

## **Study 27: Revelation 13:11-18**

**11 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.**

- The Lord opened John's eyes to see the reality of evil and its intelligent nature. The kingdom of darkness is powerful and clever. The first beast was more fierce looking, but this beast was more like a lamb. If the first beast doesn't overwhelm, then the second beast may woe the earth with its more gentle appearance.
- But this second beast spoke like a dragon, for it was speaking out of its true nature. The devil is religious in nature. He understands spiritual things and even quotes the Bible. Let's look at the temptation of Jesus, where the devil appeared to be spiritual but spoke "like a dragon":

**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him (Matthew 4:1-11)**

- The tempter was persuasive and persistent. He was offering great power that would have enabled Jesus to do some good things. But Jesus understood that power wasn't the issue, but rather the source of the power.
- Jesus resisted the devil and gives His church the same ability. The Holy Spirit gives the Church discernment to understand what evil is doing. There is no need to fear:

**Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith,**

**with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:13-18).**

- Evil days will come, but God equips His people for victory, even in death. That is the message of Revelation. What's more, Revelation is not a book about the devil. It is a book about the power of God!

**12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.**

- The devil is relentless. His aim is to keep and draw as many people away from God as possible. And remember what was said in the last study: all this is about worship; that is what he is after. The devil wants the worship that only belongs to God. He is a usurper who wants God's position.
- There is only one power greater than the devil's and that is the power of God. You will either succumb to one or surrender to the other. There are no other options.
- There is only one thing that will defeat the devil one and for all, and that is the Second Coming of Christ. At other times, he will appear defeated, only to reappear in the form of some new government or philosophy. That is what is meant by the image of the fatal wound that had been healed.

**13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.**

- God will accommodate people who choose repeatedly to reject Him and open themselves to counterfeit gods. Do you remember the story of when Moses first came to see Pharaoh to secure the release of Israel?

**So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said (Exodus 7:10-13).**

**Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. But the**

**Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart (Exodus 7:20-23)**

- The Egyptians had secret, evil arts that were able for a season to imitate the things that Moses and Aaron would do. That gave Pharaoh confidence that he could resist Moses and God. Pharaoh hardened his heart but then God took over:

**But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses (Exodus 9:12).**

- When God hardens someone's heart, it is only they have made repeated choices to harden their own heart.

**14 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.**

- All of life is a matter of obedience. Some will obey God, others the anti-God. The beast ordered the people to set up an image. The earth is full of images that claim to be God, to have power to heal, provide or save. But the early chapters of Revelation establish that there is only one is worthy of worship and that is the Lamb of God, Jesus.
- I am not insinuating that this power struggle is an easy one, for the enemy of Church is cunning and able to deceive. I have faith, however, that the Lord is able to protect me and bring me into what He has promised. That is what I have chosen to believe and stand in at this time.

**15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.**

- Martyrdom is a fact of life and history. Many who have served the Lord have given their lives to His service. Losing your life for God is not a sign of weakness on His or your part. We cannot love our lives more than God. That was the message to the Revelation churches; that is the message to the modern Church.
- I suppose the basic question is: Can you trust the Lord, even in death?
- There are many places today that if you proclaim faith in Christ, you will lose everything and perhaps even die.

**16 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead,**

- No one can escape making a decision about who their God is? No one can stay neutral. They will either serve the Lord or His counterfeit. Everyone will be forced to make a decision. The Church must reach out to the world, for many still don't know that there is another option to what and whom they are serving.
- The mark of the beast as described in these last few verses of chapter 13, have consumed the imaginations and attentions of many people. There is speculation of when and how that mark will come and be administered.
- I hope by now that I have established that Revelation is a book of symbols, given to a persecuted people so that their persecutors would not understand what was being said. I also hope you understand that Revelation is a book of victory: Our God wins.
- With so much that is symbolic, why would we now take this mark of the beast to be literal? It is inconceivable to me that this could be the case.
- I do conceive, however, of great pressure being brought upon the Church and her members to publicly proclaim faith in Christ or face great deprivation and even death. The Roman Empire certainly required that people worship Caesar or die. Other governments and systems, most recently the Soviet Union, North Korea and China, have found ways to "mark" people who don't serve their totalitarian systems. They have done this without putting a literal stamp or mark on their citizens. Many people have been martyred by their efforts.

**17 so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.**

- In fundamentalist Islamic systems, Christians cannot own property and their ability to make a living is greatly hindered. I am a marked man; my faith in Christ marks me. I must always maintain allegiance to Him. No government, employer or system provides for me. God does. That will offend others systems, controlled by evil, who want to be seen as my source. So be it.

**18 This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.**

- I received an article this week claiming that Bill Gates, owner of Microsoft and the richest man in the world, is the so-called antichrist. In my lifetime, I have heard the same said about Henry Kissinger, the Pope, Saddam Hussein and Michal Gorbachev. This is silly speculation and obviously those reports were incorrect.
- It is a waste of time to try to figure this out. If the Bible would have wanted us to know, it would have told us. Because this concept resides alone, then we must leave it alone. There is no way man can figure this out nor is it important. If you reflect on the commentary on the verses above, you will understand that persecution and death for believers has been part of every generation somewhere on the earth. Those who belong to God can be easily distinguished; those who don't can as well.

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- I wear the mark of faith, and those who don't serve my God wear a mark of works or some other religious system. I wear the mark of joy and peace, and those who don't serve my God must wear the mark of sadness and torment.
- There is no question that there is a systematic plot to wipe out Christians. That is nothing new. It was true in the days when Revelation was written; it was true today. What is also true is that God is still on the throne, the Church of Jesus is still here, and that the devil is still trying, by every means possible, to thwart the work of God. The good news for us is that he has always and will always fail. To God be the glory!