

WHERE DO WE PUT OUR HOPE?

Lesson 8

Revelation 13



WELCOME

What makes you feel safe and secure?

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 13 is a continuation of the vision in chapter 12. “Having been prevented from reaching the woman [the Church], the dragon now calls for two evil agents to continue his mission of blaspheming God, warring against believers, and deceiving the world [these evil agents are]: the beast from the sea (**13:1–10**) and the beast from the earth (**13:11–18**).”¹

Tips for meaningful engagement with the Word:

- The first beast in this passage, the beast from the sea, symbolizes secular authority: political, military and economic power used to oppose God and His people.²
- The second beast, the beast from the earth, represents pagan religious power used to support and promote the wicked political, military and economic authorities.³
- The Scriptures for this lesson have been divided into two sections. The first section looks at the beast from the sea and the second section looks at the beast from the earth. There are questions after each section. The verse numbers have been removed from the Scripture passages and footnotes have been inserted. These footnotes are intended to help clarify the passage and provide better understanding.

¹ Duvall, 188

² Ibid. 189

³ Ibid. 196



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you. Ask Him to make it understandable and transformational.

Revelation 13:1–10

Then I saw a beast⁴ rising up out of the sea. It had seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on its horns.⁵ And written on each head were names that blasphemed God.⁶ This beast looked like a leopard, but it had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion!⁷ And the dragon gave the beast his own power and throne and great authority.⁸

I saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed wounded beyond recovery—but the fatal wound was healed!⁹ The whole world marveled at this miracle and gave allegiance to the beast. They worshiped the dragon for giving the beast such power, and they also worshiped the beast. “Who is as great as the beast?” they exclaimed. “Who is able to fight against him?”

Then the beast was allowed to speak great blasphemies

⁴ While the term “Antichrist” is not used in the book of Revelation, it has been traditionally linked to the first beast, the beast from the sea. Some believe the Antichrist is one person and some believe there are many antichrists that represent political, military, and economic systems opposed to God. (Duvall, 190) Regardless, “believers must not be too concerned about attempting to identify any person as the Antichrist. This has been done with many world leaders since the first century.” (Barton, 151) Whatever Antichrist or antichrists arise, God will still be in control.

⁵ “Like the dragon, [this] beast has ten horns and seven heads (**Revelation 12:3**), but the order is reversed and ten ‘crowns’ appear on the horns, stressing again the force and strength and power of the beast.” (Duvall, 189)

⁶ Blasphemy is “the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God.” (Merriam-Webster online) The original audience might have seen these names as referring to the divine names that were hijacked and demanded by Roman emperors, such as “Lord,” “Savior,” and “Our Lord and God.” (Duvall, 189)

⁷ “This [beast] seems like a combination of the four beasts that Daniel had seen centuries earlier in a vision (**Daniel 7:4–8**), combining the characteristics of a leopard, a bear, a lion [and a terrifying beast] ... In combining these four beasts, John’s vision reveals the epitome of evil power.” (Barton, 151) Multiple evil world powers have risen and fallen over the centuries, and this will continue until the end. In Daniel, those beasts represented four different evil world powers. This beast in Revelation could represent multiple evil world powers or one evil world power; only God truly knows.

⁸ God gave Jesus, the Messiah, His power, throne and authority. The dragon, Satan, gave this beast his power, throne and authority establishing the beast as his own counterfeit messiah. (Barton, 152)

⁹ “The Beast seduced the world by imitating Christ’s resurrection when he recovered from a fatal wound...” Again, he was a counterfeit Christ, mimicking Christ’s resurrection. (Barton, 153)

against God. And he was given authority to do whatever he wanted for forty-two months.¹⁰ And he spoke terrible words of blasphemy against God, slandering his name and his dwelling—that is, those who dwell in heaven. And the beast was allowed to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation. And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made.

*Anyone with ears to hear
should listen and understand.*

*Anyone who is destined for prison
will be taken to prison.*

*Anyone destined to die by the sword
will die by the sword.¹¹*

This means that God’s holy people must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful.

1. What is your reaction to the beast blaspheming God and then being allowed by God to wage war against, and even conquer, God’s holy people?

2. The beast from the sea symbolizes secular authority. Where do you see our culture worshipping and idolizing secular power and authority today?

¹⁰ The phrases “was allowed” and “was given” show that power was not inherent to the beast but rather came from Satan. This wording also implies that the beast’s time has been set by God, who ultimately holds all the power. (Fee, 182)

¹¹ “Those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book will never experience the condemning wrath of God. They are susceptible, however, to the wrath of the dragon and the beast, resulting in persecution and possible martyrdom.” (Duvall, 192) A similar statement can be found in **Jeremiah 15:2**. (Barton, 157)

What are some of the ramifications of those choices?

3. In what ways do you trust in the authority of political and social structures rather than trusting God?

Ponder **Psalm 115:9–11** as you answer the question below:

“O Israel, trust the LORD! He is your helper and your shield. O priests, descendants of Aaron, trust the LORD! He is your helper and your shield. All you who fear the LORD, trust the LORD! He is your helper and your shield.”

Think back through your life, list a few ways you have trusted God. Then record how He has proven Himself trustworthy.

4. In the face of severe persecution, “Christians are called to conquer the beast by being conquered... We are called to sacrifice and suffering as our primary response to evil.”¹² “We conquer evil by imitating Jesus’s example of suffering.”¹³ What is your response to these statements as you think about trusting God in the face of opposition from earthly powers?

Revelation 13:11–18

Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth.¹⁴ He had two horns like those of a lamb, but he spoke with the voice of a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast. And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast,¹⁵ whose fatal wound had been healed. He did astounding miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching.¹⁶ And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on

¹² Duvall, 193

¹³ Ibid. 194

¹⁴ This beast is later identified as the false prophet (**Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10**). (Barton, 159)

¹⁵ “The dragon mimics God the Father. The sea beast mimics God the Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb. And the earth beast mimics God the Holy Spirit. As the Father gives his authority to the Son, so the dragon gives his authority to the sea beast. As the Holy Spirit seeks to move us to worship the Son and the Father, so the earth beast seeks to move us to worship the sea beast and the dragon.” (Johnson, 241) “Together, the three evil beings form an unholy trinity in direct opposition to the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit ... This unholy trinity—the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the false prophet [beast from the earth]—unite in a desperate attempt to overthrow God, but their efforts are doomed to failure.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2188)

¹⁶ “...This was the same miracle that the two witnesses for God could perform (**Revelation 11:5**), which is a reference to the miracle of Elijah recorded in **1 Kings 18:36–38**. Ironically, Elijah had performed that miracle so that God could show who was a true prophet and who was not. Christ had warned, ‘False messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones’ (**Mark 13:22**).” (Barton, 158-159)

behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life.¹⁷ He was then permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak.¹⁸ Then the statue of the beast commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die.¹⁹

He required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead.²⁰ And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name.²¹ Wisdom is needed here. Let the one with understanding solve the meaning of the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is 666.²²

¹⁷ John used precise language when he said the beast came back to life instead of saying he was resurrected. (Johnson, 245) Jesus was resurrected and will never die again. The beast will eventually be destroyed.

¹⁸ “The use of magic and sorcery [through satanic power] to animate idols [occurred] in the ancient world, and the result here is that the demonic idol demands worship on penalty of death.” (Duvall, 197)

¹⁹ This imagery is similar to the events of Daniel 3 where Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, built a statue of himself and then demanded everyone worship it or die. (Barton, 159)

²⁰ This mark is a mockery of the seal of God on His people. God’s seal will be discussed further in lesson 9. “[The mark of the beast] is [likely] not a tattoo on the forehead or on the right hand nor a micro-chip embedded under the skin. It is the character of the beast embedded [in the person]. It is the character of the beast implanted in the soul. Just as the presence of the Holy Spirit makes himself known through Jesus’ disciples, so the presence of the beast makes himself known through its disciples ... The ‘forehead’ represents ideological commitment and the ‘hand’ the practical outworking of that commitment.” (Johnson, 246)

²¹ “Both marks [mark of the beast and seal of God] portray a person’s commitments and loyalties reflected in their ethical choices and objects of worship. The mark is always deliberately received in Revelation ... and cannot be obtained by accident. Those who refuse to worship the beast [or] take its mark will face persecution (e.g., **13:7, 10, 15, 17**), while those who compromise and take the mark will experience the wrath of God (**14:9–11; 16:2; 19:20**).” (Duvall, 197)

²² “The meaning of this number has been discussed more than that of any other part of the book of Revelation. The three sixes have been said to represent many things, including the number of a man or the unholy trinity of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (**Revelation 16:13**). If the number seven is considered to be the perfect number in the Bible, and if three sevens represent complete perfection, then the number 666 [reveals that the beast] falls completely short of perfection. Whatever specific application the number is given, the number symbolizes the worldwide dominion and complete evil of this unholy trinity designed to undo Christ’s work and overthrow him.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2190)

5. The beast from the earth (the false prophet) performed miraculous signs and miracles. What tools do we have in order to help us discern if miracles and signs are from God versus from Satan?²³
(See also **Matthew 7:15–20**; **2 Peter 1:19–2:1**.)

6. There is a striking difference between Christ being resurrected to rescue and save people and the beast from the sea being resuscitated to deceive people. We belong to the Overcomer who was resurrected and will never be defeated. How does this reality give you hope?

7. Consider this statement. “[The mark of the beast] is [likely] not a tattoo on the forehead or on the right hand nor a micro-chip embedded under the skin. It is the character of the beast embedded [in the person]. It is the character of the beast implanted in the soul.”²⁴ Does this concept make sense to you? If so, why? If not, why?

²³ “Allowing the Bible to guide our faith and practice will keep us from being deceived by false signs ... Any teaching that contradicts God’s Word is false.” (Barton, 159)

²⁴ Johnson, 246

8. The mark of the beast mimics and mocks the mark of God with which He seals us as His children, growing His character in us. Read the following verses and then note how they reassure you that you are a child of God and belong to Him.

a. **Ephesians 1:13–14** (NIV)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

b. **2 Corinthians 1:21–22**

It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

A key issue from this chapter is, “Who will I worship? Who will I adore? Who will get my attention? Who will have my undivided allegiance?”²⁵

As Christ-followers we are called to give our worship, adoration, attention and undivided allegiance to the one, true God. Those of us who put our hope in the ultimate Overcomer will overcome.

How has your worship and attention recently been divided? As your act of worship, consider a recommitment to undivided allegiance to God. If it reflects the true desire of your heart, write a worshipful statement of recommitment.

²⁵ Johnson, 238



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

Those who receive the mark of the beast may benefit or profit for a brief period of time, they may feel safe and protected by those they perceive as having power. However, that short gain will be offset by the terrible and eternal consequences that await them.²⁶

When you think of the eternal consequences for the people you know and love who put their hope in things that are a mockery of the Holy Trinity, what are you motivated to do?

²⁶ Barton, 160

