

The Beast from the Land

Why so Many Heads?

The beast of Revelation 13 is depicted as having seven heads (see verse 1), so symbolically it is seen as being active throughout history by each of its heads in turn. When one is mortally wounded, the beast ceases to be active. Then, in the future, when that head is healed, the beast resumes its activities.

In Revelation 17:9-11, we are told the seven heads represent seven kings or kingdoms. They were seven successive powers that dominated and persecuted God's people

throughout the ages. Five ruled before John's time and persecuted God's people. Their details are featured in the Old Testament stories about Israel: They are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece.

The sixth kingdom—Rome—was in power during John's time (see Revelation 17:10—"one is") and, from John's perspective, the seventh was yet to come.

John saw, that in the future, the Roman Empire would sink and rise again in a Christian form. In time, medieval or Christian Rome rose to dominate God's people and became the seventh head.

But then it "is not" because it receives a deadly wound. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the American and French revolutions all

The Big Picture

In His sermon about the end of the world, Jesus warned that there will be an opposing counterfeit to the gospel as it goes out to the world.

He said His followers should understand what Daniel has to say about this. We saw in the last session how the sea beast in Revelation 13 has strong connections with the beasts from the sea in Daniel 7.

Revelation 13 reveals a counterfeit trinity seeking to coerce the world into a false system of worship. To the Jews of the Old Testament, image worship was an abomination. In this session we will see image worship being enforced by deception through a false Pentecost. In identifying the mark of the beast it is useful to understand that both the followers of Jesus and the beast have inscriptions on their foreheads [13:16; 14:1]. While the followers of the beast have the mark of the beast in their foreheads and right hand; those who follow Jesus have the seal of God in their foreheads. [7:3; 9:4] Thus the seal of God and the mark of the beast are used in contrast. To find out one, gives clues to the other. The final battle over worship is told in the language of an apostate religious system counterfeiting Christ's ministry on earth.



A couple studies the Bible together | Lincoln Rogers | Lightstock

contributed to a separation of church and state, in both their own countries and eventually other nations. The rise of democracy, secularism and education brought an end to an age of religious intolerance in many countries. No longer could the masses be so easily controlled. Today the “deadly wound” still has an effect.

However, we will see when we get to chapter 17 an eighth head appears. The deadly wound will be healed and one of the seven heads will reappear to act as in the past, as part of the eighth head. Revelation 13:3 seems to indicate that when this occurs the world will be amazed.

We presently enjoy freedoms few people have enjoyed throughout history. Revelation teaches these will be taken away at the end-time when those who want to be faithful to Jesus will be treated in the same manner as He was treated.

We have seen that the central issue will be worship. The law of God is in focus, particularly the first four commandments which deal with the “who, how and when” aspects of worship. We saw how the little horn in Daniel 7 thought it was able to change times and laws.

Over many centuries, the seventh-day

Sabbath was changed to Sunday as a result of various factors:

- The church of the time wanted to win the pagans who valued Sunday as the day of sun worship and a holiday.
- They wanted to get away from anything Jewish. One prominent feature of Judaism was the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.
- The influence of the Emperor Constantine, who wanted to make Christianity the binding influence in a decaying empire.
- The rise of the medieval church helped to develop the change. This church would later boast that the change was done by her authority.

How Reasons for the Change were Found

Remember, the central issue here in Revelation 13 is worship and covenant faithfulness, including obedience to the law of God. We have found the first three commandments are violated by the beast. But where do we find the fourth commandment, dealing with the Sabbath?

In Revelation, both the followers of Jesus and the beast have inscriptions on their

foreheads (see Revelation 13:16, 14:1). While the followers of the beast have the mark of the beast in their foreheads and right hand, those who follow Jesus have the seal of God in their foreheads (see Revelation 7:3, 9:4). Thus, the seal of God and the mark of the beast are used in contrast: to find one gives clues to finding the other.

As often required in Revelation, we need to go back to the Old Testament experiences of Israel to get an understanding of the language being used.

The Seal of God

After giving the Ten Commandments to Israel, God said to His people in Deuteronomy 6:4-8 that He wanted them to love Him with all their hearts, souls and strength. They were to “tie” them as symbols on their *hands* and “bind” them on their *foreheads*.

The idea of Christians being sealed is found

in Ephesians 1:13, 14, where we see this as being the work of the Holy Spirit. There is a sense in which all Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit. It is another way of saying God has set His people aside as belonging to Him. The seal represents ownership and protection. In 2 Timothy 2:19 we are also told how sealing is a way of stating a person belongs to God.

But this seal in Revelation 13 seems more about protection. Probably it is more related to Ezekiel 9:4, where God’s people who are sealed are given protection.

The Roots of the “Seal of God”

Let’s look again at the Old Testament roots for the expression “seal of God.” Recent scholarship has shown that the Ten Commandments follow the format of an ancient covenant document, which was stamped with a seal of ownership and authority in the centre.

At the centre of the Ten Commandments

Ilya Burdun | Getty Images



we find: the name of rulership—the Lord God. We find He is the Creator, the One who made everything. We also find His territory: He made heaven and earth. Thus we can say that the fourth commandment (see Exodus 20:8-11) serves as the seal in this ancient covenantal document as it gives the name, title and territory of the law giver.

So, in Old Testament times, we find the people of God were identified by an external sign: the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. It showed they had a special relationship with their Creator.

That's why when God sends His message in Revelation 14:6, this verse is recognised as having a very strong connection with the words of the fourth commandment.

Revelation repeatedly identifies God's people at the end-time as keeping the commandments of God (see Revelation 12:17, 14:12).

By contrast, the beast is seen breaking the first table of the Ten Commandments, which deals with the who, how and when of our worship.

The seal of God, as found in the Ten Commandment covenant, is the Sabbath and sealing God's people is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The truth is that the litmus test of obedience in the final crisis is the seventh-day Sabbath.

An Invitation to Worship the Creator

Since worship indicates obedience, the mark of the beast appears as the opposite or counterfeit to the seventh-day Sabbath. It could come as a non-observance of that day, or the observance of another day, as set up by mankind in defiance of the Creator.

Notes:

[illegible]



The day the Creator set aside | Caitlin Compton—Creative Clicks Photography | Lightstock

It is manifest in either the right hand or the forehead.

In the early days of Christianity, Sunday replaced the seventh-day Sabbath as a trade-off with pagan sun worship. Today, few actually observe Sunday as a holy day, but that could change dramatically amid the crisis of the end-time.

The issue is more than the idea of one day versus another. The sun still shines on that day as it does on other days.

It's all about the day the Creator set aside as a time to worship Him.

If we tell someone we keep the seventh-day Sabbath, we are telling them almost everything else we believe.

We are telling them we believe in the Creator who made heaven and earth. And when faced with the troubles and crises of this world, it means a lot to believe that God is in heaven and caring for us.

The Sabbath is more than just a day; it is also a symbol. Symbols have an important part to play in our lives.

The Sabbath is a symbol like a national flag. It's not just a piece of cloth; it's what that cloth stands for. Men and women have died for it in battle. It represents the honour of a nation.

The Christian church has other symbols: the Lord's Supper and baptism. They are important to us because of what they represent.

Early in human history, God said: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Don't forget that I am the Creator who made heaven and earth."

If we believe this, life has rich meaning. We have a past and a future to look forward to. We are no longer orphans without knowing who we are. We were put here by a Creator who wants us to take good care of the earth as His creation.

And, when we realise that the change from Saturday to Sunday came about to accommodate sun worshippers, we can see why this is an end-time issue alongside the other commandments of God.

The beast is asking for a commitment by regulating and enforcing worship. It is breaking—and encouraging everyone else to break—all God's commandments regarding worship. It is enforcing a false system of

Notes:

worship.

Just as the mark of the beast in the forehead relates to religious convictions, the mark in the right hand may indicate an absence of religious conviction.

Obviously, we are dealing with symbols, a literal mark could not be stamped on a person without their approval.

Origin of the Beast from the Land

▷ Read Revelation 13:11-18

As we are dealing with unfulfilled prophecy, we need to remember Jesus' warning in John 14:29—unfulfilled prophecy is best understood when it comes to pass.

Writer William Johnsson has some wise counsel on this point:

"Let us frankly acknowledge that the full understanding of the fulfilment of this prophecy of the land monster still awaits us ... Significant features of the second monster's

deceptions are not yet clear, especially the miracles that cause many to be led astray and the 'image' to the sea monster. Further, the vision indicates a stage of action which embraces the whole world ... How the mass of humanity will be drawn into the vortex of deception is not apparent at present." ["Symposium on Revelation," page 29.]

The land beast appears on the scene later than the dragon and the sea beast, and less is said about its identification.

The other beasts have come out of the sea. In Revelation, the sea is full of wild angry waters. To the ancients it was seen as something that separated loved ones and was something to be feared. This could be why John promises that in the New Earth there will no longer be any sea (see Revelation 21:1).

But this beast comes out of the land.

In Revelation, the earth has both good and bad associations:

Those who dwell on the earth are seen as being on the wrong side of the conflict in Revelation 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6.

The earth is seen in a positive way in Revelation 12:16, where the earth helped the woman. "The earth" describes the means God used to help Christians survive during the



Revelation 13 uses the language of Daniel 3 where enforcing image worship is described | Oxygen Multimedia

long Dark Ages.

The land beast is also described as lamb-like, so in some respects, it is like Christ the Lamb. We would expect to see this beast linked with Christianity. It is friendly at first but ends up speaking like a dragon (see Revelation 13:11).

Counterfeiter of the Holy Spirit's Work

According to our statement on the false trinity found in Revelation 13, the beast coming from the land is a counterfeit of the work of the Holy Spirit. It brings down fire from heaven as did the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It also works miracles on behalf of the sea beast (Revelation 13:12, 14).

Because of this work, the land beast is later called the "false prophet" (see Revelation 19:20). Jesus warned there would be false prophets in His sermon about the end of the world:

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles

to deceive even the elect—if that were possible" (Matthew 24:24).

The beast coming up from the land is also called the false prophet (see Revelation 19:20). It would seem that John also has in mind that this power will claim to do the work of Elijah who restored true worship by bringing down fire from God out of heaven. Thus will be counterfeited the true work of God being carried out by the two witnesses who work miracles and bring fire down from heaven.

We have here a so-called Christian power counterfeiting the work of the Holy Spirit. It springs out of the church and the church's faith.

Is it possible for a nation with strong Christian foundations to deny those foundations? Can people who have stood for liberty and freedom turn their backs on that heritage? We saw just that happen in Germany during the Second World War.

We also saw it happen in Israel during the

days of Christ, when the leaders of the Jewish religion allied themselves with the Romans. Religion and state worked together to put Christ to death on Calvary.

At this present time, we see the potential for this more in the United States than anywhere else in the world—a nation that was part of the earth helping the woman. People had once fled there for freedom; a young Christian nation that has been the home of Christian missions. It has exported Christianity around the world. Could we imagine that religious people in the United States, who have exported freedom and democracy around the world, could enforce a false system of worship?

The Centre of Growth for Christianity Today

As Christianity has grown around the world, it has undergone significant changes. In the late twentieth century, the centre of the Christian world changed from the north to the south, from the west to the east. With this geographical shift has also come the influence of syncretistic forms of Christianity—the amalgamation of traditional beliefs and practices with Christian faith. Often people who are in poverty and who cannot afford doctors or medicines look for miracles. In such a context, visions and dreams abound. Contact with the spirits of dead ancestors is part and parcel of “faith.” Much is claimed as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Such forms of Christianity are embarrassing for many Christians. Some contend, however, that this is another Pentecost. Could this be the lamb-like beast at work counterfeiting the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

Added to this is the trend for more and more conservative Christians to meddle in politics and work toward setting up state churches. When professed Christianity reaches out to the power of the state and unites with it to enforce worship we have an image to the beast being formed.

Images lack breath and are mocked in the Bible but *this* image is given breath from the

lamb-like beast, which is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit (see Revelation 13:15).

There will appear to be a powerful working of the spirit as we get to the end of history, but it won’t be the Holy Spirit.

Revelation warns it will be the result of the work of the three unclean spirits bringing together the dragon, the beast and the false prophet: deceiving the world by means of miracles to enforce the worship of an image to the first beast (see Revelation 16:13, 14, 19:20).

Jesus warned His followers that, as the gospel goes out to the world, it brings on the end of the world. He also warned that there would come opposition to the preaching of the gospel in the form of “the abomination that causes desolation standing in the holy place” (see Matthew 24:14, 15).

Revelation tells us that at the end of human history we will see a return to what was experienced during medieval times and most of human existence.

It will be an age of intolerance. Powers in this world will be deceived by demonic spirits and try to enforce worship, treading on the holy ground of conscience.

How often in history we have seen the tyranny of the “righteous”—so-called good people—trying to make others good like them. It can be worse when these people are religious and think God is with them in what they are doing.

Professed Christian powers will extend the power of the state to enforce worship. When this is done an image to the beast is formed. This is what the beast has done to God’s people through many centuries in the past.

The inspiration will be through “fire from heaven”—a counterfeit of Pentecost (see Revelation 13:13). False religious revivals will take place where multitudes will claim God is with them.

In the Bible story of the prophet Elijah, fire came down from heaven on Mount Carmel to show who the true God was and whose side He was taking. Revelation 13 describes how “fire” will be used as evidence by those opposed to God. This will be difficult to argue against.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 also pictures this time when the lawless one will be revealed with all sorts of counterfeit miracles. It will deceive people because they refused to believe the truth. They choose to believe a lie so God allows them to believe a lie.

Decoding the Mark of the Beast

▷ Read Revelation 13:16-18

The mark consists of the name of the beast. No-one has it yet, as this issue has not yet arrived. But Revelation says some people will have the mark of the beast on the forehead.

This contrasts with the 144,000, who are God’s people in Revelation 14:1, with the name of God the Father written on their foreheads.

The forehead refers to our minds. We think and worship with our minds. Some have a mind like the beast while others have their minds recreated to reflect God’s character. This is a choice people make and they will face the consequences.

The name of the beast has a number: 666. Those to whom Revelation was first written would be familiar with this language and able to break the code. But today, the knowledge they applied has been lost.

From the second century, people began

to use a technique known as “gematria” which means a “manipulation of numbers.” Using this technique, each letter of the Greek, Hebrew or Latin alphabet had its own numerical value.

Therefore, the number 666 has been the happy hunting ground for all types of speculation. But there are two reasons we should not try to pin the number on anyone we know:

1. **As seen in this series so far, Revelation gives numerous points of identification to reveal the beast. The number 666 is only one of many. Care should be taken not to overemphasise one point while ignoring others, especially when that particular point is widely disputed.**
2. **The number can be used for many names. Some have suggested that the Latin inscription of “vicarious filii dei” on the papal tiara adds up to 666. Some maintain the number has been there at times although it is not there at present. Others have suggested that the names of Nero, Caligula, Muhammad, Napoleon, Hitler, or—more recently—Bill Gates can add up to the number. Among the more creative suggestions was the association of the number with Ronald Wilson Reagan, because he had six letters in each of his three names.**

What 666 Really Represents

Since history seems to give us mixed signals, it is helpful to begin with what we know from Scripture and the world within which Revelation was written. Six is one number short seven, the perfect number in the book of Revelation. Day 6 is also the day both man and the serpent were created, but a full week is seven days.

So six represents human imperfection-666 represents a triple failure of being less than 777, which is perfection. The beast falls short of the divine character he is trying to counterfeit. In the same way, 666 falls short of the divine name on the foreheads of those

Solomon was a son of David—as was Jesus—but he led Israel away from God. This

Much of the imagery in Revelation 13 comes from Daniel 3, where image worship was enforced on the people of God by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The dimensions of the image in the Daniel 3 story is measured in sixes. This triggers in our mind a repeat of history. At the end of time once again, those who want to follow God faithfully will be called to make a choice.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.