowledge of him [Jesus Christ]” (πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ). The wisdom and intelligence that John speaks of is the knowledge and revelation of Christ, which a person can understand only by the aid of the Spirit. Whether or not it involves a particular cryptographic hermeneutic like gematria, he evidently expects those who have such knowledge and spiritual wisdom to exercise it. (CC)

*calculate*. Gk *psephizo*, “figure out.” Considerable time and effort has been spent trying to decipher this enigmatic number, but no single solution has won general acceptance. (TLSB)

666.† Various schemes for decoding these numbers result in such names as Euanthas, Lateinos, Nero Caesar and Domitian. Others take 666 as a symbol for the trinity of evil and imperfection—each digit falls short of the perfect number 7. (CSB)

The threefold six may indicate a threefold falling short of seven, the number of perfection (see p 217). That would be a fitting number for the anti-Trinity. Hbr and Gk characters served both as letters and numbers. “Nero Caesar” transliterated into Hbr does total 666, and numerous other names have also been proposed. (TLSB)

The number of the beast “is a human number” (Rev 13:18), that is, a number that is related to or represents human life or existence, perhaps even a number that can be understood and interpreted by wisdom available to human beings. For the number “six hundred sixty-six” is expressed in human language and words. Furthermore, since man was created on the sixth day (Gen 1:26–31), the number six could represent humanity and anything of the human nature, just as the number seven represents God. Thus 666 would represent and point to one particular individual. The person most commonly accepted is that of Nero. Yet, the numerical value of the Greek letters of “Nero Caesar” is not 666 but rather 1,005. If “Nero Caesar” is transliterated into Hebrew characters as נרונ קסר, then the total would be 666. If this is the solution, only a part of John’s recipients could have solved this cryptogram. (CC)

If Nero is the particular person to whom the number 666 cryptically refers, he is the type or model of what the beast really represents, and he is not the final fulfillment, for he had been dead around twenty years when John wrote Revelation. Nero could serve as one example of what the beasts represent: *all* anti-Christian forces. But as a *type* the deeper significance of the number is that which it *typifies*—the *unholy trinity* of the dragon (Revelation 12), the beast from the sea (13:1–10), and religious beast from the earth (13:11–18). In the context of chapter 13, the number is the number of the beast from the earth, the second beast. Nevertheless, the number applies also to the dragon and to the first beast, the beast from the sea. The number applies to all three members of the unholy trinity, especially to whichever one is most active and most prominent at any given time and in any given situation. (CC)

If the number 777 were to be used, it would refer to the holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “This evil trinity 666 apes the Holy Trinity 777, but always falls short and fails.” “*The wisdom*” (ἡ σοφία) *referred to at the beginning of 13:18 is then the wisdom that comes from God and enables the Christian to know and understand what this unholy trinity is and represents at any given time here on earth. This wisdom enables the Christian to discern how the evil forces of the dragon, both secular and religious, are always and everywhere active, at war to destroy the church and her witness to Christ. Such wisdom comes only from God, but it is a wisdom that he graciously and richly confers on all his people in Christ. (See 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; 2:7 Eph. 1:8, 17; Col. 2:3; 3:16; James 1:5; cf. Rev. 5:12; 7:12; 17:9) (CC)*

13:11–18 In order to make his attacks against God’s people even more devastating, Satan enlists the assistance of another beast, this one representing deceit and corruption from within the Church. Unfortunately, this kind of attack remains deadly and still succeeds in deceiving many believers today. Were it not for God’s Spirit and the unshakeable foundation of Christ’s Word, even the elect would be led astray. Kept safely in Jesus’ hand, however, they remain secure. • Father, grant me steadfastness in all times of temptation, especially during these last days. You will never allow anyone or anything to wrench me from the security of Your grasp; therefore, You alone are worthy of my trust and praise. Amen.