

## Chapter Thirteen

### The Beast, the Dragon, and the False Prophet

This chapter has reached a cult status among believers and non-believers alike. A fixation on the number 666 has led to a host of movies, books and commentaries so fanciful that any attempt to reconcile the issue with biblical truth is almost impossible. Folks jealously guard their cherished interpretations, no matter how fanciful.

John's revelation has been fairly straightforward up to this point. However, we are at a distinct disadvantage from our 1<sup>st</sup> Century brethren. When speaking of the events in this chapter, and to whom the 666 is applied, wisdom and discernment is needed to answer these riddles. This is why the Holy Spirit wrote, "*Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast.*" (vs. 18)

Many commentators have struggled to also identify the horns and heads of the beast with certain Roman governors. While this may be interesting, I prefer to dig the spiritual meanings from this important chapter. Even if we could prove the identity of these political powers, the answers would only serve to soothe our curiosity. Every list I've seen attempting to identify these horns and heads against historical figures lacks precision.

**13:1 And he stood on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.**

This chapter deals with Satan's affairs in the world, and how he uses intermediaries to do his will. Two beasts are described, one with 10 horns, the other with 2. Satan is described as a monster, a mythical dragon that brings down certain heavenly authorities (stars) when he himself is ejected from heaven. The question is, who (or what) is standing on the sand? Connecting the last verse of chapter 12 with the first verse of 13 gives us the following:

The dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he (the dragon) stood on the sand of the seashore.

It is Satan who is standing here, not the beast who is coming up out of the sea. Satan is "established" on unstable sand, while another kingdom comes from the restless sea—the nations. In chapter 12, the dragon hunted Christians, trying to drown them in a river of false doctrine. (12:16) The earth, however—those who  *dwell*  on the earth—swallowed up the false doctrine. Its influence did not reach the church, which stands on the testimony of Jesus. Losing track of Jesus' mother (Israel), he now goes after her other offspring, the children of Christ—the church.

This picture of a great red dragon standing on the beach is a vivid illustration. Who knows

how many millennia Satan spent, secure in the notion of proving God wrong? That he could do it just as well, or even better? The Garden of Eden seemed to be a victory, where mankind had handed him the keys. The vague prophetic reference pronounced by God, a vision of someone's heel crushing his head, simmered. Who? The Almighty began raising up a nation composed of shepherds, but these had predictably vulnerable. The Israelites were easily led into apostasy by their own lusts. Jehovah's strict moral code went against their lustful hearts, and the pagan sex feasts of foreign nations lured many away. The prophets God sent in were ignored for the most part. They prattled about the great things God had done for the Israelites in Egypt—ancient history. The so-called “chosen nation” had been divided, led by a majority of evil kings. In disgust, God finally sent them into exile, not once, but twice. Who was proving whom wrong? The only victory, if you could call it that, was Job. The old geezer had kept the faith.

Centuries go by, and the Jews were in expectation of a messiah promised by several prophets. Smarting from the long exile in Babylon, Israel had become hard-boiled and monotheistic, no longer enticed by idols. The hyper-religious Pharisees extolled the virtues of the Law. Yet Israel never returned to the land in the serenity and solidarity of times past. The Roman Empire had its hand laying heavy on them. Things were afoot, and heavenly powers were moving. A baby is born in Bethlehem, and Satan sends in Herod to seek out the child. Yet even the wholesale slaughter of babies proves futile. Michael, the archangel, had tightened his grip, and defeat was imminent.

The temptation of Christ had been a wash. Miraculous cures were being performed, demons were being cast out, and other marvels were convincing folks that this was indeed the long-awaited Savior foretold by the prophets. But Satan works in the hearts of sinful men, where pride, jealousy, malice, and murder reside. And so the attack came from the very place where one would least expect it: *from those whom God had chosen*. The religious leaders, made up of self-righteous and jealous men, had been the instruments of choice to kill the Creator. But this had been his downfall. The rules of the game dictated that “the soul who sins shall die.” (Ezek 18:4) Christ never sinned. Satan had broken the rules, and the keys to death and hell had been yanked away. The terrible proof had been when the Son of God rose from the grave.

The devil lost his place in heaven because he had crucified the Christ. The Great Deceiver had been deceived. He had been fatally wounded as predicted in Eden. Satan had unwittingly become part of God's redemption plan “formed from before the foundation of the earth.” (1 Pet 1:20) Cast from heaven, losing the war, and now dealing with elusive believers, the devil's options were now severely limited. A kingdom had been set up, as foretold by Daniel. That kingdom would be made up of those called of God.

The only way for Satan to counter this unforeseen threat was to install his own kingdom, one that looked similar to Christ's. Details weren't important. The false beast—the kingdom—only had to look good from afar off. Make a lot of promises. This is the “war” referred to at the end of chapter 12. The Devil went off—traveled to some destination—to make spiritual war with Christians, referred to here as “the rest of Israel's children.” He ends up on the seashore, unable to find those children, however. So he stands, contemplating his next move, beginning the work of bringing a beast from out of the sea. To fight the Triune God, an Unholy Trinity must be fabricated and installed, something to deceive the nations, to fool them that this is the Real Thing.

The seashore itself is a depiction of *multitudes* from the nations who are opposed to God in general and His plan of redemption specifically:

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the *sand of the seashore*. (Rev 20:7-8)

*Beast*: A wild animal, or ‘brute’ according to the Hebrew and Greek. The psalmist wrote, “I was like a beast before You” (Psa 73:22), referring to his irrational behavior. The apostle Paul wrote, “I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.” (1 Cor 15:32), a metaphor for the enemies who sought to tear him up and squash the Gospel which he preached. The term is also used to describe wicked men (Tit 1:12, 2 Pet 2:12; Jude 1:10; 2 Tim 4:17)

In Daniel’s vision of the four beasts, the prophet asked the angel the meaning of the fourth beast. The answer given: These great beasts...are four *kings* who will arise from the earth. (Dan 7:17) The fourth *beast* will be a fourth *kingdom* on the earth. (Dan 7:23)

A *beast* then, is a both a *king* and his *kingdom*. Kingdoms, by their nature, possess a ruler, subjects, a common goal, and a territory. It is a belligerent power (wild beast) in the form of a kingdom with a king. Was it Rome? Jerusalem? Or a bastardized combination of the two?

*Coming up out of the sea*: The term ‘coming up’ implies a ‘rising above,’ or ‘exaltation’ above the nations. Earthly kingdoms are always built upon the backs of former governments. This kingdom therefore, rises up over on the backs of other nations. It is an evil kingdom, borne of Satanic design and purpose:

Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron...you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another **in the seed of men**; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. (Dan 2:40-43)

As Rome conquered more and more nations and grabbing up their real estate, the empire grew. As a result, rulers found it difficult to control. Barbarian tribes were always rising up in rebellion, and Rome’s generals were constantly traversing the continent to quell these uprisings. Her own military was made up of these crude nations, whose inhabitants were better suited to hard work through farming, hunting, and woodcutting. The young men who lived in the city were too soft for military service. Because of this situation, Rome’s military was often seen as a dog that could turn on its master. Several emperors found that bribes were the only way to ensure the army’s loyalty. Rome was combined, but not very stable.

The waves of the sea are symbolic of unstable and godless men. (Jude 1:13) In prophecy, it refers to the world’s population. (Matt 13:47) In Daniel 7:3 the four beasts rise from the *sea*, and when the angel explains the vision to Daniel, they are four kingdoms that rise from the *earth*. (7:17) In the New Heaven and New Earth, there is no more sea (Rev 21:1), implying there are no unstable and godless men in it.

Satan finds himself on shaky ground, symbolized by the sand. The phrase, ‘sand on the seashore,’ is an allegory for ‘countless’ or ‘innumerable.’ (Gen 22:17; Isa 10:22, etc) Abraham’s descendants were so counted (Gen 32:12), as were also the enemies of the saints. (Rev 20:8) Satan is established on a countless, albeit unstable number of souls—the sand on the seashore. (Gen 41:49)

Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house (kingdom) upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall. (Matt 7:26-27)

*10 horns—7 heads:* Horns are indicative of strength, and bear some explanation. Both the altar of burnt offering (Exo 27:2; 38:2; cf. Ezek 43:15) and the incense altar (Exo 30:2; 27:25-26; cf. Rev 9:13) had ‘horns,’ defined as projections “of one piece with” the wooden framework and covered with the same metal that covered the altar. They formed the most sacred part of the altar and were only anointed with the blood of the most solemn sacrifices. (Exo 30:10; Lev 4:7; 18; 25; 30; 34; 16:18; cf. Ezek 43:20) It is from this application that the prophetic meaning can be understood here. The common figurative use of *horn* is taken from the image of battling animals (Dan 8:7, etc.), denoting their aggression. So Zedekiah illustrates the predicted defeat of the enemies by pushing with iron horns (1 Kgs 22:11; 2 Chr 18:10), while “horns of the wild ox” (Deut 33:17; Psa 22:21; 92:10) represent the magnitude of power. They can also represent power in general. (Zech 1:3-4) The “horns coming out of His hand” (Hab 3:4) symbolize the potency of Jehovah’s gesture. Thus, to “exalt the horn” (1 Sam 2:1; 10; Psa 75:4, etc) is to clothe with strength. To “cut off the horn” (Psa 75:10; Jer 48:25) is to remove power.

We can solve most of the puzzle by turning to 17:9, where an interpretation is given: “The *seven heads* are *seven mountains* on which the woman sits, and they are *seven kings*...” While scholars unanimously point to the seven mountains as proof of Rome, since the city was set on seven hills, they forget that the mountains are actually kings. It is made up of other nations, and became the political power that helped the Jews persecute Christians. It was Daniel’s fourth kingdom that was crushed by Christ’s kingdom. While this may appear to be Rome’s provincial governments making war against Christ’s church, there may actually be more to the story than what Revelation presents. I say this, because these conditions still exist today.

*10 diadems:* This kingdom possessed *ecclesiastical* authority, which originated from the dragon (verse 2). Normally, ‘12’ is symbolic of national unity, whereas Satan’s kingdom is focused on sufficiency or expediency to carry out its mission. Two Hebrew words translated as *diadem* in the OT come from a word meaning ‘to wind around.’ One of these words refers to the high priest’s headpiece (Lev 8:9; 16:4) as well as the king’s turban. (Ezek 21:26) The other word is also rendered ‘diadem’ in several OT passages. (Isa 62:3; Job 29:14) The NT uses the Greek word for ‘diadem’ only in Revelation. (Rev 12:3; 13:1; 19:12) Scripture also makes a clear distinction between a diadem and a crown. A crown was a garland or wreath awarded for faithfulness in service, such as a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), while a diadem symbolized royal authority.

*Blasphemous names on his head:* The head is the source of authority and knowledge. This beast’s thoughts (head) are opposed to God. The Greek word *blasphemia* means

- (1) Slander, detraction, speech injurious to another person’s good name.
- (2) Impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty.

Blasphemy is evil speech directed toward the written word (Acts 6:11), God Himself (Acts 6:11), or to the Holy Spirit. (Matt 12:31-32) Paul accused the Jews of causing God’s name to be “blasphemed among the Gentiles” because they violated the Law. (Rom 2:23-24) The Jews resisted the message of the Gospel to the point of blasphemy when Paul tried to reason with them. (Acts 18:6) Names designate their owning authority. These are slanderous titles given to the Almighty as a sign of contempt. In verse 6, “he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name (authority) and His tabernacle (the church), that is, those who dwell in heaven.” God considers calling oneself a Jew (child of God) while actually being a child of Satan blasphemy. Thus, the *name* or *authority* is a *lie*, and is

therefore *blasphemous* in God's eyes. See notes on 2:9 for a more detailed explanation of *name*.

Although scholars have labored to prove this beast to be Nero, it encompasses much more. The better answer is that Rome's authority was born in corruption. Her rulers were nearly always decadent beyond belief, practicing the vilest sins. Even the Roman citizens were disgusted with them, which helped many meet an untimely death.

**13:2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.**

The Dragon (a *spiritual* entity) gives his power, seat, and authority to the Beast (a *political* entity), indicating that the two beasts are not identical. They share the same heads and horns, and govern the same nations, but represent different manifestations of the same evil power.

The *second* kingdom—the one arising from the nations—is being described here. It is described using earthly beasts familiar to the reader. The Dragon is described using a *mythical* monster, something *unearthly*. The different parts of these wild animals describe the *nature* of this kingdom's influence. Just as leopards, bears and lions draw their power and growth by feeding on weaker animals, so also do world governments gain strength by using their military to conquer weaker kingdoms. These earthly empires operate by human design and purpose in order to carry out their mission. Such was Rome.

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed (the church), and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands (built without man's devices) and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold... (Dan 2:44-45)

The four predators listed here reflect the nature of the Dragon—they rend and tear. It's unlikely that the citizens and tribes under Rome's rule thought of themselves as actively opposing God's true kingdom. Indeed, most of them were ignorant of the True God, and thought of Christians as oddballs. On an individual level, many men and women believe themselves to be aligned with God's will as they go through life. They don't realize, however, that their very acts and attitudes are completely antagonistic to God's will and moral rule. Romans 5 describes humanity as being 'helpless,' 'sinners,' and 'enemies of God.' Though folks don't see themselves as actively and willfully opposed to God, they are antagonistic to His will. Rome was totally ignorant of Jesus Christ, but due to blatant immorality, it was shaking its fist at Him.

This is a kingdom whose power comes from Satan, the prince of this world. By its very existence it opposed God's kingdom. Rome *was* the world. Its ethnicity and politics defined it, as did its spiritual *nature*, which is described next.

*Leopard:* Jeremiah used leopards as a metaphor of God's judgment: "A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces." (Jer 5:6) Daniel uses the leopard as a symbol of swiftness in cruelty. (Dan 7:6) Isaiah suggested that a day of peace would come when the savage leopard would not harm a young goat. (Isa 11:6)

*Bear:* The context shows the "feet of a bear," focusing on the animal's mauling with its claws. Two

bears mauled the young men who teased and mocked Elisha. (2 Kgs 2:24) The era of peace was to arrive when, “the cow and the bear shall graze side by side.” (Isa 11:7) The bear is *fierce*, (2 Sam 17:8) and its feet rips open its prey. (Hos 13:8)

*Lion*: Here, the mouth is focused on, not the animal itself. The apostle Peter wrote: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, *seeking someone to devour*.” (1 Pet 5:8) Isaiah foretold that the Prince of Peace would tame even the fierce heart of the lion. (Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-9)

*The dragon gave him his power, authority & throne*: The kingdom of disobedience arising from the nations receives the devil’s authority and appointment to continue the dirty work. The throne is the chair of a king and is thus a symbol of royal government and the king’s role as a ruler and judge. (Psa 122:5; Isa 16:5) This coincides with the diadems worn by the beast, symbolizing royal authority. Note the similarity between God’s throne and Satan’s:

God’s Throne	Satan’s Throne
“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matt 28:18) Jesus shares this throne with the Father (Rev 3:21)	The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority (Rev 13:2)
Believers will share in Christ’s authority and government (Rev 3:21)	They worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast... (Rev 13:4)
The throne depicts a court of judgment (Dan 7:10, 26)	Those without the mark were not allowed to buy sell, etc (i.e., <i>judged</i> )

Before being thrown down to the earth, Satan had power and authority in heaven. He then lost that throne. Now, he assumes to establish a throne on earth. Whatever authority he gives to this kingdom, it does not possess its former heavenly glory. This much is certain: Satan never works directly, preferring to use mediums such as a serpents, King Herod and his cronies, the Roman soldiers, Caiaphus, and so on.

To understand the wild beast, the sea, and “coming up,” we need to return to Gen 1:20, where we find the waters teeming with living creatures and birds flying in the open expanse of the heavens. In Genesis 1:21, we see a form of wild beast: *God created the great sea monsters...* Revelation 13 then shows a beast coming up out of the sea (a great sea monster). The swarms of living creatures (nations) were still in the waters when the beast was rising above them. He was coming up out of the sea, *exalting*, or establishing himself over them.

A basic principle in the Law of Order in Genesis is that the earth gives birth to living creatures *after their kind*; cattle and creeping things and beasts of the field *after their kind*, and so forth. The birds flying in the skies is a type of heavenly or spiritual entity. They are *above* the living creatures teeming in the waters, of an earthly type.

Taking the “after-their-kind” principle, we can see the dragon from heaven (spiritual) is *above* the beast from the sea (earthly/fleshly). In simpler terms, birds and dragons are of the heavenly realm, while beasts of the earth and the beast from the sea are of the earthly realm. They are, allegorically speaking, *after their kind*. The beast from the sea is *after its kind*, which dwell in the sea, meaning that it adopts the temperament of the nations from which it comes.

If “coming up out of the sea” is *rising up* or being *exalted*, then getting thrown *into* the sea is being

humbled. “For this purpose I raised you (Pharaoh) up.” (Rom 9:17) If God raised up Pharaoh to demonstrate His power, did He also raise up this kingdom from out of the nations? Did He “exalt” the beast, the great sea monster? God raised up Pharaoh then destroyed him to show the Egyptians and nations His power. (1 Sam 6:1-6) Note the similarities here:

Exodus	Revelation
Pharaoh raised up out of Egypt	Beast raised up out of the nations
Pharaoh exalted and given a throne	Beast exalted and given a throne
Pharaoh destroyed at the Red Sea	Beast destroyed at the Euphrates River (16:12)
Israel crossed over on dry land	“Kings of the east” cross over on dry ground
Sang the song of Moses	Sang the song of Moses (15:3)

Although it was Pharaoh who exalted Joseph, it was actually God’s doing. (Gen 50:20) Pharaoh told Joseph, “Though I am Pharaoh, yet *without your permission* no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Gen 41:44) Paraphrasing Revelation, *The beast said to the false prophet, “Though I am the beast out of the sea, yet without your permission no one shall buy or sell in all the land.”* God can humble or exalt. He can throw down or raise up as He pleases. (Dan 4:25) The dragon was humbled by being thrown down from heaven. This idea of being exalted is connected to a *throne*, which the dragon relinquishes to the beast.

Pharaoh speaking to Joseph: “You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only *in the throne I will be greater* (more exalted) *than you.*” (Gen. 41:40)

You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.” (Isa 14:13)

A throne then is the seat of authority, a high power. Satan held a position in heaven because God *allowed* it. Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt because He *allowed* it. (Rom 9:17) Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon because God *allowed* it. The beast’s kingdom rose up because God *allowed* it, and would ultimately use it to demonstrate His sovereignty. Joseph had his authority only before the throne of Pharaoh, or in the king’s *presence*. The false prophet had his authority only before the throne of the beast, or in its *presence*. Joseph held his power in the presence of men. So too, did the false prophet have his authority in the presence of men. As the throne was significant to Pharaoh, so also was it significant to the beast. Satan’s throne was a valuable offering. He did not offer a mere trinket, but his “great authority.”

The difference between those found written in the Book of Life and those not written in it is this: The beast and false prophet were *exalted* in the minds and hearts of men who were *not* written in the Book, while God was *exalted* in the minds and hearts of those who *were* written in it. These principles have to do with deception, caused by either God or Satan. “(God) has smeared over their eyes and their hearts.” (Isa 44:18) “I advise you buy from me eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.” (Rev 3:18)

**13:3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;**

One of the beast's *seven* heads or part of his authority had been dealt a deathblow. What was once *complete* (signified by '7') was now crippled, or incomplete. What slew this point of authority? How did it recover? Verse 14 states that this fatal wound was from "the sword," a symbol for words of judgment (see notes on 1:16). The phrase 'fatal wound' means 'butchered to death.' Job said, "My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression." (Job 34:6) Note the prophecy concerning Jerusalem:

I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the punishment of a cruel one, because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous. Why do you cry out over your injury? Your pain is incurable. Because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous, I have done these things to you. (Jer 30:14-15)

The Valley of Bones (Ezek 37) is an example of God "curing" a fatal situation. Israel had no life in her. God intended to put His Spirit into the nation to bring her back to life. "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore, He turned himself to become their enemy, He fought against them." (Isa 63:10) When God is against you, there is no hope of recovery.

*Fatal wound was healed:* It was *resurrected*. Christ's wounds healed us. (1 Pet 2:24) Our "wound" (sin) was fatal, a death that can only be cured by the blood of Christ. It is a healing bringing us from death into life—a resurrection healing. "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Psa 107:20) This resurrection of the beast's head happened because someone *spoke* and it was *done*. This is all dealing with authority being removed (destroyed) and then raised back up. In the scripture above, the text reads, "I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds," declares the Lord, "Because they have called you an outcast, saying: 'It is Zion; no one cares for her.'" God brought Israel back to life through a promise (words). In the same way, the beast's head is brought back to life. It would not be an outcast, like Israel, but would be worshiped by the deceived. If we look at this fatal wound in the light of Christ restoring us to spiritual life, this may very well be describing a false salvation.

*Whole earth was amazed:* Whatever this resurrection was, it was of sufficient power to stir up the entire earth (Rome, Palestine, etc). According to Thayer, 'amazed' is tied to a similar Greek word, where John 'wondered' (was amazed) at the Great Harlot. (17:6-7) It means *to pay attention to one's external appearance; to be influenced by partiality*. This is why the angel asked John, "Why do you wonder? Why are you influenced by what you see?" When the people saw that the beast was healed, they wondered in admiration. It was from the earth (land or people) that the beast was born. It was from their creation, and they were proud of it.

*Followed after the beast:* God's prophets proclaimed His word and those who followed the word became saints. The word, *akoloutheo* means:

1. To follow one who precedes, join him as his attendant, accompany him.
2. To join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple: to side with his party.

Revelation 13:3 is translated differently among bibles. The KJV renders the text: "all the world *wondered* after the beast." The NAS says, "the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast." The words "and followed" are not part of the original manuscript. However, the KJV implies it by using "*wondered after*." The rest of the chapter bears this out, since the men worship the dragon (vs 4)

and the beast (vss. 8, 12), and are subject to his will (vs 17).

There were some in the early church that had “already turned aside to follow Satan.” (1 Tim 5:15) Christians are warned not to “follow cleverly designed stories.” (2 Pet 1:16) Many will follow the sensuality of false teachers, which will make crooked the truth. (2 Pet 2:2) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, *following after their own lusts*. (2 Pet 3:3; Jude 1:16) These are people who follow a belief system that appeals to their inner desires.

For the time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will heap up teachers to themselves according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

*Whole earth*: Literally, the *earth's four corners*. ‘Corner’ comes from a Greek word meaning ‘extremity’ or ‘quarter.’ Literally, it means ‘the ends of the earth,’ and shows up only in Isaiah 11:12. Ezek 7:2 uses ‘four corners of the land,’ which is the same thing. The ‘whole earth’ in this context encompasses those who don’t belong to God. “We know that we are of God, and *the whole world* lies in the power of the evil one.” (1 Jn 5:19) Satan will “go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.” (Rev 20:8) (MKJV)

**13:4 and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”**

The ungodly worship both Satan and his kingdom. Satan is worshiped *because* he gave up his throne to this kingdom. The kingdom is worshiped *because* it possesses (in their minds) great authority and power. Paul wrote that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God.” (1 Cor 10:20) The context of scripture bears out the idea that the Gentiles thought that their gods were legitimate and holy, able to grant them good luck. In actuality, they were evil. This is part of being deceived. Many will believe in “doctrines of demons” in later times. Today, millions follow false cults and religions, thinking they are following God and doing His will.

*Who is like the beast?* The term “who is like...?” is a question normally asked of God or those in a position of authority:

*Who is like the Lord our God, who is enthroned on high?* (Ps 113:5)

*Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord?* (Exod 15:11)

Blessed are you, O Israel; *who is like you*, a people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help, and the sword of your majesty!” (Deut 33:29)

So David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? And *who is like you in Israel?* (1 Sam 26:15)

For Thy righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, Thou who hast done great things; O God, *who is like Thee?* (Ps 71:19)

...*who is like Me*, and who will summon Me into court? And who then is the shepherd who can stand against Me? (Jer 49:19)

The ancient city of Tyre had exalted itself because of its great power, riches and influence. God said, “In their wailing they will take up a lamentation for you and lament over you: ‘Who is like Tyre, like her who is silent in the midst of the sea?’” (Ezek 27:32) Those worshiping this beast are saying, “There is nothing that can compare with you.” They are exalting the beast to the level of God.

*Who is able to wage war with him?* They considered their place defensible and unbeatable. Who is able? No one. No one can defeat us. War is a spiritual conflict between good and evil. (Rom 7:23) Christians war against doctrines opposed to God’s will, where captives are brought into obedience to His will. (2 Cor 10:3-6) What they didn’t recognize, however, was that Satan had *already* been defeated and cast out of heaven. How was he defeated? By Jesus Christ’s resurrection, an event the Jews refused to recognize. In their blindness, they did not understand that, as the dragon stood on the unstable sand, so too did this kingdom of unrighteousness have no chance. Their confidence was probably based on the removal of God’s word from the land:

When (the two witnesses) have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. (Rev 11:7)

The result was celebration. Who is able to oppose us? We have defeated God’s witnesses. A primary theme in Revelation’s is one of war, as seen in verses showing differing sides of this spiritual conflict between good and evil:

There was *war in heaven*, Michael and his angels *waging war* with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels *waged war*. (Rev 12:7)

The dragon was enraged with the woman, and *went off to make war* with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Rev 12:17)

It was given to him to *make war with the saints* and to overcome them. (Rev 13:7)

...they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together *for the war of the great day of God*, the Almighty. (Rev 16:14)

...ten kings...*will wage war against the Lamb*. (Rev 17:12-14)

I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges *and wages war*. (Rev 19:11)

I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, *assembled to make war* against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. (Rev 19:19)

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, *to gather them together for the war*. (Rev 20:7-8)

**13:5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.**

There was given to the beast—Satan’s kingdom—the ability to communicate the Devil’s will. This war is waged with words, not with machines or military strategy. This spiritual condition—understood as a *kingdom*—is now given a mouthpiece and authority to perform. This corresponds closely to Paul’s message to the Thessalonians:

(The day of the Lord) will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thess 2:1-4)

The Holy Spirit says that the church is “the temple of the living God.” (2 Cor 6:16) The man of lawlessness opposes all religions, and “takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” (2 Thess 2:4) Whatever this person symbolizes, he assumes God’s place within the church. Scholars have tried to place the pope here, as well as Nero and Domitian. The point is, it is *humanity* attempting to be equal with God, the same lure Satan offered Eve in the Garden—*You shall be as God*. The “man” of lawlessness is not a single person but an attitude existing mankind’s heart.

Satan brought down the human race through temptation. He tried to tempt Jesus, and employs similar tactics here against the church. It is done through deception, trickery, and error. Even though a singular personality is attributed to this spirit of disobedience, scripture shows it to be a general attitude.

There is “the man of gray hair” (Deut 32:25), “a mighty man of valor” (1 Sam 9:1), a “man of understanding” (Prov 20:5), “the man of importance,” (Isa 5:15), “a man of peace” (Luke 10:6), and so forth. These are all descriptive of *attitudes* or *attributes*, none of them being identified as a specific person. In order to remain consistent, the “man of lawlessness” is no different. An *attitude* existed which was (and still is) opposed to God. Attitudes require the minds of men to reap the fruits of unrighteousness. This arrogance generally involves opposition to God’s Word:

Thou dost rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Thy *commandments*. (Psa 119:21)

The arrogant utterly deride me, yet I do not turn aside from Thy *law*. (Psa 119:51)

The arrogant have forged a *lie* against me; with all my heart I will observe Thy *precepts*. (Psa 119:69)

The arrogant have dug pits for me, men who are not in accord with Thy *law*. (Psa 119:85)

All the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie! The Lord our God has not sent you to say...” (Jer 43:2)

“Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against Thee?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge’...” (Mal 3:13-15)

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie

against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic (*from the beast*). (James 3:14-15)

*42 months:* Satan's kingdom and false christs are allowed to endure during a time of great chaos and distress (see notes on 11:2). It is sometime *after* this period that the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire.

It is among the greatest testimonies of God's mercies and longsuffering that the power even to blaspheme is given men by God, Not only is it permitted to blaspheme, but God is also willing to forgive men their raging against him. (Mk. 3:28) The Beast is given power to waste the church for forty-two months or three and a half years. The persecution under Nero began about November AD 64 and continued for 42 months until June AD 68, when Nero committed suicide. This period corresponds with the twelve hundred sixty days the two witnesses prophesied clothed in sackcloth, and the three and a half days their dead bodies figuratively lay in the street of Jerusalem. (Rev. 11:3, 9) However, this should be distinguished from the twelve hundred sixty days, or "time, times and half a time," of Revelation 12:6, 14. The persecution in chapter twelve was a *Jewish* persecution with its center in Palestine, and lasted from approximately AD 34 to AD 38, when it collapsed by the conversion of St. Paul and the removal of Pilate and Caiaphas.<sup>1</sup>

### **13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.**

Not only has this beast been elevated to God's rank ("Who is like the beast?"), but he desires to cast God from the earth altogether. (Similar to the liberal political agenda that exists today, embraced by those who are actively trying to exterminate Christianity.) This arrogant spirit speaks great insults towards God, His plan of redemption, and those who have benefited by it. Those who follow the beast do not accept the Good News but have their own form of righteousness, which (in their mind) is superior. Who is able to wage war against him? Who is able to speak against our cunningly devised plan?

*His name:* They rail against His authority as the Supreme God.

*His tabernacle:* His salvation. Those who dwell in the spiritual realms. The saved.

### **13:7 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.**

*Given to him:* Turned over to him as a possession or privilege. See Num 3:9, Job 3:20, Psa 72:15, Mark 6:2, Rom 11:35, James 1:5. This verse implies that Christians would lose their lives. Since saints don't follow the beast, an earthly persecution is implied. Several attributes comprise this kingdom that makes it a personality:

1. A mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies (vs. 5)
2. Authority to act for a period of time (vs. 5)
3. Ability to overcome the saints (vs. 7)
4. Authority over the earth (vs. 7)
5. The ability to deceive (vs. 15)

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<sup>1</sup> *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 258

These are all attributes of Satan, which the world adopts (the dragon handing it to those who live on earth).

**13:8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.**

*All who dwell on the earth will worship him:* These are those from “every tribe and people and tongue and nation” in the preceding verse. Their time and effort is invested in this life, on this earth; they *dwell* on the earth. The kingdom of unrighteousness has authority over those in the earth and they reciprocate by following in their disobedience. As a result, their names are not written in the Book of Life.

*Book of Life of the Lamb:* The Gospel of Jesus Christ. (See notes on 20:12) The world rejects it and prefers to follow devices of its own making. This is the judgment: that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

*Lamb who has been slain:* The ever-present sacrifice (see notes on 5:6).

**13:9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.**

If anyone has understanding, let him understand what is being said. These words seem intended for the early Christians receiving this prophecy to take special note of what is going on here. It is clarified by the next verse:

**13:10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.**

*Captivity:* This is the only place where the word appears.

The young men...will fall by the sword, and the women will go into captivity...the day will be dark when I break there the yoke bars of Egypt. Then the pride of her power will cease in her; a cloud will cover her, and her daughters will go into captivity. (Ezek 30:17-18)

Thus, captivity portrays a capture and subjugation by an enemy. This same language appears in the OT. (Ezra 9:7; Jer 15:2; 30:16; 43:11) However, the context suggests that these are not saints being taken captive by the beast. “If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed.” Clearly, this is not a Christian act. This seems to refer to “those who dwell on the earth” being taken captive, and is thus seen in the text *here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints*. Why? The fire is going to be turned on your persecutors. They will be captured and killed. The Hebrew writer says, “For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb 10:30, 31) These words were spoken to *Jewish* Christians being persecuted by their fellow countrymen. “Judge His people” meant punishing the Jews.

Since the sword typically refers to words, it can be translated, “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matt 12:37)

**13:11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.**

*Coming up out of the earth:* The first kingdom arose from the nations (sea). Here is a second beast coming up from the earth. *Earth* comes from the same word for *Adam*. Adam arose from the earth; this false christ also rises from, or is borne from the earth. It is not a physical birth, but a personage rising up from among the people themselves. ‘Earth’ and ‘land’ are sometimes used interchangeably. The Lord told Abram, “Go out of your *country*...into a *land* that I will show you.” (Gen 12:1) Isaiah wrote that the kings of Assyria laid waste all the nations *and* their land, meaning that the people were taken captive and also the region which they occupied. (Isa 37:18) In NT times, the earth usually meant the *land* or *country* of Judea. (Matt 2:20) As discussed previously, the context must determine the meaning. Egypt, Babylon, and Rome were each considered *the world* at one time or another. When we speak of the earth, it is the area where people live, not necessarily the planet. (Gen 6:12; 11:1) The ancients did not understand the concept of a planet, although it was revealed to Moses and Job.

God is the judge of the whole earth, (Gen 18:25) describing the scope of His rule. It describes the common people. (Jer 33:9; 51:7) The fourth kingdom will devour and crush the whole earth (Dan 7:23), referring to people, not property. To properly grasp the concept, we need to realize that it is the *land where people dwell*. Jesus’ warning that He had come to send fire on the earth (Luke 12:49) meant that He came to judge mankind, not barbecue the planet. This was His primary mission. Destroying the physical planet is a separate issue.

The first kingdom then rose from the unstable and godless *nations*, while this beast is born of the more civilized and stable *land*. As the land was separated from the sea, so too were the Jews separated from the nations. They were civilized and stable because they had been given God’s moral code, something the Gentiles had not. The nations (sea) shifted and tossed, guided by “every wind” of paganism. The land of the Jews—the earth—had the benefit of being fixed and stable, thanks to the light of Jehovah’s Law. It may help to refresh our memory concerning how the earth plays a part in this book:

- A time of testing was to come upon the whole earth. (3:10) This included the deceptions caused by Satan and his evil empire.
- Censer (judgment from God) thrown to earth (8:5)
- Hail, blood & fire (judgment) thrown to earth (8:7)
- Israel flees into the world to hide. Satan sends a flood of false doctrine, which the earth swallows up. The earth, not the church, believes and follows Satan’s lies. (12:13-16)
- Beast given authority over the earth (earthly power, not spiritual) (13:4-8)
- Earth forced to worship the first beast (13:11-13)
- Earthly inhabitants deceived (swallows the “flood” from Satan) (13:14)
- Lamb redeems those from the earth, who sing a new song (14:1-5)
- Earth is harvested for God’s wrath (14:17-20)
- Once God’s will is finished, the earth is shaken like never before and men curse God (16:17-21)
- New earth established (21:1-5)

Thus we can see how the earth is transformed from a kingdom of darkness. People are saved from out of it, and a *new* earth is established in righteousness later on in chapter 21.

*Two horns:* The number ‘2’ is a symbol for confirmed testimony, while horns are symbols for

strength. This is some kind of *confirmed* power; an attested authority. These horns *look like* lamb's horns, and are part of a beast which *looks like* a lamb. They are imitations—mere stubs, since a lamb has no horns *per se*. The significance of the symbol concerns an imitation, or false christ. The horns are not military or civil in nature, but ecclesiastical. It is a wolf in sheep's clothing...the false prophet. Jesus is called "the horn of salvation" (Luke 1:69), a title also given to Jehovah:

God, my Rock, in Him will I take refuge; my Shield, and the Horn (strength) of my salvation, my High Tower, and my Refuge; my Savior. (2 Sam 22:3)

Jehovah is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; My God, my Rock, in whom I will take refuge; my Shield, and the Horn of my salvation, my High Tower. (Psa 18:2)

This horn of Satan is a means of defense against the true Christ, yet without any significant power (authority). His only true power is that *he speaks as a dragon*—as a monster.<sup>2</sup> The second beast had seven heads and ten horns, meaning a completely malevolent authority. This third beast, however, had the Messiah's form on earth, but it spoke like Satan. How does Satan speak? Through lies and deception.

*Lamb*: A symbol of sacrifice, used primarily in reference to Christ being the sacrifice of the world. (John 1:29) This messiah, however, is from Satan. As stated previously, the biggest challenge issued by the NT to the church is the warning against false teachers and their doctrines. Jesus told His apostles to beware of the teachings of the religious leaders at that time. (Matt 16:11, 12) Although the Jewish religious leaders had an external appearance of piety (looked like lambs), they spoke like monsters, denying Christ and His followers. They made up Satan's synagogue. They were the False Prophet and followers of Satan.

**13:12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.**

Just as Joseph received power from Pharaoh to exercise his authority, so too does this false christ exercise the evil kingdom's authority. John makes a distinction between the dragon and beast that rose up from the sea, which he calls the *first* beast. The dragon came from heaven, the first beast came from the nations, and the second beast came from the earth. The dragon represents the *spiritual* opposition of God. The first beast represents the *political*, or *legal* resistance to God. The second beast represents the *human* hostility towards God. This second beast is the "Lamb-Dragon." Although human in nature, it has a legal entity, but one borne out of deception. Simply put, the chosen people of God—the Jews—took on the appearance of the heathen nations around them. They were without God, having rejected the True Messiah. The authority they exercised was the same as that given to the nations:

1. A mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies (speaks like a dragon).
2. Authority to act for a period of time (forces worship of the beast).
3. Power to overcome the saints.
4. Authority over the earth.
5. The power to make a lie become "truth."

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word *tannin*, which is sometimes translated 'dragon,' is properly rendered *monster*

*Fatal wound healed:* Rescued from death. This Satanic kingdom operated under a spirit of rebellion. It was the testimony of God's prophets *against Israel* that had mortally wounded it. The word of God had lopped off a head, but Satan had "breathed" life back into it. Like some of the seven churches, the saints had *allowed* falsehood and sin to creep back into their assemblies. Sin had returned to dwell in their midst as a result. Paul told the church

"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor 5:6-8)

*He makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast:* The false christ influenced those who embraced a fleshly (earthly) existence to believe a lie and pay homage to this Satanic kingdom. In chapter 16, judgment will be poured upon this evil kingdom's seat of authority, where it will become darkened, causing men to eat their own words. (16:10)

**13:13 And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.**

Prophets were those who preached God's will. The two horns represent a false testimony as to the actual strength of this false savior. Whatever it is, it supplants God's true witnesses who were killed in chapter 11. They represent a bogus religion and proclaim a bogus Gospel. This entity is what John later calls *the false prophet*—he who misrepresents God's Word.

The beast was seized, *and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence*, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire which burns with brimstone. (Rev 19:20)

The symbol, a great *sign*, was the woman of chapter 12 (Israel). Here we have great *signs*. A third great sign is also seen in chapter 15, which is seven angels with seven plagues.

To summarize these great signs:

- Woman in heaven (Abraham's seed—the True Israel) (12:1)
- Fire from heaven (spiritual judgment) (13:13)
- Plagues from heaven (Judgment from angels against unbelievers) (15:1)

Signs are *proof* that something is true. The ancient Jews relied on signs to verify that what the prophets said was true (see notes on 12:1). These signs from the Lamb-Dragon however, are meant to deceive. (13:14; 19:20) They make the false *seem* to be true. Demonic spirits who influence world kingdoms also work signs in order to deceive men into rebelling against God.

*Fire come down out of heaven:* A clear reference to God's power:

- Fire rained down from heaven, destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen 19:24)

- Elijah brought fire from heaven to destroy the king's soldiers. (1 Kgs 1:10ff)
- God answered David's and Solomon's prayers with fire from heaven to consume their altar sacrifices. (1 Chr 21:26; 2 Chr 7:1)
- Job's sheep and servants were consumed by fire from heaven. (Job 1:16)
- Christ's disciples desired to bring fire from heaven (God's wrath) to destroy those who rejected them. (Luke 9:54)
- Fire from heaven destroys the unrighteous. (Rev 20:9)

Again, this was a deception to fool people into believing this was God's work. Only the God of the OT could rain down fire. This, however, was something wrought through Satan. Fire from heaven represented judgment or *wrath* from above. The wrath was the cause of the fire. Jesus used the term, saying, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49) He defines the fire in verse 51: "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather *division*..."

The gospel of Jesus Christ may be seen as a fire burning up the chaff and separating impurities from gold. It is a fire to those who are perishing because they see it as foolishness. (1 Cor 1:18) This wrath of fire from the false prophet is punishment on those who do not accept the *false* gospel. It divides men in the same way Christ's gospel divides. Those who obey the gospel live; those who do not are lost. Those who worship the image of the beast live; those who do not worship the image die. Division on the earth.

A man went to a certain denominational "Christian" church. When the preacher gave the altar call, the man came forward and the elders gathered in a circle with the man to "pray" for the Holy Spirit. But because the man wasn't overcome by feelings of ecstasy, they broke the circle and one of them was heard to say, "we tried." Having never been an emotional individual, I could not succumb to the inventions of the Pentecostal system. No matter how much I tried to give myself to the emotions they sought to elicit, it just didn't happen. I lived with the horror that I was un-savable, a child doomed to Hell because I refused to allow the Holy Spirit to "enter my heart." This is one way false religious systems deny salvation. There are many others, all borne from Satan.

**13:14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.**

Why are they deceived? Because of the signs. They took them to be evidence of God's truth. Paradoxically, what they thought to be truth was actually a lie. (Rom 1:25) Their deception rose from the signs performed in this world. The previous verse clarifies that the signs were performed in the presence of *men*. Since the beast is really Satan's kingdom that came from the nations rejecting Christ, it is understood as coming from *men*.

For the mystery of lawlessness does already work. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way. Then will the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord will kill with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nothing by the brightness of his coming; even he whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deception of wickedness for those who are being lost, because they didn't receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Because of this, God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who didn't believe the truth, but had

pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess 2:7-12—WEV)

Paul points to an entity that acts according to Satan's authority. To understand the means of this power, we must understand its limitations. The devil doesn't roam about unrestrained, but is confined by Divine boundaries he can't cross. Satan is essentially a liar and deceiver, and his kingdom is founded upon lies and deceit. The idea that he is able to introduce disorder into the physical universe or directly operate in the lives of men is nowhere taught in scripture. If Satan can be in my mind, luring me to do evil, and also be in the minds of millions of others, then he is omnipresent.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that Jesus spoke of the woman "whom Satan had bound eighteen long years." (Luke 13:16) Paul refers to his infirmity as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. (2 Cor 12:7) He also speaks of Satan hindering him from visiting the church at Thessalonica. (1 Thess 2:18) However, when these passages (along with the prologue in Job) are carefully studied, they will show that Satan's influence in the world has always been severely limited. His primary objective is to deceive—to twist the truth into a lie. His schemes (2 Cor 2:11) were wrought through Peter (Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33), Judas (John 6:70), religious leaders (John 8:44), sorcerers (Acts 13:10), and anyone who practices sin. (1 John 3:8) His primary goal is to work through persons and institutions that *appear* to be on God's side. Consistent and active deceit is practiced and passed off as good. When he is called the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), it's implied that the devil has the power to clothe himself in Divine attributes. Paul's description of him as an angel of light confirms this, where his ministers of falsehood appear as advocates of truth. (2 Cor 11:13-15)

Paul was saying that the "mystery of lawlessness" was already working but was held in restraint. This may allude to the four winds (demonic forces) being held in restraint to harm (deceive) the earth's inhabitants until God's chosen were sealed. (7:1-3) The smoke of the abyss was held in restraint until Satan unlocked it to ruin men with false doctrine. (9:1ff) Four angels were held in restraint at the Euphrates River, whose mission it was to destroy many. (9:14-15) Finally, Satan is restrained from deceiving people for an indeterminate time. (Rev 20:1-3) All of these are different descriptions of *spiritual* destruction.

*False signs and wonders:* On the Tuesday of the week of His crucifixion, Jesus solemnly forewarned His disciples that many would come in His name, claiming to be the Christ, deceiving many; that there would arise false christs and false prophets, who would show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even God's chosen. (Matt 24:5, 11, 23-25; Mark 13:6, 21-23; Luke 21:8) While Jesus was speaking in the context of Jerusalem's destruction, history has shown that this problem continues today.

Josephus wrote that many such seducers appeared.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish religious community was in a state of frenzy at that time, believing the Messiah's coming was imminent; that they would soon be saved from the Romans. Of course, they had already murdered the True Messiah. As late as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, people were still proclaiming to be the Jewish Christ.

Elkan Adler wrote that the adventures of Sabbatai Zevi, a self-proclaimed messiah, born in Smyrna in 1626, created a tremendous stir in Western Europe.<sup>5</sup> There is much material available on the subject, listing many who claimed to be the Messiah. Even today, false signs and wonders attract many: Virgin Mary's appear in windows; angels descend onto ponds of water, where people claim to be healed;

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<sup>3</sup> Those who believe that Satan uses his demons to carry out his will, and therefore "be in all places at once" are hard-pressed to explain Jude 6, which says, "He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." Either they're chained up or they're running around loose.

<sup>4</sup> *Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chap 13, Sect 4

<sup>5</sup> *Aspects of the Hebrew Genius*, Elkan Adler

miraculous “cures” take place in the Philippines, where healers plunge their bare hands into a sick person’s abdomen without use of a scalpel. The healer then yanks out a bloody hand containing a “tumor” (which is actually a squashed chicken gizzard). The person’s abdomen exhibits no incisions or scars. Modern-day miracle workers ply their trade on television and in revival meetings, where the powers of suggestion are influenced by motivational speakers trained to work the audience into a super-charged state of emotional frenzy. Prior to these exhibitions, candidates are screened as to what kind of sicknesses they have. Those with aches and pains, depression, or other unseen diseases, are marked for potential “healing,” while those with shriveled limbs or missing body parts are rejected.<sup>6</sup> There has never been a documented case of anyone being resurrected from the dead during these or any other so-called healing. Those claiming to have witnessed a resurrection are rank liars.

Although the charismatic denominations insist that the Holy Spirit dispenses gifts in the church today, the sad state of health care in the world testifies otherwise. Claims of miraculous healings of the type Jesus and His apostles performed are only known through unconfirmed word-of-mouth testimony. Unlike the miracles Jesus and His apostles performed, such things are never observed in public. What is seen is the widespread speaking in tongues and prophetic babblings by those who have carefully crafted their art. Those who embrace tongues, miraculous healings, and so forth, are generally emotional individuals who are prone to excitability. They are quick to judge, have a hair-trigger temper, and exalt feeling over facts. They are easily swayed to believe what is false, since they rely on physical senses and emotional experiences instead of God’s Word.

*Those who dwell on the earth:* Not only the unbelieving Jews (see notes on 6:10), but those who set their mind on earthly things instead of spiritual. As a result, they are lost. (Rom 8:6-7)

*Image to the beast:* An image is the *representation* of an object of worship—the physical proxy of a nonexistent deity. In a few places the word ‘image’ appears in a neutral sense. Adam was created in God’s image. (Gen 1:26) Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) However, the word in scripture refers primarily to something of human manufacture that replaces the true God. God often ridiculed the Israelites for worshiping idols that could neither speak nor walk. (Hab 2:18ff; Isa 44:11ff) Those idols are without life, whereas the image of this beast is distinctly different—it is *alive*.

Images in themselves are not objectionable to God until they become an object of worship. Even Solomon’s temple had many artistic images. The Second Commandment—*you shall not make an image*—is not an attack upon artists and sculptors, but upon idolaters. Moses fashioned a bronze serpent to save the Israelites bitten by real snakes in the wilderness. (Num 21:9) However, 500 years later, this same bronze image was destroyed, because the Jews had begun to worship it. (2 Kgs 18:4) Image worship isn’t the product of external stimuli; it comes from within, as people struggle toward expressive acts of worship. Carved images were miniature representations of the god’s dwelling place, while temples were full-blown abodes of their deity.

The tendency of viewing a *place* of worship as holy has been common for centuries. Folks visit beautiful churches, see the wonderful art and architecture, and get goosebumps, confusing their feelings of awe with God’s presence. The building becomes the object of worship rather than Christ. Assigning holy dignity to any “religious” image, be it a portrait of Christ or a church building, stems from

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<sup>6</sup> I had a close friend who had been confined to a wheel chair for 30 years. His legs looked like broomsticks. When he went to an Oral Roberts revival, “screeners” took one look at my friend and said that the famous preacher would pray for him. He was then wheeled into a separate room, where he stayed with others like himself for the duration of the show. There were others in this room who were tormented by unseen maladies (headaches, back pain, etc), and were part of this group to remove any obvious connotation that Mr. Roberts was trying to avoid people like my friend.

associating visible *things* with unseen religious convictions, a false connection resulting from fleshly thinking.

Then said the prophet Jeremiah to Hananiah the prophet, “Hear now, Hananiah: Yahweh has not sent you; but you make this people to *trust in a lie*.” (Jer 28:15)

You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity; you have eaten the *fruit of lies*; for you did *trust in your way*, in the multitude of your mighty men. (Hosea 10:13)

The image of Satan is deception. The image that men worshiped was his lies. Some have interpreted this verse as referring to emperor worship. When Caligula and others tried to pass themselves off as gods, everyone rebelled, including Jews, Roman citizens, and their senate. It is therefore unlikely that this is a description of the Jews or Christians worshiping one of the Caesars. The better interpretation involves something more abstract. To make an image of something means to somehow shape it so that it *shares* or *reflects* the attributes of the thing imitated. For example, man’s likeness can be reproduced in metal, stone, film, or art. A political entity, however, can only be reproduced by creating and enforcing the same policy somewhere else. An example would be trying to turn a foreign power into an *image* of America by forcing our democratic values on them. The foreign country becomes an *image* fashioned out of America’s belief system. It is the same in a religious institution.

**13:15 And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.**

*Given to him:* This phrase always means, “to be authorized.” Jesus said, “...no one can come to me, except it be *given to him*—authorized—by my Father.” (John 6:65) The key to the nations was *given to* Satan. (Rev 9:1) A boastful and blasphemous mouth along with authority to act was *given to* the beast. (Rev 13:5) Since God is in control, no one does anything pertinent to His plans unless He allows it. To that end, He always has a reason for authorizing it, typically for the display of His sovereign glory.

*Give breath:* The act of creating life. The Lord gives breath to the people on the earth. (Isa 42:5) All mankind is stupid, devoid of knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his molten images are deceitful, and there is no breath in them. (Jer 51:17) Yet we have here an image that comes to life and speaks.

Paul speaks of the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (Eph 2:2) The Ephesian text properly reads, “...the prince of the power of the *breath of the spirit* that is now working in the sons of disobedience.” This is how Satan resurrects—he “breathes life” into disobedient individuals when they are animated to do his will.

*Causes those who do not worship the image to be killed:* Those who don’t embrace or accept what this false entity represents are destroyed for disobeying the false christ and not following him. The qualifications of this destruction are made clearer in the context of the following verses. Satan desired Jesus to worship him. (Matt 4:9) Since he failed in that attempt, the next logical step was to get His followers to worship him. After all, the church is Christ’s body on the earth, living on Satan’s turf. At the end of chapter 12, the dragon “went off to make war with the rest of her offspring,” IE, the church. This chapter is now describing that war. Just as the Jews apostatized from Jehovah, “seeking after other gods,” the same thing happens to the church.

For there will arise false christs, and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, *even the elect*. (Matt 24:24)

The Spirit says expressly that in later times some (in the church) will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Tim 4:1)

The bible is clear that people will turn their ears from the truth and pay attention to lies. (2 Tim 4:4) These are those who, at one time, had the truth—those in Christ, and not unsaved individuals. However, it also includes those who *appear* to be Christians. “They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.” (Titus 1:16) Their works (right hand) and their thoughts (forehead) brand them as Satan’s children. When we step back and look at the Big Picture of this chapter, we see the following:

- Satan is worshiped (vs 4).
- Satan’s political entity (first beast) arising from the nations is worshiped (vs 8).
- The second beast from the earth (people) force men to abide by (worship) the political desires of the first beast (vs 12).
- An image of Satan’s kingdom (a false gospel) is promoted and worshiped (vs 15).

This “beast” or kingdom from among the people seems to be the visible component of Satan’s scheme. Satan is worshiped, though he stays in the background. His kingdom is worshiped, but it seems to be a passive homage, without penalties. The image of that kingdom, however, demands obeisance. It is not passive, and those who refuse to worship the representation of this kingdom suffer consequences. This seems to correlate with Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, where Satan held up the kingdoms of the world in exchange for Christ’s worship. So too does the dragon offer up his worldly kingdom (the first beast), which men wholeheartedly accept.

To put this into today’s perspective, one has only to look at what is being promoted by the media. Billboards, television and radio ads, and the Internet all promise happiness, a rich life and prosperity. Many religious groups preach a health-and-wealth gospel, where one’s bank account reflects how much God has blessed them. Yet regardless of how much we exercise and what vitamin supplements we take, all we stand to inherit with the world’s promises is old age with its infirmities, false teeth, a wheel chair, eventual loss of sight and hearing, and descent into senility.

**13:16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead,**

One distinguishing factor between chapters 12 and 13 is that the former chapter is heavily laden with Jewish symbolism. Chapter 13, on the other hand, is almost wholly lacking in it. Although there were no chapter divisions, the dividing line is still clear. The woman of chapter 12 was Israel, who gave birth to Christ. Failing to destroy the Jewish line, Satan was thrown to earth, where he proceeded to attack “the rest of her offspring,” which was the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Who would be most likely to fall for false signs and wonders but those who had come out of paganism? There is no evidence that the Jews would be so tricked, even though they sought a sign from Christ. (Matt 12:39; 16:4; etc) Concerning Jerusalem’s destruction, Jesus said that many false christs and false prophets would try and lead astray the church. He implied that the elect weren’t fooled

because they possessed the Truth and the Holy Spirit. While Matthew 24 deals with Jerusalem's destruction (which had few repercussions in the Gentile world), the principle is the same: truth protects us from deception.

This false christ "causes everyone to be given a mark," referring to the world in general. (Rev 6:15; 19:18) Satan was now in the world, seeking believers and trying to ruin them with his flood of false doctrine. (12:16)

*He causes all to be given a mark:* *All* is one of those abstract terms in scripture that must be discerned from its context. John the Baptist baptized "all the country of Judea, and all those of Jerusalem." (Mark 1:5) This doesn't mean he baptized 3 million inhabitants, only that his influence and popularity extended throughout the countryside. The *all* are those who listen to and agree with false doctrine, and end up doing what they believe to be right. The deeds are signified by their right hands. The forehead signifies their thoughts and agreement with the false teachings and wonders.

*Right hand:* Known as "the good hand" (see notes on 1:16). They are deeds done that men see as righteous. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Prov 14:12) Saul thought he was doing God's will by persecuting the church. (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13) As previously mentioned, Satan's main achievement in the world has been to work through human institutions that possess a form of godliness, but are in fact, evil.

*Mark:* According to Thayer, a mark denoted a brand, or stamp, and signified ownership. It can also refer to a sculpture or other manufactured image. In the NT, this word only appears in Revelation. When the angel of death went through Egypt killing all of the first-born, the mark of blood on the door posts kept those inside safe. God put a mark on the forehead of the righteous prior to slaying Jerusalem's inhabitants. (Ezek 9:4)

*Forehead:* Note that the mark is either on the hand or the head, not both. 'Forehead' is from a Greek word meaning *to be clear or conspicuous*. It symbolizes those thoughts that are *foremost* in the minds of sinners. This is a public or open profession of disobedience to God. The mark of this evil kingdom is clearly seen in those who adopt its bogus hopes. This seal of ownership verifies the followers of the false christ who embrace its authority. They *do* what the kingdom desires or they *think* in accordance with its desires and precepts.

*Small and the great, rich and the poor, etc:* Another way of saying "all who dwell on the face of the earth." It seems to be a worldwide influence. As the apostle John writes, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1 John 5:19) Satan is the deceiver of the whole world. (Rev 12:9) This was the hour of testing that was to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Rev 3:10)

**13:17 and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.**

*Buy or sell:* This has to do with spiritual transactions, not physical, and relates to the merchants who show up in chapter 18. They weep and wail because Babylon is destroyed, thereby decimating their ability to profit from her immorality. What they buy and sell is man's way to righteousness. This is a lengthy subject, more fully treated in 18:17-19.

It is of interest to note Edward Gibbon's observations on what life in Rome was like for a Christian:

It was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society. The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, senator, and soldier were obliged to preside or to participate. The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans, and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honor of their peculiar festivals. The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's (sic) happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved toward the funeral pile; the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry.

If a Pagan friend (on the occasion perhaps of sneezing) used the familiar expression of "Jupiter bless you," the Christian was obliged to protest against the divinity of Jupiter. (Tertullian *de Idololatria*, c. 11). This was a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community, which (was) employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions... Even the arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the same impure origin. In the style of the fathers, Apollo and the Muses were the organs of the infernal spirits, Homer and Virgil were the most eminent of his servants, and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius is destined to celebrate the glory of the demons. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter or too patiently hear.<sup>7</sup>

The word 'able' appears throughout Revelation:

- In reference to being *allowed* to interact in the beast's kingdom. (13:17)
- To point out the *strength* of the beast's kingdom and power. (13:4)
- In reference to the Lamb's *authority* to open the sealed book. (5:3)
- To illustrate man's *inability* to stand against the wrath of God. (6:17)
- To show that no one was *able* to enter the temple until certain things were done. (15:8)

*Able* may also indicate a *lack* of ability: "Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?" (Eccl 7:13) God's ability to carry out His will may depend on a person's faith: When some blind men approached Jesus, He asked them, "Do you believe that I am *able* to do this?" To which they replied, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "Be it done to you *according to your faith*." (Matt 9:28-29) Being in a fleshly condition renders a Christian *unable* to accept the deeper truths of scripture. (1 Cor 3:2) The *ability* to stand firm in the faith necessitates putting on the whole armor of God. (Eph 6:13) The word of God is *able* to save the soul (James 1:21), if that soul is willing to accept it. Controlling one's tongue *enables* a person to become perfect. (James 3:2) The word then always implies some kind of authority or power to make something happen as long as the recipient is willing to accept it.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 15. Edward Gibbon.

*Buy*: Literally, *redeem*. Jesus advised the church at Laodicea to buy gold, clean robes, and eye salve (Rev 3:14-18) to repair their spiritual decay. The merchants of the earth wept and mourned because no one could buy their wares after the Harlot was destroyed. (18:11) Buying does not necessarily require money. (Isa 55:1ff) The five foolish virgins ran out of lamp oil and had to buy more. (Matt 25:9)

In all of these instances, the *buying* refers to becoming acceptable before God. The Laodiceans lacked faith, righteousness, and were spiritually blind to boot. The Parable of the 10 Virgins depicts Christian readiness and the lack thereof to meet the Lord when He finally comes. This is why *redeem* better conveys the idea. The buying and selling, along with the connection to merchants and ships in chapter 18, all deal with obtaining *redemption*. The obvious difference is between Christ's methods and those of Satan's.

*Except the one who has the mark*: Only those doing and/or agreeing with the false christ could be among the redeemed in this kingdom. Those opposed to the kingdom's influence were "killed" (vs. 15), or "cut off." We see then two camps:

- (1) Those who followed the spirit of lawlessness in open profession could live without molestation. They were doing Satan's will publicly and openly. They thought they were doing good, signified by the right hand. They thought they were God's people, when they were, in fact, owned by Satan.
- (2) Those who refuse to adopt a certain worldview are ridiculed and censured by others. Those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim 3:12) They will be rejected and spurned by an ungodly society. Jesus told His apostles, "In the world (Satan's kingdom), you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

*Number of his name*: The number of the beast is explained as being "the number of a man" (vs 18). The indefinite article (*a* man) was inserted by translators, assuming their belief in a literal anti-christ that would one day rule the world. The NIV is truer to the original: "...let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number." (not "*a* man's number") In other words, Adam's number. Those who had the mark *did* (hand) or *thought* (forehead) like Adam, who veered from God and turned to Satan. They reject God's way and embrace their own schemes. They neither act or think on a spiritual level. Their redemption is oriented toward a works-based, self-righteous nature. The spiritual-minded person could not exist in such an environment, just as those who live after the flesh cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit. (Rom 8:5ff)

**13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.**

Numeric gymnastics have been employed in assigning 666 to organizational entities such as the European Trade Commission, the Catholic Church, and others. Others have sought to use '666' as a code for all kinds of bad guys, all of whom have gone to the grave. The root cause of this error is singular: *the widespread and pervasive belief that Revelation deals with the future*. Instead of looking at the bible to determine the meaning, they have looked everywhere *but* scripture. For centuries, they have brought their opinions to the bible, to the point of influencing the literal translation of this text. It is the number of man, not the number of *a* man. Mankind's number.

Revelation was written to the churches in Asia Minor during John's life. Those early Christians

certainly understood its relevance and knew what the number meant. However, it was also meant to be understood by us today. The key to understanding is found in the term *man* as *Adam*. It is *man's*, or *Adam's* number, not *a man's* number.

Man was made on the sixth day. (Gen 1:31) Gathering of the fields (man's work) was done on the sixth day. (Exo 16:22; 23:10) The Passover feast lasted six days, to remember God's redemption of *people* from Egypt. (Deut 16:8) The number '6' falls short of perfection (or completion), symbolized by the number '7.' Having been created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, man falls short. He is only complete (perfect) when he is in Christ. (Gal 2:20) There are three 6's.

The number '3' is the number normally assigned to the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), and represents spiritual completeness. The three 6's probably correspond to the beast, false prophet, and Satan—an unholy trinity. This number is thus understood as men (acting under Satan's influence) who are impersonating God. 6 = man; 3 = God; man acting as God.

While many scholars assert the number was a code for Nero, scripture doesn't support this. Compelling and engaging explanations have been given, but they simply cannot be proven.

There is a common belief that Revelation was written in the code language of pictures and numbers so that Roman soldiers intercepting it as it traveled from church to church could not understand it. While this sounds logical it lacks scriptural and historical proof. For one thing, most Roman soldiers came from rural areas, unlettered and illiterate. They were more interested in valuables carried by travelers, not religious scrolls. Second, political entities cared nothing for anything written by Moses, allowing the Jews to preserve their writings. This idea of Revelation being written in code to protect it from prying eyes stems from the notion that the book deals with Rome's destruction. Rome shriveled up and returned to its basic components, but it was never destroyed in the classic sense. When Christ's kingdom "destroyed" Rome, it also erased the previous three world powers, which had ceased to exist centuries earlier. So Christ's kingdom didn't use physical might to disintegrate any buildings, but through spiritual influence, conquered all worldly power.

'666' signifies that men were not only setting themselves up to be God, but were vigorously opposing the One True God, His Son, and His Spirit. The number also seems related to the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, and the 6<sup>th</sup> vial, which will be discussed in chapter 16. It is essentially a number summarizing man's spiritual rebellion against God.

When the cashier rang up some items I had purchased at Walmart, the total came to \$6.66. The young man at the register recoiled and told me I had to buy a pack of gum to change this total. I politely declined and he, in turn, returned a penny so that I could avoid being cursed. I replied, "Yep, I used to believe that stuff—until I started studying my bible." This annoyed him somewhat.

A casual study of the commentaries by those who take Revelation to be a series of future events reveals an obvious trend. As technology has progressed, the book's symbols have also been updated in order to shoe horn the meanings into scripture. This is especially true of the mark of the beast. Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century commentaries thought it was the Social Security numbering system. Preachers were bellowing from pulpits across the country avoid getting a social security number at all costs. Others naively saw '666' being tattooed on the head and hand, using mathematical formulas to prove how it made sense. The latest infatuation deals with computer technology, where we will have our IDs electronically encoded on a tiny microchip and implanted under the skin of the hand.<sup>8</sup>

I don't adhere to this nonsense. I also get tired of losing my wallet. Therefore, I'm going to be the first one in my church to get a microchip implanted in my hand. Why? Because I know what the bible says.

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<sup>8</sup> Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)