

**Revelation 13**  
**The Antichrist and the False Prophet**

The better manuscripts read “he stood,” instead of **I stood** in verse 1.<sup>1</sup>

The sea symbolizes the nations (Rev. 17:15), as does the sand of the sea (Rev. 20:8).

**Revelation 13 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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?”

<sup>5</sup> And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

<sup>6</sup> Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

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<sup>1</sup> *KJV Bible Commentary*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 2689

	<p><sup>12</sup> 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.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.</p> <p><sup>14</sup> 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.</p> <p><sup>15</sup> He was granted <i>power</i> 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.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> 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,</p> <p><sup>17</sup> 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.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number <i>is</i> 666.</p>
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This chapter introduces us to the two beasts. Keep in mind that the term “beast” does not mean that these persons are animals. They are persons that act like animals instead of humans. These verses present the “satanic trinity”—Satan, the Beast (Antichrist), and the False Prophet.

**I. Antichrist: The Beast from the Sea (13:1–10)**

Verse 1 can read, “And he [Satan, 12:17] stood upon the sand of the sea.” The sea symbolizes the nations (17:15), as does the sand of the sea (20:8). Satan calls out his “superman” from the nations and reveals his true character to the world. Up until now, the Antichrist has been operating peacefully as the friend of Israel. He made a covenant with the Jews three and one-half years before (Dan. 9:27), promising them the protection of the federation of Europe that he controls. But now this world ruler is to be revealed in his true satanic character. (For the heads, horns, and crowns, see 17:10–12.)

Three animals are used to describe the Beast, resembling Daniel’s prophecy in Dan. 7. Please read the chapter carefully. The four beasts picture four successive empires: Babylon (the lion), Media-Persia (the bear), Greece (the leopard), and the kingdom of Antichrist (the dreadful fourth Beast). The “little horn” of Dan. 7:8 is the Beast of Rev. 13, the Antichrist. Note that John saw

the animals in reverse, since he was looking back; Daniel was looking ahead. In other words, the kingdom of the Beast will be a continuation of these kingdoms, a revival of the Roman Empire.

Who is the Beast? Bible students have differed in their interpretation of the symbols in Rev. 13 and 17. It is important to note that three times we are told of his wound (13:3, 12, 14). This might suggest that the Beast will be slain and raised from the dead. In 11:7 and 17:8, we are told that the Beast ascends out of the pit, which certainly suggests a resurrection. Some think he will be Judas, raised from the dead. Both the Beast and Judas are called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12; 2 Thes. 2:3); Judas is called “a devil” in John 6:70. Whoever he might be, the Beast is Satan’s superman, his counterfeit Christ. The whole world will admire the Beast and worship Satan (v. 4), something Satan has always craved.

Up to this point, the Beast has been head of the federation of Europe, working in close cooperation with the world church (Rev. 17). He will pretend to be obedient to this apostate religious system and will use it to further his own conquests. About the middle of the Tribulation, Egypt and Russia will invade Palestine (Ezek. 37–38), forcing the Beast to protect the Jews. When the Beast gets to Israel, he will find that God has defeated Russia; and the Beast will decide to conquer Israel. He will at this point destroy the apostate church (the harlot of Rev. 17) and set himself up as the ruler and god of the world. Satan will give him power to do wonders; 2 Thes. 2 states that God will allow “strong delusion” to come upon the unbelieving world. People would not accept Christ, who is the Truth, but they will receive Antichrist, “The Lie.” The Beast will blaspheme the church in heaven and persecute the believing Jewish remnant on earth. As we saw in Rev. 11, at this point he will also slay the two witnesses, whose bodies will be raised from the dead after three and one-half days.

## **II. The False Prophet: The Beast from the Land (13:11–18)**

We see a satanic trinity (vv. 19–20). Satan counterfeits the Father; the Beast is the imitation Son and Savior; and the False Prophet counterfeits the Spirit. This second beast comes from “the land,” which probably means Israel. He is likely to be a Jew. We find in Dan. 9:26 that Antichrist will have Roman citizenship; but, like Paul, he could be a Roman Jew. However, Antichrist will need an associate to help him win the world. This associate will be the False Prophet. He has “horns like a lamb,” suggesting peace and friendliness, but there are no crowns (authority) on the horns. Satan gives him the same power as the first beast, but his task is to glorify the Beast and get the world to follow and worship him. Read Dan. 3 for a similar situation.

The False Prophet will duplicate the miracles of the two witnesses by making fire come from heaven (11:5; 13:13). This event will fulfill Paul’s prophecy of 2 Thes. 2:9 and Christ’s prophecy in Matt. 24:24.

The False Prophet is the one who orders the image of the Beast made. This is the “abomination of desolation” found in Matt. 24:15, Dan. 11:45, and 2 Thes. 2:4. The Beast will have his image set up in the restored Jewish temple in Jerusalem at this time. This image will come to life! It will speak and greatly amaze the world. Both the Beast and his image will speak “great things” and utter blasphemies against heaven.

Worldwide worship is not the only goal of the False Prophet. He will also establish worldwide economic controls. Just as the 144,000 have the Father’s mark on their foreheads (14:1), so the followers of the Beast will have his mark on their foreheads or on their right hand. This mark will enable them to buy and sell. Those who do not follow the Beast and who do not have his mark (his name) will suffer greatly; see 20:4. Satan will now have what he has always wanted: the world will be worshipping him, and he will be in complete control of all the kingdoms of the world. The only “fly in the ointment” is that Christ is reigning in heaven, and His kingdom

will one day be established on earth. Satan will vent his fury upon the saints of God on earth since he cannot touch Christ and the saints in heaven.

Verses 17–18 have caused a great deal of speculation: what is the meaning of the number of the Beast, 666? It is interesting to note that the first six Roman numerals add up to 666 (I = 1; V = 5; X = 10; L = 50; C = 100; and D = 500). This suggests, of course, the revival of the Roman Empire, but it does not tell us anything about the Beast. Both Nebuchadnezzar's image and the giant Goliath are identified with the number 6 (Dan. 3:1 and 1 Sam. 17:4–7), indicating that the Beast will be a “superman” in the eyes of the world. We do know that, in both Hebrew and Greek, numbers are made from letters, as in Roman numerals. The numerical value of “Jesus” in Greek is 888. However, it is futile to juggle letters and numbers to try to discover the name of the world ruler.

Six is the number of man. Man was created on the sixth day, and was given six days for labor. The total hours of the day are a multiple of six (4 6 = 24); so are the number of months (2 6 = 12) and the number of minutes (6 10 = 60). The Hebrew OT uses four different words for “man,” and the Greek NT uses two, a total of six. There are six different names for both the serpent and the lion in the OT; both are symbols of Satan. History tells us that the number “six” was used in the secret mystery religions of the East. It seems, then, that the Antichrist's number “666” represents the highest man can become apart from Christ. He is Satan's “superman,” his false Christ. Seven is the number of perfection, and this Satan cannot reach.<sup>2</sup>

13:1 Chapter 13 introduces us to two great beasts: one **beast rising up out of the sea**, and one out of the earth or land, that is, the land of Israel. There is no doubt that these beasts symbolize men who will play prominent roles during the Tribulation Period. They combine the features of the four beasts of Daniel 7:3–7. The first beast is the head of the revived Roman Empire, which will exist in a ten-kingdom form. He rises **out of the sea**, a type of the Gentile nations. He has **ten horns**. Daniel predicted that the Roman Empire would be revived in a ten-kingdom form (Dan. 7:24). He has **seven heads**. In 17:9, 10 these are said to be seven kings, a possible reference to seven different types of rulers or seven different stages of the empire. He has **ten diadems on his horns**. These speak of the power to rule, which was given to him by the dragon, Satan. He has a **blasphemous name on his heads**, and he makes claims for himself as if he were God and not a mere man.

13:2 **The beast is like a leopard, his feet like a bear's, and his mouth like a lion's**. In Daniel 7, the **leopard** symbolizes Greece; the **bear** is a type of Medo-Persia; and the **lion** represents Babylon. The revived Roman Empire thus resembles its predecessors in that it is swift to conquer like **a leopard**, powerful as **a bear**, and greedy as **a lion**. In short, it combines all the evil features of the preceding world empires. The empire and its ruler receive supernatural strength from Satan.

13:3 The beast has a mortal **wound** in one of its heads. Scofield explains: “Fragments of the ancient Roman Empire have never ceased to exist as separate kingdoms. It was the imperial form of government which ceased; the one head wounded to death.”<sup>24</sup> The **deadly wound is healed**. In other words, the empire is revived with an emperor as head, namely, **the beast**.

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<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 372

<sup>24</sup>(13:3) *The Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1342.

13:4 **The beast is worshiped** by men. They are not only amazed at him; they actually worship him as God. They also worship **the dragon**.

13:5, 6 The beast makes proud boasts and utters unspeakable **blasphemies**. He is allowed **to make war** (NKJV margin) **for forty-two months**. He speaks with callous irreverence against **God's name, His tabernacle**, and the hosts of **heaven**.

13:7 He makes **war** with God's people and overcomes many of them. They die rather than submit to him. His rule extends over all the world—the last world empire before Christ's Reign.

13:8 Those who are not true believers readily **worship** the beast. Because they never trusted Christ, their names were never **written in the Book of Life of the Lamb**. And because their names are not found among those of the redeemed, they are given over to error. They would not believe the truth; now they believe a lie.

13:9 This should be a warning to everyone to accept the light of God's word when it is available. The consequence of rejecting light is to have light denied.

13:10 True believers are assured that their persecutors **shall go into captivity and be killed with the sword**. This enables **the saints** to wait in **patience and faith**.

13:11 The second **beast** is another prominent figure of the Tribulation Period. He works in close cooperation with the first beast, even organizing an international campaign for the worship of the first beast and of a huge idol representing the Roman emperor. The second beast comes **up out of the earth** or land. If the land of Israel is in view, then this leader is almost surely a Jew. He is the False Prophet (see 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He has **two horns like a lamb**, giving the appearance of gentleness and harmlessness, but also suggesting that He impersonates the Lamb of God. He speaks **like a dragon**, indicating that he is directly inspired and empowered by Satan.

13:12–14 **He exercises all the authority of the first beast**, meaning that the Roman emperor gives him unlimited authority to act on his behalf. He has supernatural powers, **even causing fire to fall from heaven**. The purpose of his miracles, of course, is to deceive the people into worshiping a man as God.

13:15 He gives animation to **the great image**, the abomination of desolation, so that it can actually **speak**. The penalty for refusing to **worship** it is death.

13:16 The second beast insists that people indicate their allegiance to the Roman emperor by wearing the **mark** of the beast **on their right hand or on their foreheads**.

13:17 In addition to this mark, the beast has a **name** and a mystical **number**. Unless a person takes **the mark, name, or number of the beast**, he will not be able to **buy or sell**. It is an effort to force men by economic means to forsake Christ for idolatry. This will be a severe test, but true believers will prefer death to renouncing their Savior.

13:18 **The number of the beast is 666**. Six is the number of man. The fact that it is one less than seven may suggest that man has fallen short of the glory or perfection of God. The three sixes are a trinity of evil.

One of the biggest questions raised in connection with chapter 13 is whether the *first* or *second* beast is the Antichrist. Basically, the argument for the first being the Antichrist is that he insists on being worshiped as God. Those who hold that the second beast is the Antichrist point out that no Jew would ever accept a Gentile as Messiah, and that since the second beast is a Jew, He must therefore be the false messiah.

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**13:1, 2** The description of the first **beast (seven heads . . . ten horns . . . ten crowns)** is very similar to that of the great **dragon** (that is, Satan) in 12:3. Whereas the crowns are on the heads of the dragon, they are on the *horns* of the sea beast. The seven-headed beast may refer to Gentile world power as it relates to Israel, especially in the end times. The heads are identified both as mountains and as rulers (17:9, 10). A mountain is typically a symbol for a kingdom (see Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45). The seven heads could be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Persia, Rome, and a restored Roman empire. The ten horns may signify the final form of Gentile world power. The beast receives his **power** and **authority** from the dragon. The parallel to the four beasts (especially the fourth) in Dan. 7 and the explanation of the beast given in 17:8–11 make it seem that the beast symbolizes both a revived Roman Empire, which exercises universal authority, and a specific ruler, whom John calls the “Antichrist” in 1 John 2:18. The **blasphemous name** may be the common claim of ancient Roman emperors to be divine, or blasphemy against the name of the true God (vv. 5, 6) as Daniel predicted of the “willful king” during the tribulation period (see Dan. 11:36).

**13:3, 4 One of his heads** may stand for a specific ruler, but more likely it stands for an empire. The unbelieving **world** is enticed (12:9) by Satan to follow and worship the **beast**. Those who **worshipped** the beast also unwittingly worshiped the devil, **who gave authority to the beast**. Any false worship or idolatry is ultimately demonic and satanic (see 1 Cor. 10:20–22). The beast is worshiped because the world is convinced that no one is **like** him and that no one can successfully **make war** against him.

**13:5, 7 Forty-two months** is the duration of the beast’s worldwide supremacy, in keeping with the prophecy of Dan. 7:25.

**13:6** This first use of the word **tabernacle** in Revelation (see also 15:5; 21:3) may look back to the time when the power and presence of God were undoubted because the glory of God was seen clearly in the wilderness tabernacle. It may also look ahead to the time when God’s tabernacle will be among His people in the new heaven and earth (21:3). In the meantime, there is no visible answer to the beast’s **blasphemy**. He will appear to be victorious over God’s people.

**13:8 The Book of Life** is the register of those who will receive eternal life, in contrast to those destined for the lake of fire (20:12, 15). Just as it was God’s plan before **the world** began that Jesus Christ, the **Lamb** of God, would be **slain** for humanity’s sin, so the **names** of believers have been included in the Book of Life from the beginning (17:8).

**13:9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear** seems to imply that either the following saying (v. 10) or the wider context has significant present application, not just future reference. Therefore, widespread spiritual delusion and blasphemy, as well as persecution and martyrdom, should not surprise believers at any point in history.

**13:10** Even when believers face **captivity** or are being **killed**, they can have **patience** and **faith**, knowing that God will vindicate them (see Rom. 12:19) on “the day of wrath and . . . righteous judgment” (Rom. 2:5).

**13:11 Another** means “another of the same kind,” speaking of the close relationship between this **beast** from **the earth** and the previous beast that emerged from the sea (v. 1), even though their outward appearance is markedly different. This beast’s actions described in vv. 12–17 make

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<sup>3</sup>MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Re 13:1

it virtually certain that he is the false prophet spoken of in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. The two beasts may also symbolize the intermingling of secular, political power and religion during the Roman period and during the last days. This is the only place in Revelation where **lamb** does not refer to Christ. The lamb with **two horns** here is an emblem of Jewish worship and religious authority. **Spoke like a dragon** probably indicates that the second beast's message comes from the dragon (Satan), just as the first beast took his power and authority from the dragon (13:2).

**13:12–15 Great signs**, such as calling **fire** from **heaven** and giving **breath** and speech to the **image** of the first beast, are persuasive. These signs are very similar to those performed by the two witnesses (11:5, 6). The performance of great signs by the power of Satan is part of the mass deception prophesied by Paul in 2 Thess. 2:8, 9.

**13:16, 17** The **mark** is equivalent to **the name of the beast** and **the number of his name**. Apparently the mark of the beast is some sort of identifiable proof of ownership and loyalty placed on the **right hand** or the forehead. Since there is no evidence of such a practice in first-century society, this mark is apparently an evil counterfeit of the seal on the foreheads of the servants of God in 7:3; 14:1.

**13:18** After the preceding description of the tyranny of **the beast**, an explanatory comment designed to impart **wisdom** and **understanding** to the reader is given. The **number** (the “name” in v. 17) of the beast is **666**; it is also described as **the number of a man**. The beast is merely a man, not a god, as the signs might suggest. The number 6, just short of 7 (the number of completeness), is intensified as 666—the number of the most powerful man who is not God. This man's identity will someday be understood in relation to the number 666. It is a key for identifying the Antichrist.

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<sup>4</sup>Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Re 13:1