

The Beast From The Earth And 666

The False Prophet and the Number of the Beast

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Most of you are probably not aware that today's sermon is significant in a kind of twisted way.

If you regularly receive our sermon tapes, and if you look at the labels, you know that each sermon has a number that we have assigned to it. These numbers have been consecutively counted from the very first sermon given in January 1992. It has taken us most of 12 years (this is the fifth month of the twelfth year) to today's sermon marking the 666th sermon given in the Church of the Great God, not counting Feast of Tabernacles sermons.

This means that I have the dubious distinction of having Tape number 666. So it is only fitting that I give a sermon regarding this number—666. But, we are going to expand beyond that so that we get the context of where this number falls in the book of Revelation—particularly the context of the second beast that rises there in Revelation 13 beginning in verse 11 through the end of the chapter, verse 18.

So, this is what we are going to be studying into—Revelation 13:11-18. We are going to see if we can glean some clues as to this number, and the beast—not **The Beast** that is known as the anti-Christ—but the beast that rises from the land who enforces the mark on men.

I think that it is very important that we get this in context. Most of the sermon will not be about 666. Most of the sermon will be about this second beast.

Now as I begin (as I like to do during prophecy sermons) I would like to let you know that this is my own personal speculation. This sermon is based on what I see in this passage, and the things that come out of the Bible, letting the Bible interpret itself.

Some of what I bring up today (please do not be alarmed) may not be what you have been taught in the past. It may be somewhat different.

But, on the other hand it is not my intention to establish church doctrine.

Personally, I do not believe that prophecy should (in most cases) be considered church doctrine, because it is speculative. There are few things about prophecy that we know

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for sure, and we do consider it dogmatic church doctrine—like Christ *will* return. He says He will, and He is going to come to establish His Kingdom upon the earth.

But, what the number of the beast is, or certain other details of most prophecy, are not the sort of things to get worked up about. It is not something to leave the church over. It is something that hopefully will cause a bit of thought, and wonder, and speculation on your own part to see how these things might come out.

My conclusions that I will give today are certainly not indisputable.

I hope I do not give them dogmatically because I cannot really be dogmatic about them. I do not have a spirit of prophecy from God in that way. I am just looking at it as I see it, as I have studied it from the Bible. I do not have all the answers. And I have to lean on the principle of, "*then* you shall know. . ." to tell us that we will be uncertain about these things until they take place.

But, it is good that we think about these things, and be forewarned about possibilities about how they may come about.

Like I said, I am presenting this information to provoke thought; maybe to give some perspective that you have not thought of before; and certainly not to cross or belittle anybody else's ideas.

This is the book of Revelation, but there is a great deal of this book that has not been revealed to us yet. There is still a great deal that is cloaked in a bit of a fog. So, we have to pick our way through it and try to glean as much out of it as we can from the clues that the book itself gives. And that is what I am trying to do today. I am not trying to establish anything as certain.

Now, a bit of the context, and not just within the chapter.

Revelation 13 falls in the middle of a series of inset chapters that begins all the way back in chapter 10. Chapter 10 talks about the seven thunders, and John eating the little book. And then chapter 11 goes immediately into the Two Witnesses.

There is a short break toward the end of chapter 11 (starting at verse 15) which gets back to the time flow of the book. Although there are some that think that it continues the time flow of chapter 11, and not the time flow left off at the end of chapter 9.

But, anyway, in chapter 12 you have the Woman revealed, and her history; and then

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you get to chapter 13, in which the two bad guys are introduced. And then in chapter 14 are the firstfruits, the three angels, the harvest of the earth being reaped, and the grapes of wrath; and then you get two chapters—15 and 16—that go back to the original time sequence.

Chapters 17 and 18 talk about the woman again and the fall of Babylon.

And so, some of this is in the time, some of it is not, but chapter 13 (what I really wanted you to get out of all this) sits right in the middle of all these inset chapters.

Now, all these chapters supply needed information about major characters and major events that happen in the end time or that impact the end time.

Because of this they are mostly out of time sequence with the main flow of events of the book of Revelation. However, if they are out of time sequence so to speak, they at least bring their subjects up to the time of the end, because the subject of the book is the Day of the Lord, and the things that must shortly take place. We find that right off the bat in Revelation 1:1, and 1:10. It says there very clearly that this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ of the things that must shortly take place, and then in verse 10 it says that John was taken in the spirit into the Lord's day.

So, that is the theme of the entire book. Each one of these inset chapters takes its subject and inserts it into the theme. Then it brings it up to date, so that by the time we get back to the flow we have all our things in order, and we can move forward and use that information in understanding things in the way that God has set things out to go.

After bringing the church, the Two Witnesses, and Israel up to date, in the preceding chapters, God introduces the bad guys. That is the Beast, called in verse one of chapter 13, "the Beast which rises up out of the sea." Then in verse 11, there is the Beast which comes up out of the earth. And, that one is known elsewhere as the False Prophet.

We have traditionally understood that this description of the first beast (I will be using these terms first and second beasts because they are easier than saying Beast of the Sea, and Beast of the Land) to parallel Daniel 7. Remember Daniel 7 has all the various wild animals that represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and then the strange beast that represents Rome, with its horns being the 10 revivals of the Roman Empire.

Now, at some point back here in Revelation 13, the story focuses on the end time beast, which we know as Anti-Christ.

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Likewise, we have treated the second beast as the great false church from its inception all the way down through history to the end time. That is a period of nearly 2000 years, if we consider that the false church began sometime in the middle of the first century. Paul was then saying that already there were other gospels being preached. And it was not long after that that the Gnostics really came into the church in force, and things began to change, and by the time of the end of the first century the false church is the up-front church, and the true church has gone into hiding. It has had to flee into the wilderness because the false church is suppressing its teachings.

Remember the famous quote we have heard many times from Mr. Armstrong? He said that when the curtain came up after the end of the second century, the visible church was far different from the church of the Bible (at the end of the first century). And so this great false church, then, has pretty much ruled the minds of men, at least in Western civilization all the way down through history up to our day.

That is how we have done it traditionally in the past.

Most modern commentators do not see these two beasts as historical personages, or a succession of historical personages throughout history from the time of Christ, but as entirely end-time. They are Satanic counterparts to the Two Witnesses. Remember just two chapters before, we had God introduce His two prophets that pretty much take up the entire stage for Him at the time of the end. They are the only two real visible witnesses of Him in the whole world.

Well, in chapter 13, the way many commentators look at it today, this is Satan's counter-punch to the Two Witnesses—the Beast and the False Prophet.

So, they see the entire context of chapter 13 as end-time, not as historical background. In many cases you will find that these people do not consider, then, these to be what we would call inset chapters. They think that they seem to fit into the flow of things.

The hard thing about all of this in trying to come to an understanding of it (much less a conclusion) is that both of these views have merit. On the other hand, they both have down-sides—things that we may have a bit of trouble putting together with other parts of the Bible.

With that said, I am going to approach it from the end-time perspective today. The reason that I want do that is that it is fine to know the history. Both of these things may work because there may be a type and anti-type thing going on here. The Beast as a political entity from the time of the Roman Empire is certainly there in history to see. And

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the same would go for the false church. It is certainly there to see in history.

But for us today, with this facing us in the near future, it is more important for us to know about the end-time context than it is for us to know the history of this. There are things obviously that we can learn from the history of both the Beast Power and the False Church. But for us to be warned properly, which is one of the major reasons for prophecy—to warn us ahead of time of things that must take place just ahead—it is more important for us to consider a look at this from a current standpoint. So that is what I am going to do today.

I am not discounting what we have taught in the past. Please, do not get me wrong on that. What I am saying is that if we look at this with fresh eyes for today and what is going to come in the next few years, I think we might have a better grasp of it. This is when we live, and we will be living into that time, and that is more important than understanding the background.

Frankly, the rest of the book of Revelation treats them as end-time. I want you to see this. Go forward to chapter 16, and we will go to the sixth bowl, or vial

Revelation 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

So, we have these three unclean spirits of demons influencing all that these three do. That is all the comment I want to make here.

Chapter 19, verse 20 you are more familiar with:

Revelation 19:20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

That is their fate. Also, their fate is shown in historical terms in chapter 20.

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet [were cast]. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

So, whatever the historical background is and how much Revelation includes of it, what is needful to us right now is to have knowledge of the Beasts' characteristics so we can recognize them when they rise. If we are right about things, that is not too far in the future. That is the main reason for prophecy—to give warning to the saints so that they will be prepared for the times that they may have to face.

Back to Revelation 13, and we will read the section starting in verse 11 all the way down through verse 18 so that we can get the whole context here.

Revelation 13:11-18 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or 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 it is the number of a man: His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

That is the whole context. I wanted you to see that this number of the beast is put at the tag-end of the description of the False Prophet or the second beast. There is a flow right into it.

It is important for us to understand what this False Prophet is, what he does, and how we can recognize him. That is what we are to go into.

Now, what struck me recently in going over this passage is the continuity that goes throughout the story of this beast. That is, it reads as if John is speaking of the same person throughout—not a succession of people over a period of many hundreds of years. This is what gave me the idea to approach this as if it were current rather than

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historic.

Also, if you noticed in these eight verses there is no great progression of time suggested in the context. There is no, ". . . and then, this happened . . ." where you could see time marching forward. It seems like this all happens in one specific period of time. In fact, the only time marker in the entire chapter is in verse 5.

Revelation 13:5 And he was given a mouth [this the first beast] speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

If you will go back to chapter 11, you will see this same 42 months mentioned:

Revelation 11:2 "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."

This is equated in the very next verse to the 1,260 days of the preaching of the Two Witnesses.

So, if we are going to take only this into consideration, it seems as if these two beasts' greatest time of power is this 3½ years, and this time-frame is what John is speaking about here in Revelation 13. There may be this type in the false church as well going through history, but his main concern is to warn us here at the end for what is coming.

Now let us try to take this verse by verse, or section by section, and dissect it a bit.

Revelation 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

We will be spending a great deal of our time right here because in the introduction He lays on us a lot of characteristics that we need to take to heart.

The first thing we need to look at is this word, "another." "Then I saw *another* beast. . . ." This is a translation of the Greek word *allos*. (Maybe you have heard of an "allosaur?" That is "another lizard.") There is more to it than just "another." This translation leaves out an important nuance that is in the Greek term. It is not only "another," but it is

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"another of the same kind." Or, "another of a similar kind." It should be, "I saw a *similar* beast coming up. . ."

This immediately tells us that this beast is linked in his characteristics with the first beast; they are like "two peas from the same pod." "They are cut from the same cloth."

That is what is suggested by this wording. We know, if we go back to verse 2, last part, "the dragon gave him his power, throne, and great authority . . ."

We find out in verse 11 that the dragon is there again. And if we would think back to John 8, Jesus talks about the people who were His audience at the time being children of the Devil, because they displayed the characteristics of the Devil. They wanted to kill Him. He said, "If you were really children of Abraham, you would act like Abraham." Children almost always act like their fathers.

What we see here in chapter 13, then, is these two beasts from the sea and from the land showing the characteristics of their source of power and authority—Satan.

The word "beast" gives us an idea of the nature of these also. They are wild animals. As a matter of fact, I believe the Living Bible translates this as "wild." Several of the paraphrases take this literally. But we are supposed to understand from the type of the beast that there is a cunning ferocity and animalism about these two entities. They are not calves. They are not sheep. They are not turtle doves. They are wild animals. There is nothing tame about them. There is a ferocity in them. There is a wild look in their eyes—a savagery within them.

They are first presented as wild animals—beasts. The next characteristic is the phrase, "Out of the earth." This one comes up out of the earth. The first beast comes from the sea. You will see that in verse 1:

Revelation 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns?

Now, what is the symbolism here? That one comes from the sea and one comes from the earth? Both of these things are worldly, that is, part of this world. The sea is part of this world. The earth is part of this world. That is our first clue.

Now, go back to Revelation 4. Notice the difference about how other things are introduced.

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Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven [That is where this context is!]. And the first voice, which I heard, was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

Revelation 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

This is a time of respite before the judgments. And the judgments come from heaven. So, the context is heaven.

Revelation 9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

Here is another activity of something from heaven. A star is obviously a symbol for an angel. It is an angel who is given the key to the bottomless pit.

Revelation 10:1 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud.

Here we have the one who introduces the seven thunders, and speaks with John about these things.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

This is a proclamation from heaven of the advent of the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

You know the woman is associated with heaven, and that is only to be expected because it was God who made Israel what Israel is. And we should not forget that God

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married Israel. So, certainly Israel has a heavenly association. Its origins were not in the earth *per se*, but in God.

Here, we are talking about the 144,000:

Revelation 14:1-2 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder.

We could go on and there it describes the saints, the firstfruits of God.

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

Obviously, the gospel's source is from heaven. We have more judgments from heaven here:

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

Another proclamation out of heaven:

Revelation 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

Then he proceeds to say that Babylon is fallen.

Revelation 19:1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"

The praise of God coming out of heaven.

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Revelation 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And then he lays hold of Satan, and imprisons him.

All these things are heavenly actions, heavenly proclamations, heavenly judgments. Whatever they happened to be, their source is in heaven.

But the Beasts back in Revelation 13 have their source in this world. II Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan is the god of this world. We have already seen that the Dragon is behind these two. He gives the Beast its power and authority, and we will see that as well that it comes down to the second beast too, through the first beast.

So, we have a difference here between heavenly and earthly, or worldly.

Beyond this, there is the difference between the sea and the earth. Why the difference? Why not have the first beast come out of the sea and the second beast come out of the sea as well? But, no, the first comes out of the sea, and the second comes out of the earth, out of the land.

Let us go back to James 1, and search out quickly this idea of the sea. Verse 6; we will just cut into this because we just want the things about the sea:

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Here the sea is shown to be wavy, tossed, and windswept. We can see that it is in the Old Testament as well.

Isaiah 57:20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The sea is shown to be troubled. Again, it is shifting and restless. It is shown to be a place of mire, dirt, and uncleanness associated with the wicked.

We will chase out the land now.

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Psalm 102:25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

The earth is shown to be a foundation; something solid, and more stable; something that lasts. Granted, it is often said in the Old Testament that the earth is shaken. But, mere men do not shake it. God only shakes it. Otherwise, the symbol is one of durability—of things that are more stable.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever.

Again, the earth is seen to be something that is more stable and firm.

So, on the one hand, the sea is a symbol of instability, of agitation, of restlessness, of changeability—who knows when a squall might come up and make the placid sea into a raging tempest? On the other hand, the earth is a symbol of firmness, of sameness, of endurance. This is interesting when you add it to these two figures—the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth.

In Revelation, water has the additional symbol of people.

Revelation 17:15 Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."

Now the symbol of the earth in the book of Revelation is not so specific, meaning it implies the world—worldliness; something fundamentally human and base as opposed to heaven and its glories.

We have the sea being one that is unstable, shifting, with this implication of people. And on the other hand we have earth, which is firm, but it is always in opposition to heaven, so it tends to symbolize worldly things, or human things—something that originates here on earth among men. Both of these symbols have this idea of people in it.

Let us put this together. We can understand that the first beast rises out of the ever-changing sea of human politics and the wrestling for power. In other words, the first beast rises up out of volatility, confusion, and political storm. It is a political, military, and governmental entity. It is an entity of pure power. But, as we know, world power shifts a

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lot. Kingdoms rise and fall.

The second beast is different in that it rises out of the fundamental human need for stability and endurance. Governments and empires are a dime a dozen. They last for a short time and then another comes to take its place. However, the institution that the second beast rises from changes little throughout the generations. It rises out of the earth, which is stable.

Religion has filled that need for humanity. As much as kingdoms and governments change, usually the religion of the people just marches on through successive governments. That is the stabilizing factor in all this, and why I think that it comes out of the earth instead of the sea. It is not as volatile.

Human religion, if you think about it, has changed very little since the Tower of Babel. I mean, people the world over are still keeping Ishtar (Easter), the same spring fertility festival they kept to honor Semaramis. And Christmas, under its modern guise is for Jesus, supposedly, but it goes right back to the honoring of Nimrod! How much has religion really changed? Maybe some of the teachings have changed a little bit, but the fundamental ideas are still there, and they have been for most of the 6,000 years of man's history, whereas governments have changed quite frequently.

You can see very plainly here as we go through these verses that this beast from the land is in charge of directing worship toward the beast from the sea, and toward the dragon. It is obviously a religious entity.

Let us go on to the two horns. He had "two horns like a lamb," it says. Horns in the Bible, if you want to chase this out, symbolized power, strength, authority, or influence. In I Samuel 2:1, in the prayer of Hannah, she tells God that He has exalted her horn. He has given her power and influence.

Psalms 18:2 gives the perspective:

Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

All of those things are powerful and strong images. And "horn" is one of them.

We have traditionally taught that these two horns represent ecclesiastical power on one

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hand and temporal power on the other; that is, religious and secular authority. I see no reason why that should not be correct, especially considering verse 12, when we get there. I just have to think that it is right. It is religious and secular authority wielded by this one beast.

The beast is also like a lamb. We can take this in two ways. The first is to take it generally, and say that this beast appears innocent and benign, like a little lamb would out in the field.

The other way is to make it a capital "L" and say that this "Lamb," or this beast that looks like the Lamb, or seems like a Lamb; appears like Christ, that is Christian.

The only question about which it is, is the article. The Greek reads "a lamb," not "the Lamb." That is why the translators have it as "two horns like a lamb."

Now, lambs usually do not have very big horns. But, the power that this beast has, and uses, it would seem the horns should be bigger. I do not know. Maybe I am reading too much into that. But it seems that this image is better as a counterfeit of Christ, especially since the next phrase brings in a dragon. We know this is very clearly the symbol of Satan.

It can work on both levels, I think. It would more easily work to deceive the world if this were a "Christian" entity or person. At least a billion people on the earth claim to be "Christian." So, it works either way. I do not want to be dogmatic about that.

"Like a dragon," is the same thing. A dragon is ferocious, deceitful, and cunning—like Satan himself. The first thing we are told about the serpent is that he is more cunning than any beast of the field. Obviously, this serpent represented Satan the Devil to Adam and Eve. It is the same each way that you look at it.

I think that it is best to consider this second beast as having a façade of "Christianity" but Satanic at its heart. In Matthew 7 is Jesus' warning about false prophets. And here, we are talking about the False Prophet. It is certainly appropriate. He says the same thing:

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

It would be just as easy to say, "ravenous dragon." It is the same sort of image.

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Matthew 7:16-18 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."

Remember this is a lamb-like person with the heart of a dragon. So, which fruit is he going to project or bear?

Matthew 7:19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

What happens to the False Prophet?

Matthew 7:20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

Now let us not just stop there.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

This is interesting in terms of the False Prophet, is it not? Jesus' warning tells us to look beyond the appearance, to the fruits, because the devilish heart of this beast will betray it in its words and its deeds. And, we will see that in lawlessness. That is where it ends up: lawlessness, iniquity—antinomianism you might say. Those things will be a major part of its teaching and practice. It will be against God's way.

So you might take from this in Matthew 7, do not be fooled by the miracles and prophecies that this beast promotes or does, nor any of its so-called good works. You have to look beyond it to the fruits and the teachings.

Now remember that Paul calls the coming of the anti-Christ (who he calls "the man of sin," remember in II Thessalonians 2,) "the mystery of iniquity"—the mystery of

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lawlessness. That is everything that Satan stands for. It is going to come out through this false prophet and the beast. It is going to be a major part of their way of life and of their teaching. We will get to that in II Thessalonians 2. He is called the man of sin there in verse 3.

II Thessalonians 2:7-8 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

So, right now there are some restraints being put on, but this mystery of lawlessness has not broken out to deceive everybody. There is a time coming, though, when God will pull back His hand, the restraints will be gone, and this will break out like a wildfire all around the world.

And we should be able to recognize it, if it has not already taken place. Things are quite terrible as they are. Look at what happened there in Iraq. People are talking about this is war, but it does not matter if it is war. Such things should never occur, especially from people of a nation that purports to be "Christian." It is bad enough that the Muslims are hacking off the heads of our civilian people, but we should not respond in kind, even if it is war.

I just wanted to bring out, there in Revelation chapter 13, verse 11, that we can see the fruits of this in lawlessness.

Revelation 13:12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

The key element here is exercise authority. These are the horns that work. The first beast gives him the power to make things happen. Primarily, he gives him the power to make the people worship the beast.

This can only be brought about by organized religion with the backing of the state. That is the only way that the whole world will be able to do this, to go over to worship this beast.

Now, "in his presence," here, does not mean while in his sight, necessarily. It can mean

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that, of course, but it has another meaning that expands it out a bit further. It means more like "as his representative." So, let us throw that in there: "He exercises all the authority of the first beast as his representative," meaning as his proxy or as his prophet.

This is very similar to the way that Aaron was Moses' prophet, back there in Exodus 4, as Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians, were Pharaoh's prophets. It works the same way.

Down to "the earth, and all who dwell in it."

This is a curious way of saying this. It says that this false prophet causes the earth, and those who dwell in it, to worship the first beast. Have you noticed that before? He causes the earth to worship the first beast, as well as the people. It is kind of interesting.

We can look at it two ways: It could be a phrase to show a heightened sense of everybody worshipping the first beast. It is the earth and the people—everybody on earth turns to idolatrous adoration of the beast. We could say, then, "He takes the whole world by storm."

But it might be that everything on earth serves his purposes, and the people. It is as if all of earth is marshaled to his use, and the people worship him. This is a worldwide, universal movement. We have not seen the likes of that, yet.

I want to skip over his deadly wound, because it really refers to the first beast, and not to the second beast. Suffice it to say, that Protestants think the anti-Christ miraculously recovers from a fatal, physical wound, while the church of God has traditionally taken this historically, to mean that the fall of Rome in AD 476 was the fatal wound, and the Imperial Restoration under Justinian in AD 554 was the recovery.

Frankly, I have got a few reservations about both of them. I am wondering whether both of them were right. So, in the end, I have to say that I am not sure. So, I will not go into them.

Revelation 13:15 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should

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both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

"He performs great signs. . . ." These are not magic tricks. They would not be called "great signs" if they were. These are actual miracles. Satan has the power to do various miraculous things. It says in verses 14 and 15 that the false prophet is granted—he is given the power—to do these things. It may be part of the taking away of the restraints. Suddenly, Satan will be restored some of the power that he had in the past, then he could give this to his false prophet to do these things.

This is where I would like to go back to II Thessalonians 2 again.

II Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We see here in these two sections that have to do with the beast and the false prophet that one of the major things in it is these lying wonders—these great signs. Their deception is not in the miracle itself, or in the sign or wonder, but it is in their source! That is the way I see it.

The lying wonder, sign, miracle, will be true, and everybody will think that God has given the false prophet the power to do this, but it will be a deceptive thing coming from Satan. And the purpose of the miracle is to get people to worship the Beast and the Dragon, not the true God!

The miracle is only the means to the deception. And what it does is to get people to believe and worship error and sin—the wrong things—to be idolatrous, and not worship God, because those people did not have the love of the truth. Observers will think that these miracles come from God; but they are from Satan. We will know that because it will cause them to sin.

It says here that they will make fire come down from heaven. This is very similar to what Elijah did on Mount Carmel back in I Kings 18. Notice the reaction of the people. Verses

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36 through 39:

I Kings 18:36-39 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

Now when these people, at the time of Revelation, who see this same wonder—but this will be a lying wonder—at the time of the end, seeing fire come down from heaven, will their reaction be the same? Will they not think that the fire coming out of heaven came from God? And so they turn their adoration to the god of this world who made the fire come down.

This is a convincing sign to turn people to a god, but it will be the wrong god. I believe that is why this particular miracle is highlighted here. It is all part of the deception to turn people to the worship of the beast.

It is interesting that the Two Witnesses have fire proceed from their mouths! That is in Revelation 11:5. Maybe this miracle that is done here in Revelation 13:13 is one of those "top this" miracles from Satan; a way of trying to do as much as the prophets of God can do. He is always in competition with God.

That is exactly what the Egyptian magicians did when God told Moses to throw down his staff. The Egyptian magicians threw down their staffs, and the same thing happened. But then God stopped it after a certain point so they could not mimic the true miracles and signs of the true prophets of God anymore.

In this case, by this time, all restraint has been taken off, and they are able to do the type of a miracle to the point of calling fire down from heaven. And it will convince many people.

On to the image of the Beast. This is another area of contention. Protestants say it is a real statue that is made to speak, as well as to kill non-worshippers of the Beast. The

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church of God has taught that the false church set itself up with the same structure as the government of the Beast—that is the image of the Beast. The false church is the image of the Beast.

Again, there are problems with both, but I think that the church of God's explanation is better. Yet, I have to wonder if the Beast would share worship with the false church because to worship the image is to worship the man. Will the Beast share the worship with the False Prophet, with the false church?

Would it not be a rival to the Beast—to the anti-Christ? And from what we know of his character, he will suffer no rivals. He would not mind so much if people were worshipping an actual statue of himself. However, the wording of these verses seems to imply an end-time activity—not something that has happened down through the ages as the church's interpretation has traditionally been. So, the wording implies literally it happening—a real, literal image, a statue. So, there are questions here as well. It is hard to say.

The next word I want to look at is "breath." "He was granted power to give breath to the image." This is *pneuma*, variously translated "breath," "life," "spirit," and even "wind" or "power." The image is somehow animated—made active enough to communicate, as well as to cause people to die. This could be a way of saying that the image, whatever it is, will teach, spread its doctrine, and have capital authority over the lives of 'heretics'. If we want to take it down to its most basic, that seems to be what it is. It will both teach or spread its doctrine, as well as have capital authority over the lives of 'heretics'.

We are finally getting to the end here.

Revelation 13:16-18 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or 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 it is the number of a man: His number *is* six hundred and sixty-six.

Let us notice this very carefully. The first thing we need to understand is that the mark does not originate with the Beast. It comes from the False Prophet. "He causes all, both small and great . . . to receive a mark on their right hand." The governing authority for the mark is the False Prophet, but it identifies the Beast, not himself.

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The Beast is not the one that says, "You shall have this mark." It is the religious entity that says, "You shall have this mark." So, rather than a governmental mandate, it is a religious thing because it comes from the False Prophet.

Second, let us notice that it is universal. He names just about every class of people who must take it: Rich and poor, small and great, free and slave. That includes everybody—men, women, and children.

The third thing is this word "to receive." It is actually reflexive. Do you know what that means? It comes back upon oneself. The actual way that this should be translated is, "He causes all to give themselves a mark." It is not necessarily enforced upon one because one voluntarily takes it. But, he certainly is the cause of it.

Do we understand what is happening here? It is something that is broadcast. It is something that is given to the people. But, the people decide to take it! They choose this mark for themselves! The False Prophet commands it, but the people take it voluntarily. So, the people who take it are not innocent. They have made the choice to take it. All the False Prophet did is to put it out there, but the people take it.

This is the message of the third angel:

Revelation 14:9-11 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

This is why the angel can say this. It is not something that people are forcibly lined up and stamped with something. It is something that is preached, and people accept it. So, they are no longer innocent. They cannot claim that this was forced upon them.

Now, let us go to the word "mark" (Revelation 13:16-18). The word in Greek is *charagma*. It has a broad range of meanings: It could mean a work of art, like a carving. It could mean a snakebite, because a snakebite makes a mark on one's flesh. It can also mean an impress or seal. And it could mean several other things as well that I did not choose to mention today.

What is interesting is that there is no ancient evidence whatsoever, either in Greek or Roman culture, of *charagma* being used as the word to denote marking or branding on a *person*. This just blows to smithereens the idea that it is going to be some sort of brand on your hand or forehead, with the number 666 written there or something like that. Or, the latest one, a microchip being placed in your hand and on your forehead.

It is not something that is physically done on a person's flesh. I think that this is a clue, this *charagma* not being used as branding, that John was not talking about an actual tattoo, seal, or other mark on the skin. It is probably not a physical mark.

However, it is an attitudinal sign—a spiritual sign that shows identity, loyalty, and ownership. It is just like the sign of the Sabbath. You keep the Sabbath, but you do not have anything on your hand or on your forehead to say that you keep the Sabbath. People know that you keep the Sabbath because either you tell them you do, or they see you get out in your nice clothes into your car and drive away to church services every week.

Not only that, because you keep the Sabbath, you do so many other things that are weird, strange, or different than the other people on your block because they keep Sunday and a whole different doctrine. It changes the way that people live—their way of life.

So the same thing happens with the mark of the Beast. It is not something that is imprinted on them; it is something that comes out in the way that they live their life, and that reveals itself in either the right hand or in the forehead. Remember my last sermon? I talked about the Pharisees attaching phylacteries to their forehead or to their right wrist. It is the same thing. The right hand suggests activity or work, and the forehead represents thoughts, attitudes, emotions, ideas, beliefs, and any other kind of mental activity.

The identifying sign then, what we see here, will be recognized in the activities and the ideas and the words of the people who take the mark. It is going to be the way that they live. It will show whether they are for God or whether they are for the Beast.

Now it says a bit later on that they cannot buy or sell. This means that if you do not take the mark, your social and economic activity is going to be reduced to just about nothing. You will be marginalized. Those who refuse to follow the teachings of the false prophet will be repressed and persecuted, if not killed. They will be easy to spot because they do not have the same attitude and do not do the same things that the rest of the people in the world who have the mark do. These people will have to trust in God for their

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sustenance because they will not be able to procure it for themselves, at least not in the usual channels. Like I said, they will be marginalized, impoverished, and crushed.

Mark, name, and number. There seems to be an equivalence here. They amount to the same thing, whether you take the mark or the name or the number. It is all the same. It all identifies loyalty and worship of the Beast.

If you want to chase out the word "name," it often implies authority. And "number" has, to the modern mind, a link with economics. So, it is possible that the differences here are simply that people have different reasons for worshipping the Beast. It may be political, religious, or economic. But, for whatever reason that they decide to take the mark of the Beast, they are worshipping the Beast and therefore under God's curse. So whether people do it for political reasons, economic reasons, religious reasons, cultural reasons, or whatever the reasons are, they still have the mark. It is the same thing to God.

Let us go down to verse 18. You might think, "Wow! Here it is, time to stop, and he is just now getting to the 666 part." But, my explanation of the 666 part is very simple. I do not think that it means what we thought it meant.

Revelation 13:18 ...for it is the number of a man...

This is another vague phrase. It could mean a specific man's number, which most people have taken it to mean. Or it could mean the number of a human—a human number, which is the way that I think it should be taken.

If you take it the former way, you are looking for an individual man whose names adds up to 666 using *gematria* (Hebrew), or as the Greeks call it, *isocephial*. What these two languages did was that they used letters for their numbers. And so each letter might have a numerical equivalent.

Maybe an *A* stood for "1," and *B* stood for "2," and so on. Eventually, one has a whole set of letters that stand for numbers. So, if you were to take the name, "Nero Caesar," by working it out in Hebrew, you get 666; but if you do it in Greek, you do not get the same thing. People have tried to do this for the names of Hitler, Mussolini, Napoleon, and several other various beastly figures in world history, and it becomes just one big confusing mess.

It might even be Joe Schmo down the street who is the beast, you think, because his

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number in Hebrew adds up to 666. Some even do this using Latin.

To me, that sounds like a great deal of confusion, and makes for almost endless possibilities. And so, if it matches several thousand people on the earth, you are not going to be able to point to the Beast. You are not going to pick them out.

That being the case, I personally prefer another interpretation. And that is that 666 is the number of ultimate human *imperfection* apart from God; meaning 777 would be the ultimate perfection of a person in close proximity with God or under God. But 666 does not quite reach 777, the number of perfection to the third place.

Now, 6 is the number of man throughout the Bible. Human beings were created on the sixth day. Human beings were given about 6,000 years—six days as it were—in God's plan to show that they cannot govern themselves. Six seems to be the number that represents man's inability to reach the perfection of God alone. Thus, the 666 figure makes this man identifiable to those who think as God does, those who are striving towards 777.

The Beast, then, would be the ultimate in humanism, we might say, the pinnacle of what man can produce on his own apart from God. This will be a great man, no doubt. Of course, he is going to be infused by Satan the Devil to do all the things that he is going to do, but it is going to end in failure as we have all seen.

So, we are looking for an end-time system and a ruler who will embody all that is human and opposed to God. That is what I think 666 comes down to mean. That is what anti-Christ means. That is what we have called this person since the books of I, II, and III John have been extant. He is anti-Christ. And, that is what 666 means.

It is the mark of the one who is thoroughly opposed to God. So, we do not need to worry about some kind of governmental number, some computer chip, some tattoo, or some other physical mark that we are going to have to take or die. We are looking for attitudes, goals, works, teachings, that are against God, putting Him down, and elevating humanity.

We already see that at work. Do we not see the mystery of iniquity already at work? Just name any kind of news event over the past 80 years or so, and there will be a steady rise of humanism and the putting down of God. God is dead—is He not?—according to these types of people. And God has been strategically and progressively pushed out of our lives from that time until today, when He is barely even allowed into the country.

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As mentioned, then, what we are looking for is the Tower of Babel to the n th degree. We are looking again for another mighty hunter against the Lord—Nimrod, the Ultimate.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints [listen!]; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

How are you going to protect yourself against the mark of the Beast, against the delusions of the False Prophet?

Keep the commandments and follow the Gospel. Have the faith of Jesus Christ. Those are the ones that we see all through the book of Revelation that the Dragon hates. The Beast will hate them; the False Prophet will hate them. Nevertheless, they are the ones who get the reward.

So, here is the patience of the saints: Keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus Christ.