

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 29 - Chapter 13 Continued

We got only to verse 6 last week, but there's still more to say about those first several verses that makes it important enough to spend some time with them. There's also some important applications that we need to take to heart so let's re-read part of Revelation chapter 13.

RE-READ REVELATION 13:4 - end

We previously met the satanic Sea Beast and learned about several of his attributes. Perhaps his chief attribute is the most visible one; it is that he appears much like the Dragon. That is, he has 7 heads and 10 horns. The Dragon, being Satan, empowers the Sea Beast with his own wicked power, in imitation of the way the Father empowers the Son with his own Godly power. Stop and make a mental note of that. Satan has the ability to give some of his power to other beings, including humans. We learned that citizens of the Earth will be so bedazzled and infatuated by the power and abilities of the Sea Beast that they will lavish worship upon it. They will give in to the Sea Beast's every command because they will determine, as it says in verse 4, "Who can fight against it?"

In John's vision the Sea Beast became a spokesman for the Devil and against God, which is why one aspect of the Sea Beast is as the Anti-Christ. I say "one" aspect because the Sea Beast has 7 heads, indicating a coalition of 7 persons or entities and not just one, and they'll all play different roles in bringing the Anti-Christ into power. So the Sea Beast doesn't just represent a single person or entity, but rather several (all of them evil of course). The spokesman part of the Sea Beast is said to speak blasphemies against 3 things: The Lord, those living in Heaven, and (according to the CJB) the **Sh'khinah**. The CJB is way off course on the third thing; it is not the **Sh'khinah** rather it is (in Greek) the **skene**. **Skene** means Tabernacle, as in the Wilderness Tabernacle. The blasphemies of the Devil will be that not only does he speak against God, His earthly abode, and those who have died in the faith, but also the Devil counterfeits these 3 things in order to deceive both the Believers and non-Believers who are alive on earth at that time.

All this was prophesied by Daniel nearly 7 centuries before John received and recorded his divine visions. We'll go to the Book of Daniel to get a broader picture of just what Satan is up to in this regard.

^{CJB} Daniel 11:31-36 ³¹ Armed forces will come at his order and profane the sanctuary and fortress. They will abolish the daily burnt offering and set up the abomination that causes desolation. ³² Those who act wickedly against the covenant he will corrupt with his blandishments, but the people who know their God will stand firm and prevail.

³³ Those among the people who have discernment will cause the rest of the people to understand what is happening; nevertheless, for a while they will fall victim to sword,

fire, exile and pillage. ³⁴ **When they stumble, they will receive a little help, although many who join them will be insincere.**

³⁵ **Even some of those with discernment will stumble, so that some of them will be refined, purified and cleansed for an end yet to come at the designated time.** ³⁶ **"The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and he will utter monstrous blasphemies against the God of gods. He will prosper only until the period of wrath is over, for what has been determined must take place.**

Because this section of Daniel will take place in the End Times, and therefore ought to be of great interest to us (although it has already happened in one form in the 160's B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanies took over the Temple and defiled it), let's look at what we learn from Daniel. Remember: we need to take this section of Daniel in the context of Revelation 13 and vice versa; they work together.

Daniel speaks of Satan co-opting those who act wickedly against the covenant. Who are those people and what does this mean? The covenant is referring to the Covenant of Moses, but might also include by extension God's Covenant with Abraham. Yet, says Daniel, those who know their God will stand firm and will prevail. What this passage is speaking about is people who claim to worship the God of Israel but yet they act against the Covenant (the Law) of Moses. This is in contrast to those who truly know God, study and obey God's Covenant, and so they have the knowledge, understanding, and devotion to stand firm in the truth.

In the time of Antiochus Epiphanies this was speaking mostly of wicked priests who ignored the God ordained rituals and instead used the Temple as a treasure chest for their personal benefit. Even the High Priests in this era were illegitimate because they were not descended from the God ordained line coming from Aaron. However as concerns the End Times: what is being spoken of here is religious Jews who claim knowledge of the Torah yet nonetheless act wickedly by violating God's Torah because they place their own Traditions and Laws of the Rabbis above the Law of Moses. But this also includes gentiles (Christians) who have been taught by Church authorities that the covenants of God have no place in their lives and thus refuse to learn about them or to obey them. So these Christians indeed act wickedly against the covenants all the time thinking they are supposed to; and also believing that ignoring, even slandering, God's laws and commands is the righteous thing for Christians to do, as is condemning other Believers who do try to uphold those commands. Both groups (religious Jews and gentile Christians) who are said to act wickedly against the covenant are therefore easy marks for the Dragon to co-opt because they lack divine wisdom and truth, and instead rely on weak manmade doctrines and traditions, perhaps accompanied with a patchwork of Bible passages that are used to validate their position against the covenant. However, says Daniel, other God worshippers who truly know God (those who do NOT act wickedly against the covenant) will be able stand firm and continue to be obedient to Yehoveh. So let me be clear: this is not a contrast of pagans versus God worshippers; this is a separation of those who claim to worship God but do NOT obey Him versus those who claim to know God but DO obey Him, and their obedience is based on God's covenant.

Christ commented on this exact matter when He said:

^{CJB}Matthew 5:17-19 ¹⁷ "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah-not until everything that must happen has happened.

¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I get a substantial volume of email and as you might imagine there is short list of a few questions and comments that I get repeatedly. One that I regularly receive goes something like this: why do you constantly quote Matthew 5:17 - 19 with Jesus saying that He didn't abolish the Law? How about what Paul says in Romans 7 and in Galatians 3? In other words, while these folks don't deny that Christ said that He didn't abolish the Law and that His followers should obey those laws, and Believers' future status in Heaven will depend on their obedience to the covenant, in their minds Paul tells a different story and says the Law was abolished and obedience no longer matters. And, they prefer to go with Paul and fault me for going with Christ. I usually reply by pointing out 2 things; first: Christ is the Master and Paul is the Disciple. So if Paul is actually contradicting Jesus (which, in reality, he is not), then we have the Disciple contradicting His Master. Or in this case, we have a mere human contradicting God the Son. And second, if one studies the Torah then it comes as no surprise that Yeshua, a Torah observant Jew, said what He did. The shock for a Torah student would be if He **did** say He came to abolish what His Father gave to Moses. So it is those who deem the covenant irrelevant or abolished that are being spoken about in this passage of Daniel.

Continuing with Daniel 11, the next verse says that those who have discernment (those who are true to the covenant, the Law of Moses) will cause the rest of the people (other God worshippers) to understand what is happening. So those who know and obey the covenant are those who can discern; and it is they who are able to teach the totality and meaning of God's Word and to help those who are bewildered (because they don't know the Torah) to understand what all of these calamities and cosmic events that are devastating the earth mean and are leading towards. Even so, that doesn't say that knowing God's Word and obeying His covenant will protect these discerning Believers from harm; they (we) are going to be pursued and persecuted for their (our) faith. And I would add, they will be pursued by evil followers of Satan, and by deceived Believers, as well as people closest to them. Yeshua spoke a warning about this happening that we find in the Gospel accounts.

^{CJB}Luke 21:10-19 ¹⁰ Then he told them, "Peoples will fight each other, nations will fight each other, ¹¹ there will be great earthquakes, there will be epidemics and famines in various places, and there will be fearful sights and great signs from Heaven. ¹² But before all this, they will arrest you and persecute you, handing you over to the synagogues and prisons; and you will be brought before kings and governors. This will all be on account of me, ¹³ but it will prove an opportunity for you to bear witness.

¹⁴ So make up your minds not to worry, rehearsing your defense beforehand; ¹⁵ for I myself will give you an eloquence and a wisdom that no adversary will be able to resist

or refute.

¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends; some of you they will have put to death; ¹⁷ and everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will be lost. ¹⁹ By standing firm you will save your lives.

The dedication and boldness that these obedient Believers display will attract many followers, says Daniel; but some of the new followers will be insincere. That is, these new followers are really after a solution or perhaps just comforting for their bad circumstances (the ongoing horrifying results of God's wrath); not so much have they had a true change of heart with a new goal of an intimate relationship with God coupled with an intent to obey Him. So when they realize that actual trust in God and obedience to His covenant is not a magic elixir that protects or saves them from earthly trials and tribulations, they'll lose interest and move on to the next trendy thing that promises them protection from harm. Further, those who are sincere and yet still suffer from an earthly perspective, will actually gain from it because from a heavenly perspective Daniel says that their faith is being further refined and purified.

And finally in Daniel 11:36 we come to the part where the king (Satan, in the form of the Sea Beast or probably, better, the Anti-Christ) will consider himself greater than God and utter monstrous blasphemies (as we find John reiterating in Revelation 13:6). The Devil has been given a period of time that God will allow him to utter such blasphemous and false things. Revelation 13:5 says that this period of unrestricted blasphemy by the Sea Beast is 42 months.

During this time many God worshippers will succumb to the power, majesty, and blasphemies of the Sea Beast; but many others won't. And those who won't are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That is, those who put their eternal trust in the Lamb (Yeshua) will have their souls held safe for an eternity with God but also their minds will be protected from the seduction of the Sea Beast. Christ spoke of this time and it is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

^{CJB}Matthew 24:24-25 ²⁴ For there will appear false Messiahs and false prophets performing great miracles- amazing things!- so as to fool even the chosen, if possible.

²⁵ There! I have told you in advance!

I want to say a couple of things about this matter. First, this verse in Matthew is often used to back up the Dispensational Pre-Tribulation doctrine that claims that before a 7 year period of Tribulation begins, Believers will be Raptured away (that is, they can't be fooled by the blasphemies of the Sea Beast for the reason that they're not going to be here). But when we see that Christ is speaking in reference to those written in the Book of Life not being fooled (deceived) by the false Messiahs and false Prophets (in the End Times), then we understand that whenever it is that the Rapture will occur, what we're reading here in Revelation about some Believers being deceived occurs before then. So fellow Believers, should we still be alive at that time, we are destined to go through a terrible time of suffering and tribulation, and many are going to witness the Anti-Christ and his deceptions and not be rescued from it because the Rapture comes later.

The second point I want to make is that today it is a truism that one way to discern, on earth, a person who claims to be a Believer but isn't, from one who claims to be a Believer and is, is the fruit they bear.

CJB Matthew 7:15-20 ¹⁵ ***"Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep's clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves!"*** ¹⁶ ***You will recognize them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?"*** ¹⁷ ***Likewise, every healthy tree produces good fruit, but a poor tree produces bad fruit.***

¹⁸ ***A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit.*** ¹⁹ ***Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire!*** ²⁰ ***So you will recognize them by their fruit.***

I say "one way" to discern is because while we can look at the lives of professed Believers and observe their attitudes and behaviors and make our own judgments about them, that doesn't mean that we necessarily see them through the same eyes that God does. We can have our opinions based on what we see, but those opinions have no bearing on that person's eternal destiny. Later, in the final days of the End Times, the outward indicator of who is written in the Lamb's Book of Life versus those who aren't will be those who choose to follow the Devil and the way of the world, versus those who trust the Lamb and stay true to Him by not succumbing to His deceptions spoken from the blasphemous mouth of the Sea Beast.....probably in the form of the Anti-Christ.

That Believers will not be exempted from tribulation is emphasized by verse 10 that is a combining of 2 passages from Jeremiah.

CJB Jeremiah 15:2 ² ***And when they ask you where they should go, tell them that this is what ADONAI says: 'Those destined for death- to death! Those destined for the sword- to the sword! Those destined for famine- to famine! Those destined for captivity- to captivity!'***

CJB Jeremiah 43:11 ¹¹ ***He will come and attack the land of Egypt. Those destined for death- to death! Those destined for captivity- to captivity! Those destined for the sword- to the sword!***

That we see these two similarly worded passages both coming from Jeremiah and appearing in John's Apocalypse tells us that this is a particular way of saying something that comes from the mouths of Prophets. And the point is that regardless of who you might be, whether Saint or Sinner, whatever has been permitted in Heaven for you will play out on earth; God's will cannot be thwarted or questioned. Thus the conclusion about what this prophetic passage means for Believers is spoken at the end of verse 10: ***"This is when God's holy people must persevere and trust!"*** That is, even when the worst possible things happen to us (and they will happen), recognize that God is aware and in control; so it falls to us to persevere and trust despite the terrible circumstances we are enduring.

Suddenly in verse 11 a second beast appears: the Land Beast. Whereas the first beast

emerged from the sea, the second one emerges up and out of the earth... the soil. In Greek the word translated as land or soil is **ge** and it means solid land as opposed to the watery seas. Some scholars think that this is attempting to translate the Hebrew word **eretz**, which indeed also means "land". However in the Bible, especially after the time of the exodus when Israel seized the Land of Canaan, **eretz** became a term that meant "**the** land", specifically meaning the place where God's people lives. If that's the case, then this verse is saying that out of the land of Israel will arise the Land Beast. While that is not impossible, such an interpretation involves considerably more speculation than evidence. Rather the normal and usual use of the words "land" or "earth" fit much better with the theme of Satan mimicking the Mighty Angel's symbolic assertion from Revelation 10 (by putting one foot on the land and the other on the sea) that God is sovereign over all parts of the globe. This is because Satan has now brought forth a beast from the sea and another from the land and both take their orders from him for the purpose of trying to retain Satan's sovereignty over the earth even though God has removed that from him. Michael's war against Satan and his victory over him in Heaven has now moved to planet Earth.

We are told that this Land Beast had two horns "like **a** lamb"..... not "like **the** lamb". That is, the Greek definite article "**ton**", which means "the" is not there. It would seem that this lamb is not the same as "the Lamb that was slain" (Christ) but rather is merely "like" a generic lamb as regards its horns. The reason that this point is important to ponder is because some Early Church Fathers and several modern Bible scholars believe that it is the Land Beast that is the Anti-Christ (and not the Sea Beast) because the two little horns like a lamb indicate that Satan is mimicking Christ. I find this doubtful. Rather it is more likely that this beast with the 2 horns that speaks like a dragon depends up Daniel chapter 8.

CJB Daniel 8:3-4 ³ *I looked up; and as I watched, there in front of the stream stood a ram with two horns. The horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up later [than the other].* ⁴ *I saw the ram pushing to the west, north and south; and no animals could stand up against it; nor was there anyone that could rescue from its power. So it did as it pleased and became very strong.*

The Land Beast is subservient to the Sea Beast, and the Sea Beast is subservient to the Dragon. Revelation 13:12 explains that the Land Beast gets its authority from the Sea Beast (whereas the Sea Beast gets its authority from the Dragon). And the Land Beast uses his authority to force the earth's inhabitants to worship his boss, the Sea Beast. This Land Beast is better known in Christian circles as the False Prophet (and this is correct) and clearly the Land Beast operates under the control of the Sea Beast. Thus just as the true prophet John the Baptist announced the coming of the true Messiah, Yeshua, so does the False Prophet (the Land Beast) deceptively announce the Sea Beast (the Anti-Christ) as a Messiah. However we should not take the John the Baptist versus the Land Beast/False Prophet comparison too far. The Baptist did not receive His authority from Christ nor did he entice people to worship Yeshua.

This Land Beast/False Prophet performs great signs and miracles, and these great miracles convince people that he is authentic. Biblically speaking, a Prophet's credentials were established only when he performed miracles. Signs and miracles were the proof God's people

needed in order to believe that he was genuinely sent from God. So, using the power that came to him second-hand from Satan, the Land Beast of course performed miracles to establish his own credentials. These miracles convince pagans and the Believers who are weak in covenant faith not only that the Land Beast is a true prophet but also that the one he glorifies, the Sea Beast, is a true Messiah. This connects us back to verse 8 when we are told that everyone living on earth will worship the Beast (meaning the Sea Beast that is also the Anti-Christ) except for those written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And those who are written in the Book of Life are defined as those who do not act wickedly against the covenant.

Even more, the Land Beast (as False Prophet) will tell the world that an image of the Sea Beast as the Messiah should be built and honored. Once built, the Land Beast will use its satanic power to make the image come alive to the point that it can speak. Upon this mind boggling happening that no doubt will be broadcast worldwide, who among men could argue against the reality of the other-worldly power and abilities of the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet? Clearly those deniers who refuse to worship the image would likely fall mostly into one category: true, knowledgeable, devoted Believers that see through this fraud and know that this is Satan's doing. Naturally, a Believer in the God of the Bible could not possibly bow down to a talking image no matter the personal cost. And so according to verse 15, those who refuse to worship the talking image will be executed. From a practical viewpoint, how would the Anti-Christ and his henchmen know who among the several billion people still alive on our planet refuses to bow down to the talking image?

Peer pressure, political correctness, and a mob mindset are powerful forces (especially when fear and self preservation are at stake) and are nothing new to humanity. Nearly every generation and culture has examples of it in action. While many examples past and present are available for me to use, perhaps the easiest one in our time to compare with the End Times insistence that all humans worship the image of the Beast or die is the nearly global climate change hysteria (I'm not debating or commenting on whether climate change does or does not exist). Those who subscribe to whatever is the current belief about the existence, extent, cause, and ultimate effects of climate change have coined a name for those who are skeptical of, or reject, some or all of their beliefs: they are deemed "deniers". And in the climate change adherents' minds a denier is a dirty name akin to being labeled a traitor to mankind.

Today there are serious calls in Europe and in the USA for climate change denial to be classified as a crime against humanity. Therefore those judged as deniers would become criminals and prosecuted. I am not taking sides on this issue; rather I am saying that is not unusual that when a perceived danger erupts and a large, vocal and determined number of people decide that everyone must join them and all who won't are worthy only of scorn (or worse), precious few will resist because keeping their friends, reputations, fortunes and mortal lives are important to them. So it is not a major leap to see just how easy it is going to be for the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet to force all humans to bow down to the image or for them to ferret out the deniers (who will consist mostly of Believers in Christ). The image deniers' neighbors, maybe even members of their own families, will turn them in as a civic duty. We only have to look back a few decades to Hitler's Germany to see this very thing happen with the full belief of many German Christians that obeying Hitler's agenda was the right and righteous thing to do for the sake of their country if not for the world.

Then verse 16 brings up one of the most well known apocryphal scenarios of modern times: the mark of the Beast. The words of the scripture passage are quite clear that the evil trio of the Dragon, the Sea Beast and the Land Beast (also known as Satan, the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet), will put into place, worldwide, a requirement that a special mark be placed on every person's right hand or on his forehead otherwise that person may not buy or sell. The mantra among Western Christians today is that the technology that finally exists in the 21st century could make something like this completely possible. But in fact, marking people to control them in various ways is ancient practice. In the Roman era, soldiers were branded usually on their hands. Slaves were branded as well. In the reign of Decius, the Roman Emperor in 250 A.D., every man had to present a certificate that he had sacrificed to Caesar or he could not earn a living, even facing prison or death.

So in modern times naturally modern technologies could be employed to control buying and selling on a near global basis. I'm not going to get into all the speculations of how it could be done because they are endless. I will say, however, that the first step for government to strictly control financial transactions is to end the use of cash. And in fact the use of cash is on its way out in all the major world economies. Sweden is very nearly a cashless society; you can't buy so little as a pastry with cash. Merchants no longer have cash drawers nor do they keep cash on hand. None of the major banks handle cash any longer. If one is so unfortunate as to have cash you need to deposit, you pay a fee for the privilege. Therefore all monetary transactions are digital and accomplished with cards, pin numbers and passwords. This means that the robbery of money from stores, persons, and banks is a thing of the past. It means that illegal transactions for drugs is nearly impossible. But it also means that every purchase you make right down to a stick of gum is tracked. Every penny you earn is instantly recorded. Therefore it becomes nearly impossible for the average person to avoid paying taxes (which of course delights the government). But it also means that you can have your ability to buy or sell cut off immediately with only a few key strokes at a government computer for whatever reason they deem justifiable. What I'm telling you is not science fiction; it is the way it is today in Sweden and elements of their cashless society are spreading because every government desires to have the nearly unlimited control of their citizens' finances and the flow of money that the Swedish government now has.

So this question, then, must be asked: in ancient times a brand or a mark on the body was needed to identify and control people; but today it is not. Finger prints, facial recognition, and retinal scans are so easy and common that some Smartphones now have that ability built in. So why must a person in the End Times have a mark on their hand or forehead? Because basically it is a blasphemous counterfeit of the marking on the forehead of the 144,000 witnesses for God that we found in Revelation chapter 7. But it also mocks the most important and fundamental commandment of God found in the Torah, such that it has been given it's own title: the **Shema**.

^{CJB}Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ⁴ "*Sh'ma, Yisra'el! ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, Isra'el! ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one];* ⁵ *and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources.*

⁶ *These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart;* ⁷ *and you are to*

teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

⁸ Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead,

⁹ and write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates.

I hope you see after all that we have discussed today why it is so critical that Believers set aside erroneous Church doctrines that belittle the Torah and deny what Christ so emphatically said in Matthew 5: that He did NOT come to abolish the Law of Moses. Revelation 13 cannot be properly understood if one doesn't know the Torah and the Prophets. The puzzle of the End Times cannot be pieced together without knowledge of the Old Testament in its Hebrew context and without taking seriously God's eternal commandments. And as this chapter reveals, countless Believers at the End of Days who think they know what to expect are going to be befuddled and confused when the Dragon begins his dirty work and the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet emerge because these Believers will have been fed nonsensical doctrines and traditions while being told that God's Word prior to the Book of Matthew has no value or meaning for them. If you are one of these Believers, repent and open your Bibles to the Book of Genesis and start reading. Believe what you read and especially believe that it is for you, today, just as it was for God's chosen people 3000 years ago.