

He's Just a Man

Revelation 13

There are two entities in this chapter which God wants us to know about. They are both termed beasts as descriptors of their nature. From the time he knew of our creation, Satan has desired to destroy mankind for we were made in the image of God. We are triune beings composed of spirit, soul and flesh. As such we are representative of the triune 'nature' of the Lord – Father, Son and Spirit.

The devil's own unholy trinity is displayed in this chapter as the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. We can also look at them as the counterpoints (though NOT equals) to Jesus and John the Baptist. In either case, we're dealing with evil counterfeits and herein, God will expose them, for their end is an eternal lake of fire.

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, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sands of the sea. John's position upon these sands may be a reminder that the focus of this terrible time is indeed upon those people. The sea, as we covered in other chapters, is representative of the gentile nations as it is in Daniel's prophecies as well.

Now previously, we witnessed a dragon having a similar description, but this creature, though similar, is distinct. This "beast" arises out of the sea or the gentile nations. Having seven heads and ten horns reminds us of the dragon and it should for we will learn soon that it is the dragon (Satan) who gives this beast his power. As with the dragon, the seven heads point to the seven empires that have ruled or will rule over the Hebrews – the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Romans and the antichrist. Each of these kingdoms were antichrist (that is, in place of Christ) in the sense that the true ruler of the Hebrews is Jesus Christ. Thus, the seven heads tell us that the antichrist will carry on the tradition of devilish oppression over God's people regardless of his initial promises.

The beast also has ten horns and I'm convinced they are upon one head – the last one. They are the ten kings (note the crowns) who will give their power to the beast and will rule with him during the tribulation period. (See also Dan 7:20-24)

There is also a blasphemous name upon the heads. We don't know for certain what name this is, but we do know that it is repugnant to God. In the Bible, names are frequently symbolic of the nature of the person or thing. From this, it is clear that all the antichrist kingdoms that have ruled over His people throughout history have been blasphemous to God.

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. In our lesson from Daniel seven, we learned that the imagery of the leopard, the bear and the lion probably refers to entities contemporary with the beast, specifically, the United Nations, Russia and the 'de-winged' US. Therein, I suggested that the removal of the wings from the lion could refer to the rapture of the church.

If that is the case, the quartet seen in Dan 7 will likely, after the rapture, coalesce into some kind of conglomerate power with the antichrist in charge. As we consider this beast, we know it is a man but it is also, in a sense, his kingdom. It is like a leopard (the UN) indicating a global or at the very least a multinational scope of power. His feet or means of transportation is like a bear (Russia) and this could refer to Russia's enormous supply of oil and gas which Europe is increasingly dependent upon. His mouth is like that of a lion. This could mean that the beast is loud and confident and/or that he, as the 'mouthpiece' of his empire, is from the country which the de-winged lion represents.

Satan gives him his power, his throne and great authority. Now, it is only by God's permission that Satan has ever done this throughout history with any kingdom, but when he (the devil) tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, one of his claims was that all the kingdoms of man

had been given to him and he in turn gave them to whomever he wished. Jesus did not contest this.

Power is the word "dunamis" and means the power resident within someone; throne is the word "tronos" and means his position, in this case at the 'top of the food chain' so to speak; great authority is "megas exousia" and means his great ruling authority. It implies that, like Nebuchadnezzar, he may have absolute dictatorial power, ultimately not being subject to any law but his own.

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. That little "as if" could mean that it is all an act. In any event, recall that the heads represent the myriad kingdoms that have each risen up out of the sea, (that is, the gentiles) over the sand of the sea, Abraham's descendants. This beast embodies all seven; that is, he is of the same spirit. Here, one of the heads has previously suffered a mortal wound. I'll suggest that this could picture that the antichrist and/or his empire itself, the last head, will suffer a mortal blow somehow and yet arise 'from the ashes'. Remember that according to Daniel's vision of Dan 2, the Hebrew people will be, at this time, jointly ruling over Jerusalem with the revived Roman empire (the clay mixed with the iron). As such, the antichrist at the top of this revived entity will have reason to

defend Israel or at least to appear to do so.

This has intrigued me for the first word for wounded means “slaughtered, butchered, put to death by violence”. It is not a wounding that was accidental or just happened to become life threatening. It is a slaughtering, violent, intentional thing. With this in mind, I’ve often wondered if the antichrist might somehow maneuver to take credit for the miraculous deliverance that God will provide Israel when Russia and her Muslim allies attack as described in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Let me explain.

In that passage, God makes it clear that as a result of His divine intervention against Gog, Israel will once again turn to Him. However, it may be inappropriate to interpret “Israel” too broadly. You see, there are and will be two Israels –

- the redeemed and the stiff-necked
- the ‘sand of the sea’ and the ‘earth’
- the children of faithful Abraham and the unbelieving children of the flesh.

Paul wrote, “...they are not all Israel who are of Israel; Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children...They which are the children of the flesh are not the children of God.” (Rom 9:6-8) and, “Know therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” (Gal 3:7)

It may be that the AC will deceive the world and especially the carnal Hebrews into thinking

that he, upon interjecting himself and/or his forces on behalf of Israel, has suffered a deadly blow (to himself or to the empire) but will ‘miraculously’ arise and assume the credit for saving them. After this war, with Russia and her Magog allies humbled, she could certainly be forced to provide his empire with all the oil and gas needed.

In addition, “all the world” can be misleading unless you realize that the word for “world” is the same word for earth and as such is consistently representative of the land of Israel. Recall that John, as a believer, is standing with the “sand of the sea”. What this could be saying is that all those of Israel who are not saved will marvel; they’ll be in awe of the one who has apparently rescued them from annihilation. Finally, they will ardently follow him as their messiah. At the same time, Eze 38 and 39 make it clear that in the eyes of “many nations” and of the spirit-filled Israelis (the true Israel), God will rightly be glorified.

Now although it’s possible, I don’t think this “deadly wound” refers to an isolated assassination attempt because of what we read in the next verse:

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” As we suggested above, the result of this supposed resurrection is that the reprobate Jews will begin to worship Satan and his protégé, the antichrist, just as Jesus predicted

when He said, *“I am come in my Father’s name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.”* (John 5:43) Note, however, that their praise of the beast is directly attached to his apparent military prowess. They clearly consider him a military genius. I don’t see how a survived assassination attempt would provide this kind of regard. If, however, the carnal, delusional Jews (those who were not sealed and saved in chapter seven) mistakenly think he is responsible for wiping out the overwhelming armies of Gog...that, I can see causing this awe and the lauding of his military capabilities.

Whether it happens in this way or not, Satan and his antichrist will indeed be adored by many, especially the deceived of Israel.

Recall that Jesus is called the “last Adam” in reference to the first Adam in the garden of Eden. That relationship is based upon them being the only two men to live on this planet in a sinless state. As the counterpoint to Christ, the antichrist, has a first and last relationship as well. Nimrod was the first conqueror and gatherer of men against God. He helped found the anti-gospel, false religion of Babylon. (More on that in chapter 17.) The antichrist is thus the last Nimrod for he does the same thing.

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. I’m inclined to believe this is speaking of the first three and a

half years of the tribulation, the period when heaven is silent (see chapter eight). During that time, the AC uses his masterful oratory skills to wow everyone and to make increasingly blasphemous claims. This verbal tirade against all things right and good will come to a crescendo when the AC ‘crosses the final line’ and proclaims to the world that he is divine.

Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. This will be the midpoint of the tribulation when he stands in the temple of God and claims he is god. (See 2 Thes 2:4) He will put in place the abomination of desolation which we’ll consider more in a moment. This brings us up to the days of the trumpet warnings, the seventh of which is the beginning of the outpouring of the vials of God’s wrath.

It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. These saints are specifically Hebrew believers but probably include gentile Christians who get saved during this time as well. We also have confirmed here that Satan, who we know has given the AC great authority, will be holding back nothing – in the spiritual realm, he’ll

give the beast authority over the whole world. At the same time, in the political realm, this probably shows that the nations of the world, perhaps through the UN, will also give authority to him to rule over them. Everyone on the planet apart from the persecuted saints will just adore this guy.

If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. This is the great admonition to everyone concerning this supposed savior. Though he will for a time seem to be exceedingly successful in capturing and killing the remnant of believers of the outlawed faith in Jesus Christ, he's going to go down. His day is coming, and in fact, this is what will give hope and thus patience to the saints.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. This is our second beast. He arises out of the earth – that is, unbelieving, carnal Israel. He has two horns like a lamb which to some seems to indicate that he will be an imitation Christian. Some have suggested that this could be an apostate pope. Since the lamb is used extensively in Hebrew worship, it could also mean that he's a religious Hebrew with a wicked heart. He will definitely be the 'religious' promoter of the first beast.

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. Unlike the Holy Spirit of God, this counterfeit counterpart is not omnipresent. He has a limitation to his authority – it is only in the presence of the AC who is specifically empowered (probably possessed) by Satan that he can use this authority. His power or authority is not his own but derived from the first beast, the antichrist.

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. His parlor tricks will deceive those on earth, but he can only do them in proximity to the beast. Remember, Satan is not God's counterpart. He's only an angel and a fallen one at that. There are limits to his power.

This false prophet spreads the word that everyone should make an idol in the image of the beast to celebrate that he was wounded by the sword and yet lived. Again, this whole resurrection thing may be contrived. Note, though that the word for sword here is what we would call a scimitar. This could again, refer to the AC supposedly defending the Jews against Gog and the Muslims hordes for a

scimitar is and has been a common weapon and emblem for the Islamic people.

It does seem, however, that the Islamic practice of beheading is utilized by the AC during his rule so it may be that after the war an 'olive branch' of reconciliation to the Muslims will lead to their involvement in his persecution of the believers.

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. The Greek word for breath is pneuma which indeed usually means breath (and sometimes spirit) but would be better translated here as "animation". In Rev 9:20 it says that the deluded people of the world will continue to worship demons and idols that cannot see or hear or walk – it specifically omits speak because this idol can do that. But this will be no voluntary religion. Like Nebuchadnezzar with his own golden idol, everyone will have to bow or be killed. Even now, university of Arizona scientists have achieved the technical breakthroughs necessary to create 3D holograms so the technology will certainly be available to create this talking animated idol.

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. Much speculation has surrounded the recent creation of the embedded RFID-style chip. The Greek word used here for "mark" means something imprinted or engraved. Like firmware, these chips are indeed imprinted with specific information. They even contain small transmitters which allow for tracking of the chip. Here is a description taken from Hoovers of one of the companies involved with this technology:

Digital Angel (formerly known as Applied Digital Solutions) can get under your skin. The company is best known for its VeriChip technology -- computer chips that can be embedded under the skin and read by a remote sensor to check vital signs and diagnose medical problems. Its VeriChip subsidiary markets the technology for medical use in humans. VeriChip won FDA approval for its product in 2004. It acquired wireless identification product provider eXI Wireless in 2005. Digital Angel gets about two-thirds of its sales in North America.

Of course, another possibility is a tattooed name or number. Whatever the case, everyone, without exception is going to be forced to take this mark or find themselves excommunicated from the economic system. There are three imprinting possibilities mentioned – a mark, the beast's name and the number of the beast's name. Perhaps these will represent echelons of privilege in the beast's kingdom.

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 666. Let's try to set aside all the nonsense we've all heard associated with this verse and take a sober look at it. First of all, the information given is clearly not to be dismissed for the Spirit expressly says, "Here is wisdom." The Bible says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, so if you're a believer, you should take special note – this is important.

"Understanding" is defined as "the capacity for spiritual truth, the higher powers of the soul, the faculty of perceiving divine things, of recognizing goodness and of hating evil." Does that sound like the spiritual lame brains who will be following the AC?? Of course not. This admonition is given to born again believers in Christ.

In ancient times, people would count with small pebbles. The word "calculate" or 'count' is derived from the word for these stones. The Greek Lexicon defines it as:

- 1) to count with pebbles, to compute, calculate, reckon
- 2) to give one's vote by casting a pebble into the urn
- 3) to decide by voting

Herein, the Lord tells His people to count or calculate the number of the beast specifically because it is the number of a man. Now, the antichrist will be promoted as god, but his number is that of a man. Why would the Lord tell his people to count or calculate this number and then just give it? Clearly,

there is something to be gained in the process.

Many have looked to the system of Hebrew numerics wherein each letter and annotation of the words has a number associated with it. The inherent difficulty with this is that there are many interpretations of these values, many approaches, and as a consequence, many claims that some significant so and so is the AC. The problem is compounded when the name is not of Hebrew origin. That seems to me like a recipe for personal interpretation and error and indeed, it has been.

1 Kings 10:14 says that Solomon received yearly six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold. Perhaps this suggests that the Antichrist, like Solomon, is a good man who becomes corrupted. Keep in mind, though, that we are told to calculate the number. In other words, we're not told to simply look for 666 but rather to expect that we'll have to somehow count or calculate it.

It is the number of a man. If, at the point of his open blasphemies, the AC's number is already commonly known as 666, then giving us the number doesn't make as much sense – there's no reason to calculate it. If, however, calculating this 'number of his name' before it is known openly, using 666 as the answer, leads to identifying a specific person, then it does make sense. If that be the case, the believers would then be assured that although this man comes to exhibit seemingly supernatural powers or even claims to be from another world, he's just a

man. He is not divine. Like King Cyrus of old (see Isa 44:28, 45:1) God has foretold his appearance.

You see, his supposed divinity will be the major delusion of the world during this time. Thus armed with the truth, God's people will be able to stand strong in face of the flood of lies that will come.

Because the definition of this calculating involves voting, I think it is quite possible that the AC will arise to power by way of election. However, this number does not refer to the number of votes or electoral supporters or such – remember, it is "the number [that when calculated is the same as or equal to] of his name". It may be that a voting process which uses a number, that when calculated is equal to his name, will emerge.

2 Thes 2 makes it clear that it won't be until after the Holy Spirit (and presumably, the church) is taken out of the way that the AC will be revealed. I have my suspicions as to who this man may be, but the people who will really need to calculate his number are those who, in those last terrible days during the tribulation, will be faced with amazing, deceptive displays of Satanic power.

The irony in this is poignant. Consider, as we wrap up this lesson, the following passage from the Gospel of John:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

The Jews answered Him, saying,

"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." (John 10:31-33)

The Jews of old were blind to the truly divine power of Jesus and incensed that the people considered Him as divine. In contrast, the modern carnal Jews will be impressed with the Satanic power of the AC and incensed when people fail to think of him as divine. As Jesus said, men love darkness rather than light. Be strong in your faith, brethren. Don't be taken in. That AC -- he's just a man!