

## Revelation Chapter 13 Handout

*The war on God's people has begun. The war will be to seduce the entire world in order to have them turn to the dark side. Those on the dark side then will ultimately work with the beast to kill the saints. This will be an epic struggle. The beast has been said be the anti-Christ, Rome, the Papacy and any number of other theological heresies. Each claim has some who defend it and some who argue against it. Some argue that it is a single person who will come and deceive the world and others claim that it is a present reality (always present) that tries to deceive... the present reality of Satan. One other option is to look at the dragon and the two other beasts as an un-holy Trinity. In other words each of the beasts in some ways tries to imitate one person of the Trinity. In this way it makes it very difficult for the faithful and for those in the world to tell the difference between good and evil.*

1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority.

*Beast* - the Greek word is for a wild beast.

*Rising out the sea* - the beast comes out of the chaos that has always threatened God's people. If it is let loose in the world then all is lost. Only God can hold it back. But now the chaos is taking form to try and overcome God's people.

*Ten horns and seven heads* - there have been attempts to identify the seven heads or ten horns with political realities... some including coming into today. However this ought to be resisted because John is focused here on theological deception... who is the real God? Thus any political or religious entity over time could qualify.

*Were blasphemous names* - the beast is challenging God by defying the first commandment. This is an attempt to replace the name of God with other names... names of other gods. So whoever exalts itself over God (such as the Roman emperors) embodies the spirit of the beast.

*Like a leopard* - while some of this may remind people of particular uniforms or nations, depending on the animal, this could also be another way of saying it is unnatural. It is nothing that the good creator God would have made.

*Dragon gave* - here we begin to see the similarities between the Trinity and the un-holy trinity. God gave his throne and his power to Jesus. Jesus also has been given great authority. So here the dragon is trying to create an imitation Jesus.

3 One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed. In amazement the whole earth followed the beast. 4 They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

*Received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed – again we see the movement of John to help us see that the beast is an imitation of the Christ. Just as Jesus has died and been resurrected by God, in the same way the beast has a “fatal” wound that has been healed. He is able to impress the world with this mark.*

*The whole earth followed the beast – this is what should have happened to Jesus but did not.*

*They worshipped the dragon – worship was only for God and the lamb that was slain. Their imitation is working because it seemed so much like the real thing.*

*Who is like the beast? – this is the prime question. This is the give away. Those who are in the know, those to whom God has revealed the plan in this book know the answer. We know that there is a reality in the world which is more than the beast.*

*Who can fight against it? – this is the question. The myth has become that the beast is untouchable. Much as Rome at that time was untouchable.*

5 The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation, 8 and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered.

*Given a mouth – the beast is allowed to speak to the people in such a way that it appears to be impervious to God and to the lamb. It “is allowed” to exercise authority meaning that God is still holding back the beast.*

*Forty two months – this is a limited period of time. This will not go on forever.*

*Allowed to make war on the saints – thus even the people of God are being persecuted. Some will fall to their deaths. This does not mean they will lose their souls but that they will lose their lives.*

*Foundation of the world – there are two ways to take how this is used. The first is that it stands with “whose names have been written.” This implies that there are some who are chosen from the very beginning to believe... the elect of Calvin. The second way ties it to “that was slaughtered.” This means that Jesus is the one from the foundation of the world. The Greek grammar and word order could swing either way. It would be troubling that the former use is in mind since the rest of Revelation seems to imply that our actions and choices are tied in with our salvation.*

9 Let anyone who has an ear listen:

10 If you are to be taken captive,  
into captivity you go;

if you kill with the sword,

with the sword you must be killed.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

*Let anyone who has an ear – this is the only time in the book other than in the letters to the seven churches that this language is used.*

*If you are taken captive – this is a real possibility. True believers can indeed go into prison and die. So if you are taken captive then go with your captors.*

*If you kill – followers of Jesus were not to take up the sword in their defense like the Zealots and Essenes who believed in trying to defeat the Roman Empire through violent means. If you kill them then they will surely kill you.*

*Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints – this is the theme of this entire chapter. In the face of great and overwhelming evil, the saints are to remain faithful to their Lord.*

11 Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed.

*Another beast – this is the land beast. We have the dragon, the sea beast and the land beast. This beast will later be called the false prophet. The two horns may remind us of Jesus words to watch out for false prophets that come like wolves in sheep's clothing. It could also be the Holy Spirit which is Christ alive within the world.*

*Exercises authority – The land beast makes people worship the first beast... just as the Holy Spirit makes people worship Jesus Christ. It does not point to itself but to another and yet also exercises authority.*

13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; 15 and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

*Performs great signs – again the nature of the Holy Spirit is that it performs great miracles... healings, etc.*

*Even making fire to come down – fire is the nature of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.*

*Make an image – we are moving into violating more and more commandments. This is what people want to do... make images and so the earth beast allows them to do so.*

*Give breath – again the work of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God gives life. Here the beast appears to give life to an image.*

*Cause those who would not worship the beast to be killed – this recalls the prophets of God who could call down fire from heaven on false prophets.*

16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark,

that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

*Also it causes all – no one can escape the tentacles of the beast. It will reach itself into every aspect of society.*

*Marked – this is mark of ownership. God's people have a mark of ownership and now the beast's people have a mark of ownership. The deception is now about complete.*

*Right hand or forehead – these were the two places where the Babylonian Talmud does not allow Jews to wear their tephillin (prayer scrolls). So these would be places the beast could use and not find a mark of God.*

*Cannot buy or sell – life will become very difficult without the mark of the beast. We see this in the seven churches that are struggling to survive poverty imposed not being willing to acknowledge Caesar as Lord.*

*Six hundred sixty-six – there have been far too many books, articles and commentaries written on this number since John first penned it. If we go with the way that John usually uses numbers (not the Hebraic way of using them to spell words) 666 is almost 777. In other words if the beast and his friends are trying to imitate God, they come up just short.*