Revelation 13:1-18 - A Call for the Endurance and Faith of the Saints

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Introduction - This chapter introduces two more characters and elaborates on their attributes and deeds. Satan's antichrist and false prophet arise and deceive the world, but Jesus' followers must persevere in faith. Jesus calls His followers to endure hardship and keep the faith, trusting that God's plan and justice are best.

v1-8 - Beast from the Sea: The Antichrist - As the dragon (Satan) stands on the sand of the sea (12:17), a beast arises from the sea (Dan 7:3) or among the nations (Rev 17:15). In appearance he is like the dragon (12:3), yet different, and comes from the bottomless pit (Rev 11:7; 17:8). He will be destroyed by Jesus, yet he is one of a group of kings who will have geo-political power (Rev 17:7-14; Dan 2:40-43). He engages in blasphemy: "slander, detraction, speech injurious to another's good name… impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty."[1] John previously warned about this "antichrist" who is opposed to the truth and denies Jesus Christ (1Jo 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2Jo 5-9). He is like the historical kingdoms of earth that conquered the known world (Dan 7:3-8, 11-12, 17-27). Satan gives him his power and throne (Lu 4:1-13; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2; Jo 12:31). He seemingly survived a fatal wound, either indicating his spiritual succession to the Roman Empire[2] or survival of a physical wound (Zec 11:15-17). He is worshipped (Rev 11:7), fulfilling Satan's desires (Rom 1:25). He utters blasphemous words (Dan 7:24; 11:36; 2Th 2:1-15) against God's name (Ex 20:7; Matt 12:31-32) and us, His temple (2Co 6:16-18; 1Co 3:16-17). His authority lasts 3.5 years (Dan 9:24-27) even over the tribulation saints. Anyone not in the book of life, written before the start of history (Rev 3:5; Eph 1:3-14), will worship him (2Th 2:11-12).

v9-10 - A Call for Endurance - Similar to Rev 2-3 and 14:12, all are encouraged to listen up. The Christian is called to endure trial and suffering, not to take up carnal arms (2Co 6:1-10; 10:1-6; Mat 26:51; Dan 11:36). Be firm in the faith and resist the devil (1Pe 5:9; 1Co 16:13; Phl 1:21; Rev 12:11). God has ordained each of our days (Psa 139:16) and will have final triumph over evil and repay them all (Rom 12:19).

v11-14 - Beast from the Earth: The False Prophet - A similar beast arises who speaks like Satan and is called his False Prophet (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The antithesis to the Holy Spirit (Jhn 16:8-11), the false prophet deceives everyone into worshipping the antichrist. He can perform great signs (Mat 16:1,4) like calling down fire from heaven, typically an act of God (Rev 11:5; 20:9; 1Ch 21:26; Gen 19:24; 2Ki 1:10-12; 2Ch 7:1), except in Job (Job 1:16). God allows this great delusion; they have rejected the testimony of Jesus (2 Th 2:11).

v15-18 - The Image and Number of the Antichrist - The false prophet causes people to create an image of the beast and worship it (Dan 3), establishing the abomination of desolation in the holy place (Dan 11:45; 2Th 2:4; Matt 24:15). God is righteously jealous of our worship. We should worship Him alone and never an idol (Ex 20:1-6). The antichrist's image seemingly comes alive and forces people to take the antichrist's mark to participate in the economic system (cf.Rev 7:3). The antichrist is a man and his number is 666. There are a variety of interpretations of this number.[3] We should be careful not to engage in "mere speculation" and "worldly fables" (1Ti 1:3-7; 4:7) but instead realize that whoever this pawn of Satan is, he's no match for Christ or God!

So, what? Now, what? Satan will set up a false trinity: an antichrist (beast from the sea) who appeared to be slain but is healed. A false spirit (beast from the earth) who deceives the world by performing great signs and causing people to worship the antichrist. Satan sits as the head, a false god, receiving worship because of the activities of those two beasts. Satan and the antichrist may sit on a throne on earth, but as we saw in Revelation 4, there is One seated on the throne in heaven. We worship the One and Only True God. There is a Lamb who is worthy to take the Scroll (Rev 5). He is coming!

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[1] Larry Pierce. *Outline of Biblical Usage*.
[2] John F. Walvoord. *Revelation: The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries*. 206.
[3] See the following page.

His angels will end the rule of this false trinity, and His very word will slay them all (Rev 19:19-21). Jesus promised us a place with Him, eternal life, and a place in His everlasting kingdom.

- How does the world lead me right now? How can we encourage one another as we follow Jesus and refuse to follow the world?
- Don't utter haughty and blasphemous words - how can I make my speech and conduct more humble and God-honoring? (Phl 2:3; 1Pe 5:5; Mat 12:36)
- If we have authority, we are stewarding something God loaned to us. How does that impact how we lead?
- Does my life reflect the truth that I am the temple of God with His Spirit dwelling within me?
- Resolve:
    - Who will fight for us? I can take courage that God will hear what is said and done against me and will enact His justice. (Rom 12:19) Will I let vengeance be His?
    - What am I going through today that God is calling me to endure through and keep the faith? Is there a way you could be helped by members of your small group if you make the need known?
- Reflect: perform an idolatry inventory. What things or behaviors occupy places in your life only God should? List them out. Find Bible verses that condemn that attitude or practice. Find verses that encourage a Godly attitude or practice to replace those idols. Pray and ask God for help transforming your heart and mind in Christ.

Possible Interpretations of 666

The number could be computed as a sum of the letters in a Greek or Hebrew name ("gematria" - some languages' letters also represent their numbers and thus have a value), or it could be symbolic.[4] The first 6 Roman numerals add to 666.[5] Six squared is 36, and adding up 1-36 produces 666.[6] Nebuchadnezzar's statue was 60 by 6 (Dan 3:1). Six could represent the number of man, falling short of perfection (7): made on the 6th day, works 6 days for multiples of 6 hours a day (24) and multiple of 6 minutes in an hour (60) and multiple of 6 months of year (12); there are four names for man in OT and two in NT.[7] It seems likely this is the best human Satan could put forth and empower, but he will still fall far short of the perfection of God.

[4] John F. Walvoord. *Revelation: The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries*. 215.
[5] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines: New Testament*. 835.
[6] *Halley's Bible Handbook*. 945.
[7] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines: New Testament*. 835.