

Last week in chapter 12 of the Revelation, we were given a picture of the spiritual battle that lies behind the world's persecution of Christians.

Towards the end of the world's history, Satan and his demons are cast out of heaven. And because he knows that his time is short, he unleashes all his fury. **First** he tries to deceive and destroy the church with a flood of evil. And when he doesn't succeed in that, he turns his fury upon individual Christians, with terrible persecutions...

Today, as we read chapter **13**, we're given another perspective – we're no longer focusing on the **spiritual** battle – we're now focusing on the physical outcome of that spiritual battle – how the spiritual battle, is being physically experienced in the world...

And once again, we're back in the domain of apocalyptic literature, and there's a lot of numbers here, and a lot of symbols, used to describe, what is going to be a terrible time for Christians.

13 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and

the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast.
⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

The Second Beast

¹¹ Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

At the end of chapter 12, Satan is about to unleash his fury on the faithful disciples of Jesus. And it ends with this sentence: “And he stood on the sand of the sea”...

And this is significant, because now in chapter 13, two beasts arise: One out of the sea; and one out of the earth. And with the image of Satan standing on the shoreline, there's no doubt that these 2 beasts are Satan's henchmen – because there he is, – he's overseeing the arrival of both...

The first beast (we'll discover later on) is the antichrist, and the second beast is the false prophet.

The 1st beast (the antichrist) rose out of the sea. And the description of this beast, is almost identical to the description of the dragon that represented Satan back in Chapter 12.

- 10 horns – means he's very powerful
- 7 heads – meaning he's been given all authority on the earth

Only **this** time, instead of the 7 **heads** each having a crown, each of the 10 **horns** have a crown... Telling us that the ruling authority that he wields upon the earth, will be very difficult to resist, because he is relying on his **power** to maintain it. His authority to rule, is because of his strength. And he is so strong that nobody can stand against him.....

He's described as being **like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth**

Now, that all sounds very strange. What is this weird looking Frankenstein monster of a beast? Well, I've said this before, and I'll say it again: "We're always going to have trouble understanding the book of Revelation, if we're not familiar with the Old Testament." In Daniel 7 Daniel describes 4

separate beasts coming out of the sea (Lion; Bear; Leopard; and then a more terrifying beast with 10 horns)... And these represented 4 kings (or as it pans out – 4 **kingdoms**).

And the most common explanation for these 4 kingdoms that Daniel saw, are the kingdoms (or the empires) of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and the Roman empire¹... The 4th kingdom – the Roman empire, was particularly powerful, and very hard on God's people...

And so straight away, we know that the beast rising from the sea, represents a king, or more likely a **kingdom** (or an empire). But **also**, we have a picture here, of **one single beast**, but this **single** beast is like a giant milkshake of all of the worst, (or the most terrifying) attributes of the 4 beasts of Daniel's dream...

And so what are we being told? Well, we have to be careful that we don't narrow this down too much, but this is what it seems to me: There will arise a world government, that is **very** powerful. It **may** be a single dictator... Or it may be a world-wide government system, or a world-wide alliance...

And at this point, I think it's far more profitable for us to identify "What" rather than "who"... Alright, it'll be easier for us to know "**What** to look out for", rather than "**Who** to look out for."

So, this "beast" – this world dictator (or world government), is depicted as the antichrist. He's almost like Satan incarnate. His power is given to him by Satan, but we also have to note, that antichrist only has his power, because God allows him to have it (and it's only for a time) ...

And this antichrist is made to **look** like the devil's version of Christ.

Here's the similarities in the imageⁱⁱ In the Revelation:

- Both Christ and the beast have swords;
- They both have followers who have their names written on their foreheads
- They both have horns
- They both look like they've been slain
- And yet they have both overcome their mortal wounds
- They are both given authority
- They both have authority over "every tribe, tongue, people, and nation"
- And they both receive worship

And so, the antichrist mimics the **real** Christ, in order to deceive many. And that shouldn't be a surprise for us – In 2 Corinthians, we're told that ^{2 Corinthians 11:14} **Satan disguises himself as an angel of light**. – he comes in the guise of something good, and that's all part of his deception.

Antichrist – this world ruler will be **so** powerful that nobody will be able to stand against him, and we're actually told that the people of the earth, will **worship** this ruler... Now, we probably have a great deal of trouble even comprehending this... Who on earth would worship their ruler??? We would never worship our politicians, would we??

But we only marvel at this, because we've never lived in a land where the ruler **has** absolute authority... *We live in a democracy, and **our** ruling governments are 'people pleasers' – They have to be, otherwise we won't vote for them... And*

even when our economy is failing, and our national debt is rising, they can't cut spending, and they can't increase taxes, because then we won't vote for them... And so they either have to lie to us to get our vote, or they have to buy our vote, and at the same time, send our country broke... And that's what we vote for – it's our own fault – in a democracy we get the leaders we deserve.

But when the antichrist rises to power, he will have **absolute** power... And when a leader has absolute power, that leader is worshipped... The Apostle John, who wrote this book of Revelation, knew all about this. He lived in a land where the Roman Emperor had absolute power, and that Emperor was worshipped. And if you **didn't** worship the emperor, you weren't allowed to work; you weren't allowed to buy food; In some cases you were imprisoned; fed to the lions...

Ahh, but you might say, “But that's a thing of the past. Nobody in their right mind would ever worship their ruler today!!!”... Wouldn't they????

You do know, it's not that long ago, that the image of Adolf Hitler and his Swastika was plastered all over Germany, and people would greet one another by saying “Heil Hitler” ...

In North Korea today, Kim Jong Un is adored / even worshipped by the people of North Korea, simply because he is the descendant of the their god-like founding president, Kim Il-sung . And if they don't demonstrate the correct amount of adoration, well they pay the consequences. And they're probably never seen again...

But let's not just look to the past, or overseas – in Australia:

- Some worship popstars

- Some worship sports stars
- Some worship movie stars
- Some worship the famous, simply because they are famous...

What do you think a mosh-pit is at a rock concert?

It's a place to gather, to adore, and worship. You're never going to hear the music better in a mosh-pit – a better listening experience is gained with a set of head phones at home – but you see, a mosh-pit isn't a place to listen to music – it's a place to worship.

Now, if a modern man or woman can worship someone who gives them a nice listening experience, don't you think they're capable of worshipping someone who has the power to feed them, or to prevent them from ever getting a job ever again?????

But this leader isn't **only** worshipped because of the consequences of **not** worshipping him: This leader, or this system of government, was mortally wounded. There was no way that it could survive. But he did. **its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast.**

This ruler looked like he was dead. It looked like it was all over for this ruler (or this empire).... There was no way that it could possibly recover, but recover it did ...

So, what is this antichrist like? Well, antichrist is exactly that – anti – Christ. He is against God. He blasphemes God... But only because he is allowed to... Alright, we're going to be told this over and over again. It may **seem** that God has lost control of the situation... But God has **not** lost control... God is **allowing** it happen, but only for a little while. And we have to remember that.

V⁷ Also it was **allowed** to make war on the saints and to **conquer** them.

The lie of prosperity theology says, “If you have enough faith, you'll prosper:

- You'll prosper financially;
- you'll prosper physically;
- You'll be healthy and wealthy,
- and you'll live a long life...”

That my friends, is a lie of antichrist. Jesus told us the exact opposite: to follow Jesus is to take up our cross. To be His disciple, is to enter a life of persecution and sometimes, poverty... And God will allow the **saints** to be persecuted, even unto death...

It is normal for the Christian church to be persecuted. The freedom and peace that we have as Christians in our country is **not** normal – it never has been.

Millions of Christians were killed in the various Communist revolutions. Christianity was outlawed. God was blasphemed... At the time, it would have been very easy to say “Well there's the antichrist – it's the rise of communism”...

But then again, millions of Christians have been killed, and Jesus is blasphemed, with the rise of Islam too.

Antichrist is allowed to make war on the saints, and to conquer them. And this will be a worldwide phenomenon – authority was given it over **every** tribe and people and language and nation

Now, we might find hard to imagine, how this could possibly be – that one ruler, or one government, would rule **all** the nations of the earth... Well here's 3 possibilities:

1. The first possibility, is that one nation will rise, and conquer every other nation of the earth. If you can remember back to Revelation 6 and the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse, a world leader rose, bent on conquest. So, the first possibility is, **that** world leader may be the antichrist.
2. A second possibility, is that the nations of the world, willingly hand over control, because they need someone powerful, to restore law and order. Let's remember again, the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse – There was **conquest**; followed by **anarchy** (lawlessness) where the people of the world would just kill one another; followed by **famine**; followed by **death**...

Now if you were living under conditions of lawlessness and famine and death, wouldn't you want someone to step in and sort things out?

*Nations **do** give their power over to others... Brexit was a reaction **against** Britain losing more of its*

independence, to the EU. And even in Australia, we're dictated to (to some extent) by the UN... And sometimes in some nations, circumstances get so terrible, that the nation themselves ask the UN to step in and restore peace and stability...

And so a 2nd possibility is that nations will hand their power over to antichrist, because he has the power to restore order...

3. A third possibility, (a bit left field) is that some kind of corporation gains so much power and influence in the world, that it effectively becomes the ruler of the world.

Of course there's other possibilities as well, but that's just 3 of them... But once again, let's not ask "**who**", but "**what**".

- Some person, or some organisation, gains so much power, that no one can stand against it.
- It's a ruler or ruling system, that blasphemes God, and makes war on Christians.
- People marvel at it, because it was near dead, but it recovered
- And because of this miracle and because of its power, people of the world, all over the world, begin to worship it

But there is one group of people who will **not** worship the antichrist: Christians... Anyone who personally knows the **true** Christ, won't be taken in by the antichrist...

So, will the Christians fight against him? No, they won't.

¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.

You know, any Hollywood movie that I've seen, that involves the antichrist, usually the heroes stand up and fighting against him... But that's not the way of the disciples of Jesus. We are **not** to physically resist... Our job, is to stand strong in the faith.

- If we are imprisoned, we are imprisoned for the Lord.
- If we are killed, we are killed for the Lord.

But if you choose to physically fight, don't believe for a moment, you're doing that for God...

(But let me clarify this, **here** we're talking about "personal persecution of God's people". I'm not talking about issues of whether it's right or wrong for a Christian to go to war when their nation goes to war – that's a separate issue).

Righto, the **2nd** beast.

If the 1st beast represents one world ruler, or one world ruling body, the 2nd beast represents his minister of religion, or one world religion. The second beast, is the false prophet.

This beast had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

That means, it appears Christ-like, because in the revelation, the lamb of God is described as having horns... So it appears Christ-like, **but** when the 2nd beast speaks, its words are not the words of God – they're the words of the devil.

Last week, as Chapter 12 described the spiritual battle, there was a flood of evil, coming from the dragon's mouth, to try and sweep away the church... And now here we're getting a bit more of a description of what this will look like – a false teacher, who appears Christ-like, but his words are deceptive...

We already have a new, social religion, that the world widely accepts, and it has crept in to many churches (under the guise of godliness[it appears Christ-like]), but it's not Godliness at all – it's basically a humanist religion, where humans are elevated to the place of God...

- It's a religion of "political correctness"
- Of human rights
- Of equality and inclusiveness
- It has the concept of a safe space
- where you can believe what **you** want to believe, as long as you don't expect anybody else to believe it too

And it categorically rejects anything that

- excludes anybody or any ideas
- in fact, it rejects any claim to exclusivity (such as Jesus is the only way to God)
- It rejects anything that condemns
- And it rejects any notions of sin that we need to repent of, in relation to God

And there are all sorts of social gospels, that are wholly acceptable to the world, but they do not hold to the uniqueness

of Jesus Christ crucified and raised as the only Lord. Whereas for Christians, that's our core belief...

And many of these false teachers seem like very nice people – they seem to be very friendly, and very loving, and very accepting (almost Christ-like), but when they speak, their lies and half-truths, are the words of the devil.

So, what is the role of the 2nd beast (false prophet)? His role, is to get the people of the world, to worship the ruler of the world. And of course, when they worship the ruler of the world, they're actually worshipping Satan.

How does he achieve it? Well, this false prophet, has power to perform signs and wonders. Just like Elijah, he can make fire come down from heaven. And Jesus has warned us about this. **Matthew 24:24** **For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.**

There are 3 ways that signs and wonders can be performed:

- There are the signs and wonders of God (done in the power of God)
- There are tricks and illusions (such as most stage magicians use to please their crowds)
- And there are signs and wonders, that are performed by the power of the occult – Satanic and demonic powers, accomplishing supernatural acts.

And it disturbs me, how even Christians are drawn to the signs and wonders of the occult... *My own grandfather – a very dedicated Christian told me once how an old water diviner,*

did his divination on his son (my uncle), and how my uncle's ailments were cured by following his prescription....

In our increasingly health obsessed world, even Christians participate in Yoga; and Thai Chi; and Iridology; and Raki,,, and all sorts of other Eastern Mysticism, because "Hey, this gives me health benefits – it's really great – it's gotta be good... What could possibly be wrong with it???"

Well, I'll tell you what's wrong with it – for example: Yoga and Thai Chi, are not just exercise regimes – if you want exercise, take up a sport, or go for a walk... The movements, and body positions of disciplines such as Yoga and Thai chi and various forms of the martial arts, are a form of worship of Eastern religions... And if there **are** health benefits beyond normal exercise, by what power do these benefits come???

It's in the domain of the occult...

The false prophet will lead astray even the elect, if that were possible.

By his signs and wonders, the false prophet **deceives those who dwell on earth** . People of the world will make images of the beast... And we know that idols are just useless blocks of wood, or chunks of stone. They can't do anything... But somehow this false prophet animates these objects. He **was** allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

Anyone who doesn't worship the world ruler, will be killed. And most people **will** worship him. They'll have his a mark of loyalty – either the name of the world ruler, or his number – 666.

And the only people who will be allowed to buy or sell, will be those who **have** worshipped him, and have his mark of loyalty on their forehead, or on their right hand...

Christians will be the only ones who don't, and so these are going to be terrible times for anyone who remains faithful to Jesus Christ.

Now of course, the question I'm pretty sure you all want to ask me, is "What is this mark? What is this number?"

When credit cards came out, that was the latest theory – it's going to be credit cards.

By the way, for a while I had a credit card that made me a little uncomfortable – You know the 3 or 4 digit number that's written on the back, on this credit card that I didn't use very often, was the number 666.

Maybe before credit cards, it was the serial numbers on bank notes ...

When barcodes came out, that was the mark of the beast.

What **is** the mark of the beast that is put on the right hand or forehead?

Is it a literal mark? Where if you **do** worship the antichrist, you **are** allowed into the financial system, so you can buy and sell goods... Technology is at a state now, where this is quite possible.

Each person would have an identifying mark, and funds are transferred electronically.

A tattoo on the hand, or a microchip... or more likely, a fingerprint from your right hand, or a retinal scan from just beneath your forehead...

Living in **our** age, of **course** we have to identify this cashless society with some form of electronic identification of the individual...

By the way, when I was at Bible College and learning Hebrew (not very well, by the way), but when we learned the alphabet, we learned that each letter also represents a number... And I was struck when I saw the letter waw or vav for No.6 www. And so, I'm very careful to make sure that the world-wide-web (and what **it** represents), is not something that will ever make me worship another God...

So, that's one option – it **could** be a literal mark, or a micro chip, or a finger print, or whatever, that allows us to conduct financial transactions...

The **second** possibility is that the mark of the beast is not a literal mark at all, but a symbolic mark. Followers of Jesus Christ, have the mark of the Holy Spirit on them. Followers of the devil have the mark of the antichrist on them.

In Exodus and Deuteronomyⁱⁱⁱ, it talks about the Law of the Lord, and how it should be so much a part of who we are and what we believe – it should be so much a part of our lives, that: Deuteronomy 6:8 **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.**

Now of course, some Jews take that literally, and tie a little box to their forehead (with the Law of the Lord written inside of it), or they have it tied to their right hand – they take it literally – what was supposed to be symbolic...

So, what is bound to **your** mind and **your** right hand? The law of the Lord – the Gospel of Jesus Christ? – Are you unashamedly a disciple of Jesus Christ, and following Him (for all you're worth)???

Or, are you worshipping the ruler of this world???? – who are you bound to?

Now, whether it be a literal mark, or a symbolic mark, the important thing I want you to notice, is those who do **not** worship the ruler of this world, will not have his number on their forehead, or their hand – it's not the other way around.... Alright, are you getting this? **Our** task, is to worship God, and God alone. And by doing this, we will not **have** the mark of the beast on us. We're sealed with the Holy Spirit.

If we are faithful to Jesus Christ, and refuse to worship the beast, we will not **receive** the mark of the beast, because we're not entitled to it... It's only those who worship the beast, who are entitled to the mark...

You know, sometimes we get caught up in the details, and we start to feel, “I’ve gotta work out what this mark is, so that I don’t unwittingly get branded by it, and therefore excluded from God... And we’ve missed the whole point...

The point is, if we stay faithful to Jesus, the beast won’t give us his mark – we’re not entitled to it – it’s as simple as that.

Remember last week – Chapter 12 told us about the spiritual battle... How do we conquer the evil one and not be taken in by him??? We overcome, by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of our testimony.

We hold to the faith, and we keep testifying to the good news of Jesus Christ. – that’s what it’s about.

So I haven’t told you what 666 represents, have I.... I don’t know. I reckon we’ll know when the time comes.

Our task, is to remain loyal to Jesus Christ, and to tell the good news to anyone who will listen (and to a heap of people who won’t listen). It’ll be costly though... You won’t be able to buy or sell – unless you can manage to grow your own tucker, your family will starve. And anyone who refuses to worship the beast will be killed...

But that’s OK, because those who die, die for the Lord.

ⁱ Archer, G.L., Jr., 1986. Daniel. In F. E. Gaebelin, ed. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

ⁱⁱ Beale, G.K., 1999. *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*, Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Exod. 13:9; so also Exod. 13:16; Deut. 6:8; 11:18