

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 13:1-18

Topic

Nonbelievers suffering in the Tribulation will wonder after two charismatic men, but we read that they are energized by Satan and are therefore more like two beasts

Title

"The Beastie Boys"

Introduction

I gotta say, I love Wikipedia. Where else can you search for 'deals with the devil in pop culture?'

Some of the films you might recognize, at least by their title, that feature such deals are, *The Devil's Advocate*, *Bedazzled*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, *Constantine*, and *Ghost Rider*.

Regarding their hugely popular song, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Queen once explained that the song "is about a young man who has accidentally killed someone and, like Faust, sold his soul to the devil."

Television seems to love the selling of souls to Satan. Multiple episodes of *The Twilight Zone* are dedicated to it. *The Simpson's* have at least two episodes along those lines.

I found this next one a little disturbing. *The Muppet Show* featured a plot in which Alice Cooper attempts to sell the Muppets a contract that promises "fabulous riches and worldwide fame" on behalf of the devil. Several characters consider the offer, while Gonzo fervently pursues the deal. Ultimately, he becomes frustrated at not being able to find a pen to sign away his soul.

In the future Tribulation, people will knowingly forfeit their souls by worshipping both the devil and the world leader we most commonly call the antichrist.

We won't be on the earth when the antichrist is revealed. Our text is about those who are left behind after the church is raptured.

Does that mean there is nothing here for us except some information to satisfy our curiosity about the future?

Hardly, because as we work through the verses, we are reminded that the devil, even now, incites people to worship him.

Satan asked Jesus to worship him in the wilderness temptation. If he went after Jesus, he will probably go after Jesus' followers, too.

I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 What Are You Being Offered To Worship The Devil, and #2 How Are You Being Threatened To Worship The Devil?

#1 What Are You Being Offered To Worship The Devil?

(v1-10)

The Tribulation earth will want a hero - but not the kind you think. The vast majority of earth's population will be weary of God's judgments, but will steadfastly refuse to repent. They'll be looking for an alternative to Jesus Christ; looking for someone to be their champion *instead of* Christ.

In fact, that is the meaning of the name antichrist; 'anti' means *instead of* Christ. Let's meet him in our text.

Rev 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

The NIV translates this, "and the **dragon** stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea..."

The "dragon" is Satan and it is he who is standing "on the shore of the sea" having been thrown down to the earth at the end of chapter twelve. His final strategy is to energize two men that will do his bidding.

The first beast is the antichrist. We saw him earlier as the first of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode forth. It is his signing of a treaty with Israel that starts the clock for the Tribulation. These verses tell us about his empowering by Satan near the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Revelation 13:1 ...He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

Each of these symbols is defined for you in chapter seventeen.

- The “ten horns” are identified as ten kings who are united by this one man.
- The “seven heads” are the seven hills of the city in which his power resides. Rome is universally known throughout history as the city of the seven hills; thus this is often thought to be a confederation of ten nations or ten world regions based in Rome ruled over by the antichrist.
- The “seven heads” also represent seven kingdoms in world history.

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

Speaking of animals... *The Washington Post* published a chart of the animals that are statistically most likely to kill you. Sharks, alligators, venomous snakes, and spiders are, surprisingly, on the very bottom of the list. At the top of the list are bees, wasps, and hornets.

Cows and dogs kill far more people than sharks and gators. Statistically, cows kill twenty-times as many people as sharks. Think about that during Dairy Month.

The animals listed here are the ones that the prophet Daniel used to represent certain kingdoms of the world: the leopard was Greece, the bear was Medo-Persia, and the lion was Babylon.

The antichrist and the kingdom he will rule is another in this succession of satanic kingdoms.

The antichrist is called the "beast" in this chapter. He has about forty-six descriptive names in the Bible - thirty-three in the Old Testament and thirteen in the New Testament.

Revelation 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

The antichrist doesn't have two heads. Why, then, does it say "one of his heads?" Because, prior to this event, he is only ruler over one portion of the larger empire. He will reemerge from his "deadly wound" to take sole control of the empire.

Towards the middle of the Tribulation the antichrist will be mortally wounded but come back from the dead. The words used describe a violent death, like an assassination. Revelation 17:8 makes it clearer when you read, "the beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel..."

According to Zechariah 11:16, the antichrist's arm will be permanently withered and his right eye totally blinded. I wonder if this isn't in mockery of the fact Jesus Christ rose from the dead with wounds in His body?

It is while he is in the bottomless pit that he is completely energized by Satan. When he returns, he has supernatural abilities.

Revelation 13:4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

His restoration to life will inspire nonbelievers to openly worship both him *and* Satan. The world will embrace their hero - their 'instead-of' Christ.

Revelation 13:5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Forty-two months is three and one half years. This is the last half of the seven year Tribulation. He will be "given authority" means that, while he seems to take control of things, God remains in charge, and history will come to its prophesied end.

Revelation 13:6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

First, he will “blaspheme [God’s] name.” He might argue that God's wrath being poured-out proves He is a vengeful deity, not to be worshipped.

Second, he will blaspheme God’s “tabernacle.” Both Daniel and Jesus spoke of the antichrist defiling the Temple.

Third, the antichrist will blaspheme “those who dwell in Heaven.” He will be all about the here-and-now, inspiring nonbelievers to be materialists who care mainly about present satisfaction.

Revelation 13:7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

For a time the antichrist will seem to succeed in his war against God as God's earthly people are "overcome."

Martyrdom, however, is never a defeat. It is the ultimate victory of faith in the face of opposition.

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

It is the writing of the names in the Book of Life, *not* the slaying of Jesus on the Cross, that happened "from the foundations of the world."

John Walvoord says of this good news,

Some references to the Book of Life seem to indicate it is the book of the living, namely, of all born in the world, and that those who do not [eventually] trust in Christ are blotted from it leaving only those who are saved... The simplest explanation here seems the best, namely, that their names were written in the Book of Life from eternity past. This was made possible by anticipation of the future dying of the Lamb on their behalf.

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

We recognize this phrase from earlier in the book but immediately notice the important difference. In the opening chapters it read, "he that has an ear to ear, let him hear **what the Spirit says to the churches.**" The dropping of "the Spirit" and "the churches" is one more indication that the church is not on the earth for the Tribulation.

Will “anyone have an ear?” Yes. The Tribulation is a time during which multitudes are saved. Most of them will be martyred, but they will be saved.

Revelation 13:10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

This is a chant of victory. You can almost hear it on the lips of the Tribulation martyrs. As the agents of the antichrist capture them, and sentence them, and execute them, you can hear them say to their persecutors, “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.”

Does that seem harsh? In the Tribulation, by the time these believers are being martyred, it will be too late for their persecutors to be saved. The agents of the antichrist will have already sworn their irrevocable allegiance to him.

John adds, “here is the patience and faith of the saints.” Their “patience” is the certainty that Jesus is coming back. Their “faith” is their faithfulness to live accordingly and to accept whatever earthly fate befalls them in light of their eternal future.

Satan gets what he wants - worship - by giving nonbelievers what they want. They want to be left alone to sin. Earlier we read,

Rev 9:20 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

Rev 9:21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

What is the devil offering **you**? Is it happiness - if you will just leave your husband or your wife? Is it more possessions - if you'll just lie or cheat or steal?

Is it something from the list I just read?

Believe me, he **is** offering you something, or someone. He wants to do a deal with you, and every Christian.

"Here is the patience and faith of the saints." Resist him; go on resisting him. Resist him to the shedding of blood; to death, even.

#2 How Are You Being Threatened To Worship The Devil?

(v11-18)

Besides giving folks what they think they want, the devil threatens to withhold everything they physically need, and to kill them.

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

"Another beast," means *another of the same nature*.

The antichrist rises out of the "sea," which might be a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. If so, it simply means the antichrist will come from that part of the world.

Scholars argue about his descent - whether he is Gentile or Jewish.

Many say he will be European, because Daniel says he descends from the people who destroyed the Temple. We tend to forget, however, that the Roman Empire spanned far more territory than Western Europe. Titus and his men, who sacked Jerusalem, were Syrian. So we are not certain his nationality.

The second beast comes from the “earth.” I’m sure it is a clue to his origins but I don’t know what it means, other than to tell us he is a man, not a demon.

His description as having “two horns like a lamb” is interesting in that everywhere else the word “lamb” is used in the Revelation it refers to Jesus. It has led some to speculate that this man will claim to be Jesus. We know from our Lord that the beginning of the Tribulation, the first half, will see a slew of false Christ’s rise up. It’s likely he will be one of them.

He will emerge as the leader of a false religious system (of which we read more about in chapter seventeen).

Though claiming to be Christ or Christ-like, the second beast will speak “like a dragon.” It means his words will be satanic.

I wonder if that's why the world's best selling dictation software is called Dragon?

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

“In his presence” means *on the behalf of*. He has all the antichrist’s authority and makes things happen in his evil administration.

One major thing that he makes happen is to cause “the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed.” Here is how he does it:

Revelation 13:13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

“Performs” is in a tense that indicates repeated activity. He does sign after sign. The “signs” are designed to persuade mankind to follow the antichrist. They point to him as the one to watch and worship.

One of the “signs” is “he even makes fire come down from Heaven in the sight of men.” This can be understood in one of two ways:

1. God's two witnesses, who we saw in a previous study, can kill with fire. In the Old Testament, Moses performed various signs that were mimicked by the magicians of Egypt. This could be something similar, as if to say, "Anything God can do, I can do."
2. It could also be a fire that counterfeits what happened on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit fell upon the church and tongues of fire hovered over them. If the second beast claims to be Jesus he could be counterfeiting a second Pentecost.

Revelation 13:14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth - by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

“Deceives” means *to lead astray*. Miracles, signs, and wonders can validate the Word; or they can lead you astray. God's Word must be used to judge their source by their message.

The people on earth will be led “to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.” They won’t simply worship an image to the beast. They will help “make” it.

Remember the Golden Calf? Aaron, Moses' brother, had the Israelites bring their gold and jewelry in order to use them for making the idol they would worship.

What, exactly, this “image” is we are not told. It will be something more than a mere likeness but beyond that I haven’t a clue.

Revelation 13:15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

John is careful not to say that he gives life to the image. Only God can do that. It is something miraculous, but also deceptive and false.

Those who refuse to worship the beast are to be killed. Notice that it is the image itself which causes the non-worshippers to be killed. Again, I can’t fathom exactly what it means. But it's creepy.

Revelation 13:16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

"Causes" doesn't mean he forces them.

Here is how I see it. People will already be utilizing some sort of technology to conduct cashless business. The second beast will demand allegiance to the antichrist by worshipping him in order for folks to continue using the technology.

It'll be a choice. No one ever takes the mark, so to speak, accidentally, or without knowing what they are doing. In the very next chapter we will read,

Rev 14:9 Then a third angel... [said] with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

Rev 14:10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

“All” in verse sixteen means all types and classes of people. They are described in contrasting pairs.

- “Small and great.” It won’t matter if you are educated or uneducated, white collar or blue collar or no collar. Those distinctions will still exist but being “great” will not exempt you, nor will being “small” exclude you.
- “Rich and poor.” There will always be disparity of wealth. The concept here is that wealth will be useless unless you are participating in the system.
- “Free and slave.” That sounds ominous. A little later we’ll read in 18:13 that men trafficked in “the souls of men.” Human trafficking is already a huge problem in the world. It will worsen. But even if you’re “free” you can’t avoid the decision to take the “mark.”

John specifically mentions the “right hand” and the “forehead.” I see no reason this should not be taken literally.

By the way: In the Old Testament book, Deuteronomy, you'll recall God saying to His people regarding His statutes, "you shall bind them as a sign on your **hand**, and they shall be as frontlets **between your eyes**" (6:8).

It's why orthodox Jews wear *phylacteries* - small, leather boxes with verses inside - on their heads and forearms. The mark of the beast is a mocking, a mimicking, of this old practice.

Revelation 13:17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

We report quite frequently, in our Prophecy Updates, about the multiple technologies which exist right now that certainly could fit the description of a "mark" *in* or *on* your hand or forehead.

A person will not be able to conduct **any** business whatsoever without worshipping the antichrist. There will be no access to public services or health care or anything.

Revelation 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

In both Hebrew and Greek each letter of the alphabet really does correspond to a number. The first nine letters correspond to 1 through 9, the next nine to 10 through 90, and the last few letters to the hundreds. The number of a word or name is the sum of the numerical equivalents of its letters.

Relating this to 666, Jewish commentator David Stern writes,

The number could be entirely symbolic. The name of Messiah in Greek, Iêsous, equals 888; 7 is regarded as the perfect number; and triple repetition symbolizes absolute ultimacy (as in Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy is Adonai of Hosts"). Therefore 888 means that Yeshua is absolutely and ultimately beyond perfection, while 666 means that the beast in every respect falls short of perfection and is therefore absolutely and ultimately imperfect and evil.

I like that; it's simple and biblical. I'd add the observation that 666 is 6 repeating itself three times.

That may not seem profound, but it is helpful because, if you stick to the context, the Revelation discusses six world-ruling kingdoms up to and including the time the apostle John was writing: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Historians like to point out that the Roman Empire has never really been totally eradicated. So the next world-ruling empire will be the future revived Roman Empire of the Tribulation. It is, in that sense, a **repeat** of the sixth kingdom.

The revived Roman Empire of the Tribulation will then be taken over by Satan's beast. It is, in a sense, **another repeat** of the sixth kingdom.

Rome of the past, the revived Rome of the future, and the revived Rome ruled by the antichrist is the sixth world-ruling kingdom repeating itself three times - thus 6-6-6.

Mankind will never progress beyond this sixth kingdom.

Seven is the number of completion. Jesus will establish His Kingdom of Heaven on earth - the true seventh kingdom.

The threat of being totally cut-off from society, unable to buy or sell or conduct any business, will be a powerful incentive to take the mark of the beast.

Most of the believers on the earth, right now, live under the constant threat of persecution, even unto death.

How is Satan threatening **you**? You were probably threatened when you first got saved. Your family and your friends threatened to abandon you. Your boss may have threatened to fire you.

If you're not currently facing any threats, *maybe you need to get back in the fight.*

Those of you who follow baseball have heard announcers compliment a pitcher whose stuff is wicked-good by saying "He's really dealing."

Satan is wicked-bad, and he's dealing. You don't want what he's offering; and you need not be intimidated by his threats.

Nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Are you a believer? Your name **is** written in the Book of Life; but you must believe, before you die, in order for it to remain there.

Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ 13:1-18
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