

The Beast's Right-hand "Man"

Text: Revelation 13.11–18

Theme: Only the wisdom of God's gospel can keep us from being deceived by Satan's counterfeits.

Introduction — As we come into this portion of Scripture, let's remember...

- remember that 11.15–19 is the middle of the whole book
- it announces that "Christ is King"
- on either side of that announcement there are depictions of the persecution of the church
- God gives us pictures of the reality that has been, is, and will be—Christians will suffer
- Jesus is King; Satan is a pretender who opposes the King
- our Lord reigns, even though it may not seem like it right now
- that's because the church is afflicted, and will be even more so
- once the gospel has been proclaimed to all nations, the final Antichrist will arise
- but don't forget, also surrounding both sides of 11.15–19's proclamation: Christ is King
- we see the church, though suffering, protected, sealed, nourished by God
- in Rev 10.1–11, the true prophet is pictured
- now, in 13.11–18, the false prophet is depicted
- and this false prophet is used to battle the church, seeking to wipe her out

So, let's look at...

I. THE SECOND BEAST, THE FALSE PROPHET, VV. 11, 12

- both beasts, in Rev. 13, are of Satan's design
- they are allies in war on church and Christians
- both are given incredible power and authority to do great evil
- so, what's the difference between the two?

1. Distinct from the first

- one is from sea, v. 1; other is from earth, v. 11
- v. 7: it is given to first beast to make war: political & military might
- vv. 11–12: given to second beast to speak for first beast: PR for Beast #1, media relations
- both represent demonic, earthly power
- take dragon and two beasts, you have unholy trinity
- and yet, there are differences in the two

1) Different in appearance

- Beast #1 is like the four beasts of Daniel 7; again, saw that last week
- Beast #2 is almost likable, like a pet lamb; but do not be deceived
- he is a false savior bringing a false message
- unlike the Holy Spirit, who only ever points to Jesus Christ
- this second beast points and directs worship to the first beast

2) Distinct in domains

- if first beast is the secular arm, representing evil gov'ts, political & military power...
- then second beast is the religious arm
- he seeks to lead you to worship the first beast
- uses his voice to woo, to sweeten the call, to lure you into idolatrous practices against God
- he performs signs & wonders, all to draw attention to the first beast
- if first beast is the governing powers that be, this second beast is its media voice
- it spews forth falsehoods and propaganda in such amounts, soon, it seems, all listen & believe

3) How do they contrast with the true Christ?

- both Christ and the first beast are slain and then raised again
- both have followers with their names stamped upon foreheads
- both have horns
- both carry authority over nations, tribes, languages, and people
- both receive worship
- both will have a return: one to eternal destruction, the other to eternal victory
- but who are these beasts, especially this second beast we hear about now?

2. Identity of this second beast

- saw last Lord's Day that first beast represents governmental power: political & military power
- beast #2 would be like a prophet & priest
- instead of bringing Word of God & proper worship in spirit and truth
- this beast directs worship to Satan & first beast
- as for his words, well he utters lies and deceits to draw attention to dragon & beast
- here is where we need the words of Jesus ringing loud in our ears
- *For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

(Matthew 24:24 ESV)

- don't forget or neglect what we've been told in Word of God
- *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.*

(1 John 2:18, 22 ESV)

- this second beast is also given tremendous power to murder those who will not worship
- so, for those who will not swear that Caesar is Lord: he kills
- for those who seek to point out the lies of governors and kings
- for those who promote true righteousness instead of evil legislation
- for those who adamantly deny the mark this world system would put upon them
- they will suffer, excruciatingly, horribly, even unto death
- but do not fear, my brothers and sisters...all they can do is kill you
- do not love your life more than dying for name of Jesus

3. A warning to us

- these beasts warn us not to be ignorant of Satan's schemes and devices
- yes, these beasts can be beastly, and they will be
- but know that they will also be incredibly charming as well
- when devil comes at you with seven heads, ten horns, roaring like a lion: well, you see that
- but when he comes as a lamb, as an angel of light, that's harder
- this warns us of great need of wisdom and discernment
- our nation's government, even along with our state's, seek to convince they know best
- how to raise our children, how to live your life, what lifestyles are acceptable, even
- the media works as their voice, giving us "the news" they want us to hear
- entertainment industry subtly slips in messages of all sorts in TV shows, movies, and more
- even sports — football, basketball, baseball — are not immune to the propaganda
- and then there are those who seem to be a part of the church
- when we listen to radio/TV preachers tell us we can live our best lives now, we believe them
- when others preach that if you'd exercise your faith, you'll be healthy, successful, prosperous

- some preachers, in pulpits you'd recognize, tell you Jesus exists simply to make you happy
- Jesus will make your job better, your marriage stronger, your family exceedingly blessed
- you get sold a bill of goods, told Jesus is a divine therapists not Son of God
- the gospel they hold out will never save you, but boy-oh-boy does it sound good
- *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*
(Matthew 7:15 ESV)
- be warned: get wisdom, use discernment, wake up and stand guard

Now, we see...

II. THE POWER OF DECEIT AND IDOLATRY, VV. 13–15

- many have tried to identify these two beasts & who they specifically represent
- I grew up with books selling like hot cakes seeking to expose the beast & antichrist
- some were sincere, others merely sensational
- some methods were serious, others fantastically silly
- a few might show signs of intelligence, but most lacked that and were just plain foolish
- John's first readers didn't need to know the name of Antichrist
- they needed to know the name of Jesus
- they saw evil all around them, seeking to do them great woe
- they needed, like we need still today, great confidence in our God & in His Christ
- so we need to know this beast's power & how he will exercise it

1. This beast's role

- Rome's governmental power & authority sought to crush any rebellion
- but the second beast, representing the religious arm of this empire, was tolerant
- as long as you honored the Emperor, they let you be
- but many earth dwellers of the day grew in their hatred of God's people
- they couldn't have them NOT worshiping Caesar
- they canceled them economically: severely limiting buying & trading & business
- they stifled them educationally: keeping them away from places of learning
- they marginalized them as families: making them slaves, prisoners
- some unbelieving family members turned upon believing members
- and then the unbelieving world turned them in as traitors to Caesar

1) this is the beast's main role: get people to pledge allegiance to a throne

- to promote the first beast in such a way you would ask: "Who can stand against him?"
- and even if you, as a believer stood against this, when one emperor died, another took place

2) blasphemous names

- in ancient Rome, got to point where couldn't buy goods without approved coin
- that coin had to have the emperor's image engraved upon it, and called Caesar god
- it is heading there once again, even today
- if our current administration gets it way, they will establish a digital currency
- you will lose your privacy regarding your finances
- you will lose your freedom to purchase freely
- the beast will exert his power against you & the media will sing his praises
- yes, the beast will take care of you, provide for you, keep you safe & secure

2. Given power to deceive

- John tells us that first beast is like this, so much so that earth-dwellers worship & adore him

- John also says it seems like no one can defeat the beast
- this antichrist is so clever he fools the masses of the world
- he evokes worldwide admiration
- both beasts end up doing this: the one by force, the other by deceit and cunning
- John, earlier in his first letter spoke of this
- *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

(1 John 5:19 ESV)

- how can the whole world worship “the god of this world”?
- how can they substitute worship of God for loving adoration of Satan himself?
- they are blinded, deceived, given over to their own lusts
- they do what is right in their own eyes, even as in the days of the judges of the OT
- given over wholly to humanism: worship of man
- given over to following the beast: our elected officials know best, do what they say
- given over to evil folly: let the powers that be take care of you, tell you what’s best for you
- they degrade the Bible, mock Christians, promote unbridled adultery and fornication
- governments support ideologies of sexuality that blasphemous a holy God

3. How can we stand against such beasts?

- how can we remain true to God, even if we get threatened with imprisonment or murder?
- the world asks: “What’s wrong with you? Everyone is doing this; why can’t you?”
- how can we stand against a world that promotes self-worship?
- when the world tries to force us to be tolerant of sin, wickedness, evil?
- what on earth can we do?
- *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

(Ephesians 6:10–12 ESV)

- it is, indeed, principalities and spiritual forces we fight against
- behind our world’s and nation’s governing authorities is the beast & his right-hand man
- world is in grips of institutions and ideologies that are rife with vile wickedness
- they wage war against us, the church of Jesus Christ
- so what can we do?
- be warned, right now; stop pleading ignorance
- God’s Word tells us right here, in plain language, the devil is behind all this
- we are to watch and pray
- we are to put on the armor of God
- we are to stand, to fight the fight of faith, and to trust in Sovereign God & His Christ

We come to this second beast’s final trick...

III. THE MARK OF THE BEAST

- vv. 16–17 tell us how to identify the beasts
- just as God seals us with His very own Holy Spirit, thus identifying those who are His
- so they will seek to identify those who are theirs

1. Literal or spiritual?

- remember what kind of language we are dealing with here
- this is apocalyptic language: symbolic so much of the time
- visions and pictures are given to John pointing to a greater reality behind them

- also remember: when God seals His people, Rev. 7, He doesn't need a visible mark upon us
- we have His name upon our foreheads...so look around right now and see that mark
- no, you can't because it's not a literal mark, but a sealing of our whole life in Christ
- in the same way, the beasts will want to mark those who belong to them, who worship them
- they will not need a bar code tattoo, a digital chip under your skin, or a secret credit card
- the beast will know because those who dwell on the earth will follow all they say
- they will willingly bow the knee, obeying blindly, unthinkingly, unreservedly giving allegiance
- the mark is a sign of ownership
- receiving this mark of the beast means you belong to Satan
- it means you'll serve him, worship him, do whatever he suggests and tells you
- the mark is the philosophy of hell, the ideology of self
- when put on the right hand: symbolizes all that you do in work, trade, and industry
- when you do that which is controlled by Satan, you bear his mark
- and as we see, his mark is the mark of man: 666
- don't think this is some mystery; it is not
- if the perfect number of fulfillment and completion is seven, then six falls just short
- the religion of man, the number of man always falls short: even three times—666!

2. A call to steadfastness

- instead, God's people must cling to Christ and to Christ alone
- you cannot bear two marks at the same time: it is one or the other
- if you are sealed by God, you belong to Him and nothing or no one can change that
- but don't think for a minute that you can take Satan's mark and still be a Christian
- it is possible to profess that you belong to the Lamb but act just like the dragon
- well, sadly, this is a sign of who you belong to and you've been blindly deceived
- O church of God, stand; be ready to stand, be ready to give your life if you need to
- but do not compromise or you will be lost

Conclusion – This requires wisdom

- this calls for wisdom — and how do you get that wisdom?
- from God and His Word
- so, you must be in this book
- 2-5 minutes each day will NOT get you by when beast comes hard after you and us as a church
- Revelation contains hard truths: the church, her people, will suffer, and some terribly
- yes, Jesus' victory is assured, but we will suffer for His name
- but an even harder truth is this: great many in this world on wrong side of truth
- they will bear the mark, be vanquished in the end, and marched to eternal torment
- wisdom from God tells you now: today is day of salvation — look to Jesus Christ

This calls for Wisdom — the wisdom that tells us Christ is the Victor already

- oh, I know, it seems like these beasts are already flexing their unholy muscles
- but Christ is the guaranteed winner in all this

The great composer Johann Sebastian Bach had a feather unusual way of getting upon each day

- his children would go to piano, play a few lines of music, leave off last note
- Bach would awaken, get out of bed, and strike the last chord
- this is what John is telling us
- these two beasts seem like they are playing their tune uninterrupted

- but all they do, all that is created by man, is incomplete
- Jesus Christ will play the last and final chord
- He will have the last Word...and one little word shall fell him, Luther sang

So, pray for grace to recognize the beasts of Satan

- you know their character; it's right here before you
- they hate the church and come after it to do away with it
- so pray for wisdom

And repent of all the ways that you currently absorb the world's mind and soul

- stop catering to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life
- ask for the Spirit's grace to show you who you truly are
- pray that God will help you abhor your sin, hate it more than you love life itself

And then, trust in the Lamb

- recognize that Jesus is Lord over all
- trust His perfect work of redemption on behalf of sinners
- only God the Father, Christ the Son, and God the Spirit can deliver you & meet your every need