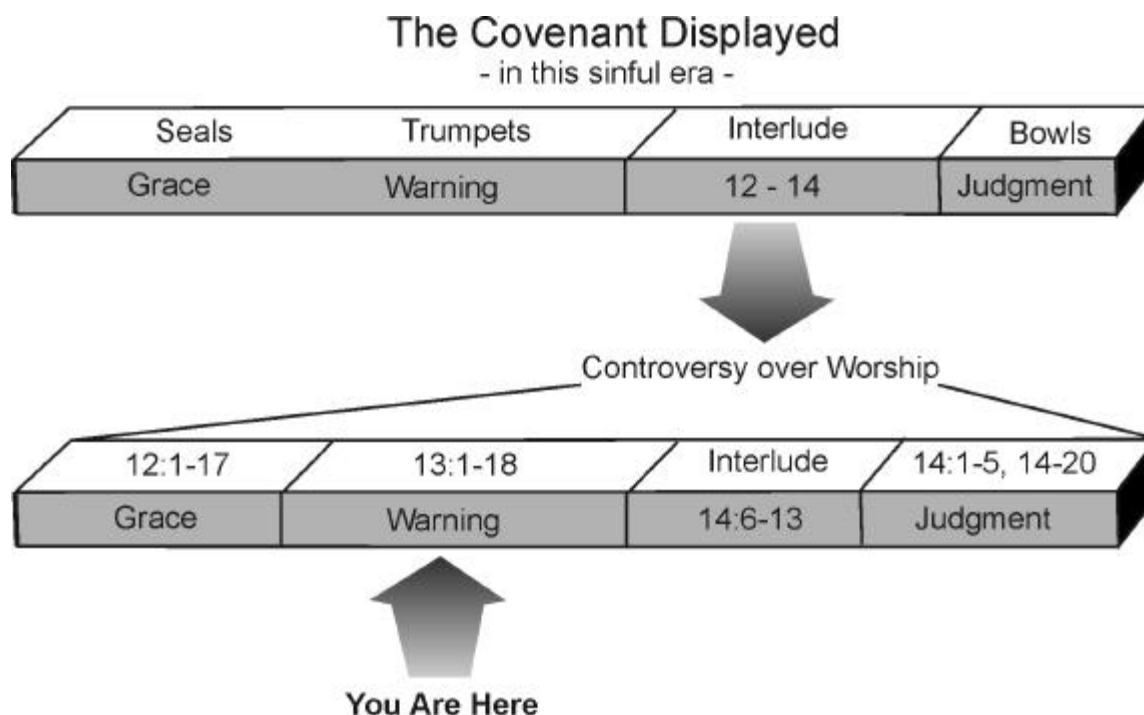


## The Controversy Over Worship Part II The Beast – Warning of Judgment to Come

The “beast computer” is already at work in The Hague! Don’t let yourself take the mark of the beast! They are going to put a microchip under your skin! Nobody can buy anything without it! And on – and on – and on...

Revelation 13 has probably led to more outrageous ideas and breathless sermons than any other passage in the Bible. Everybody seems to “know” just what’s going to happen. And if you don’t see it their way, you’re a heretic – or worse. There are so many *different* ideas that seem to have a grain of truth that it seems impossible to sort it all out. So what can we do? Will the Bible straighten this mess out for us? Can the Bible interpret itself *here*?

The easy answer is, “Of course!” But because there’s so much insanity out there, we have to be disciplined in our approach.<sup>1</sup> We have to trace symbolism back to its source. Then we have to carefully follow the timeline in the visions. If we do this, answers will come. But if we use the daily newspaper as our prophetic bookmark, we’ll end up a loooong way from the story God wants us to hear.



Our first stop is to look at the map. Every interlude so far has been a recap of the series it’s in. Since this is part of the interlude in the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, it’s part of their recap.

<sup>1</sup> If you think I’m being over-the-top in my description, just search for “Mark of the Beast” or “Number of the Beast” on the internet.

Chapter 12 was a recap of the Seals. So chapter 13 will be a recap of the Trumpets. It will be the warning of judgment to come. Let's see.

**And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. (13:1-2)**

If this looks like an instant replay of the **dragon** in 12:3, you've been paying attention in class. Just like the **dragon**, the **beast** has **ten horns and seven heads**. That means it comes from the *same* Old Testament source, Daniel 7. It also means that it has the *same* basic meaning – human government from the time of Babylon on. Just as important, it means that the **beast** *isn't* a single person or organization.<sup>2</sup>

Beast	Heads	Horns	Daniel text
Lion	1	0	7:4
Bear	1	0	7:5
Leopard	4	0	7:6
Frightening	1	10	7:7
Total	7	10	

This time, there are **ten diadems** instead of seven. This means that we have to look at more details. The first problem is the number **ten**. It's a round number designed to point us to the horns.<sup>3</sup> These represent the era described in Daniel 7:7-8, 19-25 after the fall of pagan Rome in 476AD.<sup>4</sup>

Next, we see another one of those delicious parodies. All of the **heads** have **blasphemous names**. The High Priest in the Temple wore a turban with a gold plate engraved "Holiness to the Lord" (Exod 28:36-37). The **blasphemous names** are the exact opposite, showing that man's kingdoms owe their allegiance to Satan. God may be sovereign, controlling the course of history, but Satan is the ruler of this earth (John 12:31, 16:11), with **power over every tribe and people and tongue and nation** (13:7). And this isn't the only parody in chapter 13.

The *entire career of the beast* is a burlesque of God's warning of judgment to come in the seven Trumpets. This time, we get to watch Satan pulling the strings of nations, trying to make everyone think resistance is futile. In the final version of his lie in Eden, Satan cries, "**You'll die if you don't worship the beast!**" (13:15, c.f. Gen 3:4).

Satan has power over **those who dwell on the earth** (13:8, 12, 14), but he can't control **those who dwell in heaven** (13:6). All he can do is **blaspheme God's tabernacle**, the saints. And this brings us to a wonderful image.

During the exodus, God refused to be separated from His people, so He had the Israelites build a tabernacle for Him to live in (Exod 25:8). Next, when Jesus came to die, He "tabernacled" with men (John 1:14, literal Greek). After He ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit so that He lives in us (Gal 2:20). That is, we have become God's tabernacle. Not only that, we are "in heaven" (Heb 12:22, Rev 13:6). What a wonderful picture!

<sup>2</sup> ...or computer, or Roman emperors, or President Bush or ...

<sup>3</sup> We know this because in Daniel 1:20, Daniel and his friends are "ten times smarter" than the other kids in Babylon U. Now, if your kid can walk, talk, and chew gum, it's almost impossible for anyone to be "ten times smarter" than your kid. The idiom really means "a lot" smarter. We can confirm this by looking in Daniel 7, where the ten horns of the fourth beast are "ten kingdoms" that come up after pagan Rome falls in 476AD. Of course, there were more than ten, and the number varied over time. If we take the idiom to mean "a lot" of kingdoms, then it matches the picture perfectly.

<sup>4</sup> We'll discuss why this *isn't* the same time described in 17:12-13 when we get there.

Anyone who trusts in Christ will be protected from any real harm that Satan might try to inflict. Even if Satan is able to **overcome** (13:7) a saint, his eternal life is secure (John 11:25-26). He may be able to “kill the body, but after that can do no more” (Luke 12:4). God will replace that cursed body with an immortal, incorruptible one (1 Cor 15:50-55). Satan’s “victory” is an illusion.

**I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed** (12:3). We have to be very careful here because some translations lose key information. First, one of the **heads** was **wounded**. The **wound** was so bad that it nearly killed **the beast**. Did you catch that? **The beast** nearly died. John doesn’t say, but the **head** probably does die. Next, **the beast** (not the **head**!) recovers from the **wound**. Let’s put this together.

The **beast** represents human government from Babylon on.<sup>5</sup> Babylon was conquered by Medo-Persia, which was conquered by Greece, which was conquered by Rome. So far, there aren’t any gaps. In 476 Rome fell, but no single government took over. The eastern part of the empire was more or less intact, but the western part broke up completely. As the prophet Daniel said, “It will become a divided kingdom” (Dan 2:41, literal Aramaic).

It didn’t take long for this situation to change. In 508 Clovis, king of the Franks<sup>6</sup> ceded land to the Roman Catholic Church and declared his allegiance to it. In 533 Justinian, Emperor of the eastern remnant of the Roman Empire issued an edict declaring the Pope to be the head of all churches. Then he used his army to take out anybody who resisted. This meant that the Roman Catholic Church wasn’t just the top dog in religion; it was the alpha male in *everything*.

Once the Roman Church became the center of political life, all the crowned heads of Europe looked to Rome for legitimacy. The **deadly wound** inflicted in 476 had been healed. But the **beast** didn’t look the same.<sup>7</sup> Human government was centered, not in a “political” entity, but in a “religious” body. No, it didn’t deal with day-to-day political rule. But all the governments served at its pleasure. It got its way, but made the others do the dirty work. **All the earth was amazed and followed after the beast** (13:3).<sup>8</sup> **They worshiped the beast** (13:4).

At this point we have to remind ourselves just what the word “worship” means. It doesn’t mean that churches were set up to praise human government. Rather, it literally means, “to bow down or prostrate before.” It expresses complete dependence on someone in authority. So if a person holds a human government as the highest authority, it is “worshipping” it. The flip side of this is that if a human government is your highest authority, God *isn’t*. You’ve made humans into gods, and are an idol worshiper.

The **beast was given a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies** (13:5). This brings us right back to Daniel 7:8, where the “little horn” does the same thing. It even does it for **forty-two months**, the same

“time, times, and half a time”	Dan 7:25, 12:7, Rev 12:14
“forty-two months”	Rev 11:2, 13:5
“1,260 days”	Rev 11:3, 12:6

<sup>5</sup> You might ask why God started with Babylon. After all, Satan didn’t start with Babylon. The vision recasts Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (Dan 7), so it begins where Daniel’s vision begins. If there had been an earlier set of symbols that could be used, God might have used them. But Daniel’s vision is the first one that provides symbols adequate for the apocalypse.

<sup>6</sup> The Franks became the French.

<sup>7</sup> This is noted by Daniel when he notes that this kingdom is “different from all the others” (Dan 7:19).

<sup>8</sup> Sharp students of history will raise their hands here, complaining that the Papacy didn’t exert absolute control. And they’re right. The Church was in the center of the political storm, sometimes on top, and sometimes being pushed around. But when push came to shove, all the kings came to Rome for the Pope’s blessing. In one famous example, Pope Gregory VII made Henry IV of Germany stand barefoot in the snow for days (January 25-28, 1077) like a common penitent before admitting him to an audience.

period that the **two witnesses** prophesy (11:2-3) and the church is **nourished in the wilderness** (12:6, 14). All these are the *same* period, since they use the same language, quoted from the same sources (Dan 7:25, 12:7).<sup>9</sup> They are describing the same events – the persecution of true Christianity during the Dark Ages. **All who dwell on the earth worship the beast** (13:8). But note; these are **everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life**.<sup>10</sup> Only the wicked follow Satan’s lieutenants.

**If anyone has an ear, let him hear.** (13:9)

This shifts our attention from Satan to God. We heard this call seven times in the seven messages to the churches. Each time it reminds us of the call to Israel in the *Shema*, “Hear O Israel!” (Deut 6:4). That call continues. “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is One!”<sup>11</sup> God calls out to true Israel, the saints of all ages, to listen to His announcement.

**If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.** (13:10)

God quotes Jeremiah 15:2, declaring that destiny of the wicked has been fixed. A false prophet (Jer 14:15) or a wicked person (Jer 14:20-15:1) has no hope. Only the saints who trust in God will survive. Anyone who rejects God will be destroyed (Jer 15:6). In fact, this is the hope of the saints. God will rescue them in the Day of the Lord when He destroys the wicked.

**And I saw** (new scene!), after **the deadly wound was healed** (13:12), an **earth beast with two horns like a lamb, but a voice like a dragon** (13:11). Once again, God shows us how Satan tries to hide his true nature. He deceives many by appearing like a pure Lamb of God (see 5:6). “Come join us! We have the keys of salvation!” But Satan can’t successfully disguise his voice. A different gospel is preached (c.f. Gal 1:8-9). False Christianity snares the unwary.

The **land beast exercised all the authority of the sea beast in his presence** (13:12). This gives us another view of Papal Rome at the center of the political world. The Pope claimed to be the Vicar of Christ, the holy voice of God on earth. At the same time, he<sup>12</sup> led the most evil and corrupt body imaginable. Rome identified and convicted “heretics,” then handed them over to the civil government for execution. Forgiveness of sin was sold for a price. Even the papacy itself was sometimes bought or sold. All **earth-dwellers** (the wicked!) were forced to **worship the sea beast**.<sup>13</sup>

The **land beast performs great signs that deceive the earth-dwellers** (13:13-14). The “miracles” attributed to various “saints” fill many books. Obvious examples include the Shroud of Turin, healings by relics, the “miraculous” appearance of Pilate’s staircase in Rome, and on, and on,

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<sup>9</sup> You may notice that “forty-two months” is not the language in Daniel. He uses “a time, times, and half a time.” Revelation 11:2-3 equates the “forty-two months” with “1,260 days.” Revelation 12:6 & 14 equate “1,260 days” with “a time, times, and half a time.” All three descriptions are of the same time period.

<sup>10</sup> This verse is a classic example for students. It defines the term “earth-dwellers.” First, it describes what they do, and then it tells us who they are. We don’t need to go to a dictionary or commentary. Everything we need to understand the term is in the verse itself. Of course, verse 6 does the same thing, defining God’s tabernacle as the “heaven-dwellers,” the saints.

<sup>11</sup> Modern Jews have substituted *Adonai* for *Yahweh*, since the name of God is too sacred to speak.

<sup>12</sup> I’m using “he” to speak of the long line of Popes during this most corrupt era.

<sup>13</sup> Do I really need to go through this again?

and on. The reference to **fire from heaven** isn't intended to be any more literal here than it was in the story of the **two witnesses**. Instead, it's meant to remind us that counterfeits look just as real as the fire Elijah called down from heaven (2 Kings 1:10-15). Even Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate some of Moses and Aaron's miracles.

Next, the **land beast** makes an **image to the sea beast** (13:14) that carries out the **death sentence** (13:15) against **those who do not worship the beast**. As we saw just a moment ago, this is a perfect picture of civil authorities executing heretics convicted by papal courts.

The **sea beast**, **land beast**, and **image to the beast** make up a false trinity, yet *another* parody of God's truth. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are so unified that they make up the One True God. The false trinity is just as unified, but works to undermine and overthrow the One True God.

### **The Mark and the Number**

This **number of the Beast** is so famous that it seems to be everywhere. A Google search on "**666**" yields 101 *million* hits, with lots of cult-style applications, often in hard rock music. On one website, a mathematician calls the number **666** "cool," and shows dozens of its unique mathematical properties. A brief look at the "theological" sites shows enough wildly varied theories of its meaning to drive you crazy. So we have to invoke the first rule of interpretation again – the Bible interprets itself. Let's look at the passage.

**And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (13:16-18)**

The **land beast makes everyone receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead**. Let's get one thing straight right here. This isn't a physical mark. That idea is *literalism*, and denies the symbolism in the book. This is an echo of a command God gave the ancient Israelites. It's so important that we should look at it in detail.

"Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one! And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deut 6:4-10)

This opens with the *Shema* (literally, "Hear"), the most important statement of Hebrew faith. There is only one God for man. Of course, if there's only one true God, then there's only one God to be worshiped.

Next, God commands Israel to keep "these words ... on your heart." Fidelity to God isn't simply obedience; it is a matter of the heart. To emphasize this fact, the *Shema* is to be written on the doorposts and gates while being bound "as a sign on your hand" and "as frontals on your forehead."

The ancient Hebrews did write the words on their houses and wore phylacteries.<sup>14</sup> This isn't wrong, because it would tend to make you think about the verses, but it wasn't God's intention. His real point was for you to make Him the center of what you do every day. Of course, that is true worship.

The **mark of the beast** is a pale imitation of binding God's words on your hand or forehead. It shows that **earth-dwellers** put men above God. It's not about microchips or tattoos. It's about what you *do* and who you worship. And make no mistake about it; even "atheists" worship someone. It isn't God; it's man. Of course, if they ally themselves with man's governments and man's religions, their daily lives – **buying and selling** – won't be affected.

**Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (13:18)**

The first part of this reminds us that when man thinks he's smart, he's really not (Isa 29:14). Man doesn't discover wisdom, God reveals it (Job 28:12-13). Yet God tells **him who has understanding to calculate the number**. I can just hear God sneer, "You think you're so smart? Figure it out!" And right then, for anyone who recognizes his own limitations, God says, "Here's the number. As always, I Am the revealer of knowledge."

Literally translated, the verse says, **It's man's number**. This fits perfectly with what we have been saying all along. Man puts himself in God's place, and then worships himself. Every step of the way, he threatens God's people. But God shows us that we shouldn't waste our time on man's threats. We should fear Him who can destroy body and soul in Hell (Matt 10:28).

The reference to **calculation** takes us outside the Bible for the first time. But it doesn't take us outside Bible times. In ancient Greek society, one use of "calculation" was to figure out the numerical value of words. We call this gematria, from the same root for the word "geometry."

Greek didn't have separate characters for numbers, so each letter had a number value. When certain names or words were added up, the number value was considered to have secret spiritual importance.<sup>15</sup> In this case, **666** was a very important number in pagan religion.<sup>16</sup> It's the sum of the magic square of the sun, one of the most important pagan deities. It's the gematria value of Syene (S?? ? ?), a city in southern Egypt that was thought to be a place of celestial alignment where the divine secrets of the sun god were displayed on earth.<sup>17</sup>

Pagan religion opposes the true God, and the numbers derived in pagan religion are another sign of man's rebellion. Yet even though these numbers were "secret," God understands them. Man thinks he's the final authority, but God isn't fooled.

Just to put the final nail in the coffin, God has included an implicit joke in this passage. The entire chapter is about "the Great Beast." And even though those exact words *aren't* in the chapter, the gematria value of *to mega therion* is – do I even need to say it – 666!

Man may warn that everyone must fall in line, but God laughs at such pride. In the end, God wins, and His people win with Him. Man's warning of judgment is a puny shout against the only real power in the universe. Even Satan's backing is worthless.

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<sup>14</sup> Phylacteries are small leather boxes worn on the forehead. They contain a slip of paper with a passage from Torah written on it. See Exodus 13:16 and Matthew 23:5.

<sup>15</sup> If you want to see a more technical discussion of the number of the Beast, check out Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> For a relatively complete exploration of the number in pagan religion, check out *Jesus Christ, Sun of God*, by David Fideler (Quest Books, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Syene, present-day Aswan, is on the tropic of Cancer, so at noon on the summer solstice the sun casts no shadows around buildings or down wells.

The symbolism and story of the false trinity had its first application in a time long past. This could make modern men sneer that it has nothing to do with us now. But this would be far from true. The principles of the war between Christ and Satan haven't changed. Men haven't changed. We're all corrupt and rebellious. We've heard Satan's call to worship him by putting everything ahead of God. But his warning of judgment is a phony. It's God we must fear and worship.

