Revelation 13

Two Beasts:
The Great Counterfeit

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Satan cannot create; he can only copy. He builds a counterfeit trinity, a counterfeit resurrection, a counterfeit worship and a counterfeit seal — and the whole world follows. But every "was given" in this chapter reminds me that the beast runs on a leash God holds, and for a set time only.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

REVELATION 13 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw ⚠ a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads ⚠ the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and ⚠ the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his ⇄ deadly wound was healed: and ⚠ all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they ⇄ worshipped the dragon which gave ⇄ power unto the beast: and they ⇄ worshipped the beast, saying, ⚠ Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and ⇄ power was given unto him to continue ◷ forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in ⚠ blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him ⚠ to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and ⇄ power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall ⇄ worship him, whose names are not written in ★ the book of life of the Lamb ▲ slain from the foundation of the world.

9 ▮ If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is ▮ the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld ⚠ another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had ◷ two horns like a lamb, and ⚠ he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the ⇄ power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to ⇄ worship the first beast, whose ⇄ deadly wound was healed.

13 And ⚠ he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And ⚠ deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had ⇄ power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an ⇄ image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had ⇄ power to give life unto the ⇄ image of the beast, that the ⇄ image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not ⇄ worship the ⇄ image of the beast should be killed .

16 And he causeth all, both ◷ small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a ⇄ mark in their right hand , or in their foreheads:

17 And that ◷ no man might buy or sell, save he that had the ⇄ mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath
understanding count the number of the beast:
for it is the number of a man; and his number is
Six hundred threescore and six.

Marked in the text

- **v1** a beast rise up out of the sea
- **v1** the name of blasphemy
- **v2** the dragon gave him his power
- **v2** power *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** deadly wound *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** all the world wondered after the beast
- **v4** worship *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** Who is like unto the beast
- **v5** forty and two months
- **v6** blasphemy against God
- **v7** to make war with the saints
- **v8** the book of life of the Lamb
- **v8** slain from the foundation of the world
- **v9** If any man have an ear, let him hear
- **v10** the patience and the faith of the saints
- **v11** another beast coming up out of the earth
- **v11** two horns like a lamb
- **v11** he spake as a dragon
- **v13** he doeth great wonders
- **v14** deceiveth them that dwell on the earth
- **v14** image *(every occurrence)*
- **v16** small and great
- **v16** mark *(every occurrence)*
- **v17** no man might buy or sell
- **v18** Here is wisdom
- **v18** count the number of the beast
- **v18** it is the number of a man

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 13:11 (KJV)

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Setting

Chapter 12 showed the dragon cast down to earth, "having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time" (12:12). Now "the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore" (v1) and calls up his helpers. John sees two beasts, one from the sea and one from the earth. The war against the woman's children (12:17) now has a face, a voice and a mark.

Structure

- vv1–4 — **the beast from the sea:** "having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names" (v1). He is like a leopard, a bear and a lion, "and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority" (v2). One head looks slain,

"and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast" (v3). They worship the dragon and the beast: "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" (v4).

- vv5–8 — **his mouth and his war:** "a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him" (v5). He blasphemes "His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven" (v6). He makes war with the saints and overcomes them, with "authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation" (v7). All the earth worships him — "everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain" (v8).
- vv9–10 — **a call to the saints:** "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" (v9). Captivity and the sword will come; "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints" (v10).
- vv11–15 — **the beast from the earth:** "he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon" (v11). He makes the earth "worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed" (v12). "He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men" (v13). He deceives the earth-dwellers into making an image to the beast (v14), gives it breath so it speaks, and has those who refuse to worship it killed (v15).
- vv16–18 — **the mark and the number:** everyone — small and great, rich and poor, free and slave — is "to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead" (v16), so "that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark" (v17). "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" (v18).

Repeated words

beast (throughout the chapter); worship (vv4, 8, 12, 15); authority (vv2, 4, 5, 7, 12); was given (vv5, 7, 14, 15); wound (vv3, 12, 14); blasphemous / blasphemies (vv1, 5, 6); dragon (vv1, 2, 4, 11); signs (vv13, 14); image (vv14, 15); sword (vv10, 14); mark (vv16, 17); number (vv17, 18).

Contrasts

the beast's head "as if it had been slain" (v3) ⟷ "the Lamb who has been slain" (v8). "Two horns like a lamb" ⟷ "he spoke as a dragon" (v11). The world asks "Who is like the beast?" (v4) ⟷ the name Michael means "Who is like God?" (12:7). A name written in the book of life (v8) ⟷ a name and number on the hand (vv16–17). The beast's mark on the forehead (v16) ⟷ God's seal on the foreheads of His bond-servants (7:3). The beast overcomes the saints (v7) ⟷ the saints overcome "because of the blood of the Lamb" (12:11).

Chapter theme (my words)

Satan cannot create; he can only copy. He builds a counterfeit trinity, a counterfeit resurrection, a counterfeit worship and a counterfeit seal — and the whole world follows. But every "was given" in this chapter reminds me that the beast runs on a leash God holds, and for a set time only.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 13:8 (KJV)

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall ⇄ worship him, whose names are not written in ★ the book of life of the Lamb ▲ slain from the foundation of the world.

How to read the beast

Christians read this chapter four main ways, and I want to understand each before I settle:

- **Futurist** — the beast is a coming world ruler, the Antichrist, heading a final empire just before Christ returns. This is Guzik's view.
- **Preterist** — the beast is first-century Rome and its emperors, especially Nero; the early church sometimes linked 666 to Nero's name, as Guzik notes.
- **Historicist** — the beast is a power running through church history; through the centuries many have pinned 666 on popes, reformers and dictators.
- **Idealist** — the beast is the recurring spirit of state power demanding worship. Mounce, quoted by Guzik, captures this note: "The beast has always been, and will always be, in a final intensified manifestation, the deification of secular authority."

These views overlap more than they fight. Rome was a beast to John's first readers, beasts have risen in every age, and Guzik expects a final one.

The beast from the sea (vv1–4)

To Israel the sea was a picture of chaos and the restless nations. The beast looks like his father the dragon — seven heads, ten horns (12:3). Leopard, bear and lion are Daniel's beasts in reverse order (Dan 7:4–6): this last empire gathers up all the empires before it. Daniel's fourth beast had ten horns (Dan 7:7, 24), and Guzik ties this to a revived form of Rome. Is the beast a system or a person? Guzik leans toward a man closely identified with his empire — he is worshiped, his number "is that of a man," and he goes to destruction. Seiss: "This beast is finally damned." His power is borrowed: the dragon gives him what Jesus refused in the wilderness (Matt 4:8–10).

The counterfeit resurrection (v3)

The word for "slain" is the same word used of the Lamb (5:6; 13:8). Satan mimics the cross and the empty tomb, and the whole earth is amazed. Guzik: "Satan can't create, but he can effectively deceive with imitation." The world's question — "Who is like the beast?" — is worship built on power. Robertson, in Guzik: "Worship of the devil and the devil's agent is justified purely on the ground of brute force."

Given, given, given (vv5–8)

Four times the text says "was given." The beast's mouth, his time and his war are all permitted. Forty-two months is three and a half years, the same span as 11:2–3 and 12:6, 14, and Daniel's "time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25; compare Dan 9:27). He "overcomes" the saints — Guzik: this does not mean

"that the beast can overcome the faith of the saints." They lose their lives, not their crown. Who are these saints? Guzik, holding a pre-tribulation rapture, sees believers who come to faith during the tribulation; post-tribulation readers see the church itself. Either way, the dividing line is not courage but the book of life of the Lamb (v8). Whether "from the foundation of the world" goes with the names written or with the Lamb slain, both are true (1 Pet 1:19–20; Eph 1:4).

Captivity and the sword (vv9–10)

"If anyone has an ear" — the same call as the seven letters (2:7). God's people will not fight the beast with the beast's weapons. Guzik reads v10 as a reminder that each person still answers for what he does. The saints' only weapon is "the perseverance and the faith of the saints."

The beast from the earth (vv11–15)

Later called "the false prophet" (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He looks like a lamb and talks like a dragon. Guzik calls the three an unholy trinity: the dragon in place of the Father, the first beast in place of Christ, and the second beast imitating the Holy Spirit — pointing people to worship someone else, working signs, giving breath (v15). His fire from heaven copies Elijah (1 Kgs 18:38) and the two witnesses (11:5). Miracles alone prove nothing (Deut 13:1–3; Matt 24:24; Exod 7:11–12). Guzik: "Signs and wonders will be present among Christians, but the real marks of God's work are love and truth." The speaking image recalls Nebuchadnezzar's statue (Dan 3), and Guzik connects it with the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3–4).

The mark (vv16–17)

No class is exempt — small and great, rich and poor. The mark controls commerce: no mark, no groceries. Guzik notes the word *charagma* was used for an engraving or stamp, and says, "a literal mark needed to buy or sell is certainly conceivable and practical." But the mark is more than technology; it is a public pledge of loyalty, the devil's copy of God's seal (7:3; 14:1). Chapter 14 makes clear that taking it is a choice of worship (14:9–11).

666 (v18)

"Here is wisdom" — a call to discernment, not to a guessing game. Guzik: "the schemes for unlocking the number of the beast are as confusing as they are endless." He notes several possibilities: in Greek the letters of "Jesus" total 888, so 666 may picture man falling short again and again; and Solomon's yearly gold weighed 666 talents (1 Kgs 10:14), a picture of a gifted man ruined by glory. The plainest point is the text's own: "the number is that of a man." The beast, for all his wonders, is only a man.

Word study (Greek)

- **beast — *thērion* (G2342):** a wild, dangerous animal; contrast *zōon*, the "living creatures" around the throne.
- **diadems — *diadēma* (G1238):** royal crowns of rule, not the victor's wreath (*stephanos*).
- **blasphemies — *blasphēmia* (G988):** slander, speech that insults God.
- **slain — *sphazō* (G4969):** to slaughter; used of the Lamb (5:6) and of the beast's head (v3).
- **wound — *plēgē* (G4127):** a blow, stroke, wound; elsewhere "plague."
- **amazed — *thaumazō* (G2296):** to marvel, wonder at.
- **worship — *proskyneō* (G4352):** to bow down, kiss toward, pay homage.

- **authority — *exousia* (G1849):** delegated right and power to act.
- **overcome — *nikaō* (G3528):** to conquer, prevail; the word of the promises "to him who overcomes" (chs. 2–3).
- **perseverance — *hypomonē* (G5281):** endurance, staying under the load.
- **Lamb — *arnion* (G721):** a little lamb; the second beast's "lamb" horns borrow the word.
- **signs — *sēmeion* (G4592):** a miracle that points to something beyond itself.
- **deceives — *planaō* (G4105):** to lead astray, make to wander.
- **image — *eikōn* (G1504):** a likeness, statue, representation.
- **mark — *charagma* (G5480):** an engraving, stamp or brand.
- **calculate — *psēphizō* (G5585):** to count with pebbles, to reckon.

Cross-references

Exod 7:11–12; Deut 13:1–3; 1 Kgs 10:14; 1 Kgs 18:38; Dan 3:1–7; Dan 7:3–8, 23–25; Dan 9:27; Dan 11:36; Matt 4:8–10; Matt 24:15, 24; John 5:43; 2 Cor 11:14; 2 Thess 2:3–12; 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:1–4; Rev 7:3; Rev 12:9–17; Rev 14:9–11; Rev 17:8; Rev 19:20.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 13:18 (KJV)

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Command to obey — "If anyone has an ear, let him hear."

The whole earth was amazed and followed (v3). I'm called to listen to Jesus instead of the crowd. Test what impresses me — success, power, signs — by love and truth. "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

Sin to confess — following power

The world worshiped the beast because no one could fight him (v4). I've been drawn to strength more than holiness — to the man with money, the leader with a crowd. The men I disciple know this pull: the dealer with the car and the cash, the gang that seemed like it could protect them. That worship never ends free.

Warning to heed — the mark is a choice

No one wanders into the mark; they take it to keep their job and feed their family (v17). Every compromise I make to keep my paycheck or my standing is practice for a bigger one. Small surrenders train the heart for the big one.

Promise to trust — "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)

The beast was "given" everything he had, and only for forty-two months. My name is written in the Lamb's book (v8). The beast can take a man's life; he cannot take his name out of that book.

Example to follow — the perseverance and faith of the saints (v10)

They didn't win by the sword. They endured and believed. For a man in prison, a man fighting to stay clean, a man with no hope left, this is the way through: not a dramatic victory but faithful endurance, one day at a time, refusing to bow.

Worship

"Who is like the beast?" the world asks. I answer with Michael's name: who is like God? The beast's wound was healed for a season; the Lamb was truly slain and truly rose, and He alone is worthy.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Lamb who was slain, open my ears to hear You above the crowd. Keep me from being amazed by power and signs and from bowing to whatever promises to feed me. Give me the perseverance and faith of Your saints. Thank You that my name is written in Your book. Make me a steady voice for the men who are tempted to follow the beasts of this age. Amen.