

## 02.03.2019 SATAN AND HIS ALLIES

***And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17***

The text above introduces the study for this week. After the victory of Christ at Calvary, Satan is enraged with the remnant people of God and goes to war against them. The battleground is now planet earth and in Revelation 13 we find Satan enlisting the aid of 2 allies – the beast from the sea and the beast from the land. Together they become the great counterfeit of the Holy Trinity of the Godhead.

Revelation 13 is written in 2 tenses – the past (13:1-7, 11) and the present/future (13:8-10, 12-18). While in the past, Satan's main strategy against God's people has been coercion and force, in the present and future his main strategy is deception. His unholy trinity will seek to oppose or counterfeit the redemptive activity of the Trinity. John uses a literary tool of describing the activities of this unholy alliance in Biblical language used to describe God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since Satan cannot create (only God is the Creator), he seeks to imitate the activities of the Godhead.

While we can interpret the prophecies describing the past relatively easily, we find that the prophecies of the future do not give us exact details of the final events of earth's history. We are not called to speculate about what God does not make known to us. The primary purpose of the prophecies of Revelation is to teach us how to live today and be prepared for the future.

### **The Dragon**

Satan has always sought to take the place and position of God (Isaiah 14:13, 14). In Revelation 12 and 13, he functions as the leader; authorising and giving orders to the other members of his trinity.

John uses the literary tool of parallelism to describe the counterfeit activities of this trinity.

<b>GOD THE FATHER</b>	<b>SATAN THE DRAGON</b>
Dwelling place in heaven - Rev 4 and 5	Dwelling place in heaven – Rev 12:3, 7, 8
He has a throne – Rev 4 and 5, 7:9-15; 19:4	He has a throne - Rev 13:2b; also see 2:13
Gives power, throne and authority to Christ – Matt 28:18, Rev 2:27; 3:21; Rev 4 and 5	Gives power, throne and authority to sea beast Rev 13:2, 4
He is worshipped – Rev 4:10; 15:4	He is worshipped – Rev 13:4a
He lives and reigns forever – Rev 4:9; 5:13; 11:15	He is destroyed forever – Rev 20:9, 10

### **The Sea Beast – a Counterfeit of Christ (Revelation 13:1-8)**

The sea beast acts with the full authority and power of the dragon as Christ acts in the full authority of the Father.

See Table below:

## The Sea Beast

## Jesus Christ

Comes from water to begin his activity (13:1)	Comes from water to begin his ministry (Luke 3:21-23)
Resembles the dragon (12:3; 13:1)	“He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9)
Has ten diadems (13:1)	Has many diadems (Rev. 19:12)
Has ten horns upon his heads (13:1)	The Lamb with seven horns (Rev. 5:6)
Receives power, throne, and authority from the dragon (13:2, 4)	Receives power, throne, and authority from the Father (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 2:27; chapters 4-5)
Forty-two months of his activity (13:5)	Three and half years of his ministry (as the Gospel of John indicates)
He was slain (13:3)	He was slain (Rev. 5:6)
Came back to life (13:3)	Resurrected (Rev. 1:18)
Received worship after his mortal wound was healed (13:3-4, 8)	Received worship after his resurrection (Matt. 28:17)
Was given universal authority over the earth after the healing of his mortal wound (13:7)	“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”(Matt. 28:18) after the resurrection
Who is like the beast? Rev 13:4	Michael “Who is like God” Rev 12:7
Global target (over all nations, tribes, tongues and peoples) – Rev 13:7	Global target (over all nations, tribes, tongues and peoples) – Rev 5:9; 10:11; 14:6

### The Earth Beast – a Counterfeit of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 13:11-17)

The earth beast acts as a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit represents Christ and acts on earth with Christ's full authority, so the earth beast acts with the full authority of the sea beast.

See Table below:

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## The Earth Beast

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## The Holy Spirit

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Called the false prophet deceiving people (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)

Called the Spirit of truth guiding people to salvation (John 16:13; Rev. 22:17)

Lamb-like (13:11)

Christ-like (John 14:26; 16:14)

Exercises all the authority of the sea beast (13:12a)

Exercises all the authority of Christ (John 16:13-14)

Directs worship to the sea beast (13:12b, 15)

Directs worship to Christ (Acts 5:29-32)

Performs great signs (13:13; 19:20)

Performs great signs (Acts 4:30-31)

Brings fire down from heaven (13:13)

Comes in fire at the Pentecost (Acts 2)

Gives life/breath to the beast's image (13:15)

Gives life/breath of life (Rom. 8:11)

Applies the mark on the hand or forehead (13:16)

Applies the seal on the forehead (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)

### The Activities of the Sea Beast: Revelation 13:5-7

*Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. 13:6, 7*

This beast had political and religious power for 1260 years. His activities are also described in Daniel 7:24, 25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

His primary aim was to claim for himself equality with God ('blaspheme His name'), the ability to provide a counterfeit salvation ('blaspheme His tabernacle) and make war against the saints ('those who dwell in heaven').

This historically refers to the power of the Roman Catholic 'magisterium' during the Middle Ages. "By the Magisterium we mean the teaching office of the Church. It consists of the Pope and Bishops... The day to day teaching of the Church throughout the world, when the Bishops are in union with each other and with the Pope, and present something as definitive, this is infallible. (Vatican II, *Lumen gentium* # 25). It was precisely by the use of that authority that Vatican I was able to define that the Pope alone, when speaking as such and making things definitive, is also infallible...The task of authoritatively interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on [Scripture or Tradition], has been entrusted exclusively to the living Magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." *The Basic Catholic Catechism. PART FIVE: The Apostles' Creed IX - XII*

The claim to forgive sins, to act as intercessor by the Roman Catholic church is the blasphemy of the tabernacle; a counterfeit salvation.

It is important to remember that the ones who will be held responsible for this activity is the Magisterium of that church. There are many sincere and God-fearing people in the Roman Catholic church.

During the 1260 years of the Middle Ages the church had great power and used it to coerce and persecute those who held to the pure gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.

### **The Activities of the Earth Beast: Revelation 13:12-15**

The earth beast arises after the sea beast has received its deadly wound (the removal of papal power by Napoleon in 1798). It is the friendly earth that at originally provided refuge for those fleeing persecution (Revelation 12:14-16). John tells us that this beast that has similarities to a lamb, will one day in the future, speak like a dragon.

In the future, the first beast will regain its power ('the healing of the deadly wound') and all the world will marvel and follow the sea beast (13:3). The earth beast by this time will have all the authority of the sea beast and will cause (make) the inhabitants of the earth (those who have rejected God) to worship 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. 13:12*

We saw in last week's study that this historically refers to the United States of America which was a small, relatively weak nation at the time of the mortal wound of the first beast, but had lamb-like qualities of freedom of worship and conscience. Revelation tells us that it will become such a powerful player on the world stage that it will be able to coerce the world to worship the first beast. This scenario is still in the future.

*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. 13:13, 14*

Here again we see Deception as the strategy of Satan. By seemingly miraculous signs the earth beast will deceive the world into worshipping the sea beast, which is really worship of Satan. He will cause them to make an image of the first beast.

At this point a caution is necessary against rash judgments many make when it comes to the identity of the two beasts of Revelation 13. Followers of Christ must manifest not only Christian love but also divine discernment as they proclaim "the everlasting gospel" and warn the world of the deceptive nature of Satan and the two beasts as his allies. Deciphering which group of people, or which individuals, belong to God's people is often impossible for human beings. It is God's prerogative to pass final judgment upon the people. One may apply the same principle of discernment to political and religious establishments as well. Since this earth is the valley of sin in which God Himself is working to save human beings from Satan and his allies, and since this world is comprised of human beings who struggle on all levels, including political and religious ones, we must recognize that rarely is an institution entirely evil. In all times and in all institutions God has his agents working for Him...As God's duty alone, any passing of judgment by human beings is irresponsible behaviour and often hinders the objectives of the gospel. *Ranko Stefanovic: Revelation. P.441-442*

### **The Image 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. 13:14, 15*

The people (i.e. where legislative power lies with the people) will make an image to the beast as commanded by the second beast. What is this image? It is the use of the same principle used by the church of the Middle Ages to enforce its religious decrees. People were not allowed to act according to their conscience; religious decrees were compelled on the people by the power of the state.

This is in complete contrast to the government of God. God gives man free-will; the freedom to choose or reject God's will for him.

One of the great issues of the Reformation, apart from the restoration of the true gospel, was the insistence of separation of the Church from the State. No longer should the Church be able to use the power of the State to enforce obedience. (Those who are familiar with European history of the medieval/middle ages and the works of Dante – he referred to the Montague /Capulet feud as based on this - will also recognise the Geulph/Gibhelline factions; the former supported the Papacy and the latter the State in the form of the Holy Roman Emperor. The Ghibellines were generally in favour of church-state separation).

### **The Mark of the Beast**

*He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark (the mark, the name) 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. 13:16, 17*

**The issue here is worship.** While those who worship God receive the seal of the Holy Spirit on their foreheads (they have their Father's name on their foreheads – Revelation 14:1), those who worship the dragon and the beast will receive their mark on their forehead and their hand.

The forehead stands for the mind, and the right hand stands for the deed and action. **Worship is an attitude of mind and is revealed in our actions; we serve whom we worship.** Jesus said to Satan, *'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'* Matthew 4:10.

The mark is not a visible sign. It is a counterfeit of Deuteronomy 6: 4-8. In this great passage, Moses reminded God's people Who they worshipped and their responsibility to God, their family and their fellow-men.

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." Deuteronomy 6:6-8*

God was not primarily speaking of literal wearing of His words. He was conveying to His people that they should be totally committed mind, body and spirit to Him and this devotion to Him would result in acts of godly love.

The mark of the beast is a counterfeit seal. It reveals that those who reject God are committed to the worship of Satan and his allies.

### **The Number of the Beast**

*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. Revelation 13:18*

In the book of Revelation, numbers have symbolic meanings (e.g. 144,000, 7, 12 etc). So this number has a symbolic meaning.

The context of this verse shows that it refers to the time of the end, not the past.

666 in Revelation is defined as a human number. The phrase in the Greek can be translated as 'the number of a man' or 'the number of humanity'. It refers to a system that opposes God.

The best way to understand 666 is from a spiritual perspective. Seven in the Bible is the divine number that expresses God's perfection. Being one short of seven, six represents humanity falling short of the divine perfection. This is based on the fact that humans were created on the sixth day—a day prior to the completion of the full week of seven days.

Humans find their purpose only in the number seven by acknowledging God as their Creator and Redeemer. *Stefanovic, Ranko. Plain Revelation.*

Thus 666 refers to humanity apart from God; humanity that refuses to acknowledge God. In the end time they are described as the inhabitants of Babylon. Ancient Babylon is associated with the number six. Their counting system characterised numbers by 6 and 60 (the sexagesimal system). It is still used for measuring time and angles. In Daniel 3:1, Nebuchadnezzar's statue was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide.

It is symbolic of a system that counterfeits God, and yet does not reflect His true glory which is His character.

### **Conclusion:**

The issue in the final crisis will be worship. Only God is worthy of worship (Rev. 14:7; 19:10; 22:8-9), and to worship anyone else is an affront to Him. The two groups in Revelation at the time of the end are identified as those who worship God versus those who worship the dragon and the beast. The final test will not be denial of worship, but rather who is worshipped.

Three groups of people exist today: those who love the gospel and are committed to God, those who hate the gospel and God, and the vast majority of people who are indifferent to or ignorant of the gospel. The last group is not necessarily against God, nor has it necessarily sided with Satan.

However, Revelation 13 makes it clear that as the end of time approaches, polarization will take place, and all will have to make a stand for either God or Satan. One group will worship and fear the true God (Rev. 11:1, 18; 14:7; 19:10), and the other will reject the gospel and worship the dragon and the beast (Rev. 13:4-15; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20). The key issue in the final crisis will be centered on the matter of proper worship. Christ's end-time followers will be characterized by their total commitment to God and their readiness to obey his commandments, including the one that points to the true day of worship to God, the Creator and Saviour (Rev. 14:7, 14). Those not truly committed to God—those who do not have unreserved love for the gospel—will find themselves completely exposed to the end-time deception and most likely to be deceived.

What matters in the final crisis, accordingly, is love for the truth (2 Thess.2:10). The deceived world will follow the religious system based on sensationalism and emotional expressions that will take the place of the gospel religion that involves heart and conduct. Love for the truth is the only hope for God's people in the final crisis. We may apply the same principle here for those who did not or will not live in the end time: sooner or later in life we all face issues and make decisions that place us on one side or the other. As the history of this world approaches its end, the book of Revelation appeals to God's people to take the Bible and, in a heart-searching spirit, to study the prophetic word for themselves. This is what Peter had in mind when he wrote: "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

**Total commitment to God and love of the gospel is the secret of victory for God's end-time people in the closing days of this world's history.** *Ranko Stefanovic: Revelation.*

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