

# *Revelation*

## *Lesson #11*

### *The Two Beasts*

*(13: 1-18)*

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# Review

Lesson #10 introduced a flashback to a time before Genesis 1: 1, giving us context for the story that we are reading. Chapter 12 opened with a great sign appearing in the sky: *“A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth”* (12: 1). And then a huge red dragon appeared in the sky, seeking to devour the child!

War broke out in heaven, the dragon leading his minions and the archangel Michael leading God’s army of angels. Michael and his army defeated the dragon and his crew, casting them down to earth, where the dragon vowed revenge. He hunted the woman who had fled with her child, to devour him and those who followed him.

For John Milton this is the epic grist for *Paradise Lost*. In Lesson #10 we examined the war in heaven, drawing on *Paradise Lost* and William Blake’s watercolor illustrations.

# Preview

In Lesson #11 we meet two beasts, one who comes *“out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its heads were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous names”* (13: 1). In contrast to the many “antichrists” we hear John speak of in his correspondence, this is the Antichrist, the arch-deceiver and the minion of Satan. Accompanying him is a second beast, the “false prophet” who *“had two horns like a lamb’s but spoke like a dragon. It wielded all the authority of the first beast in its sight and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast”* (13: 12); this is the False Prophet.

Combined, Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet comprise a grotesque parody of the Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

And they prepare to do battle for the very soul of humanity.



**As we ended Lesson #10, the dragon stood, feet planted firmly “on the sand of the sea” (12: 18), breathing out murderous threats against the woman clothed with the sun and against her offspring, the followers of Christ, the Church.**

**As we had a flashback to the war in heaven in Lesson #10, so now we set the stage for the battle of Armageddon in Lesson #11, first meeting two of God’s enemies. Here, the dragon calls forth two beasts, one from out of the sea and one from out of the earth: the Antichrist and the False Prophet.**

“Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear’s, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, ‘Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?’”

(13: 1-4)

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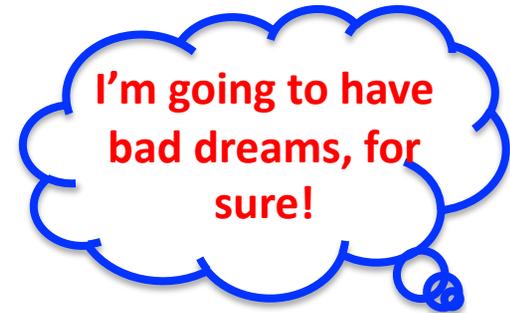


William Blake. *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea* (watercolor, ink and graphite on paper), c. 1805. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C..

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That's a mighty  
scary figure!



I'm going to have  
bad dreams, for  
sure!

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## Some points to remember as we examine the two beasts:



- We've already identified the dragon as *"the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world"* (12: 9).
- We also learned that the dragon, or Satan, was *"the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made"* (Genesis 3: 1): Satan is—like all angels and humans—a created being, unlike God who had no beginning and who has no end.
- We learned, as well, that out of pathological hubris, Satan wanted to be God; he wanted to sit upon God's throne and reign over all. Rallying a third of heaven's angels to his cause, he waged war against God; he was defeated; and he and his crew were *"hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky"* (*Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 45).
- "Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate"* (*Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 58), Satan vowed revenge, resolving to seduce the "puny habitants" of God's new creation, cajoling them to his side, reigning over them and ultimately destroying them: sweet vengeance against God.



Make no mistake, Satan knew God, and he knew the triune nature of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, in his attempt to be God and to rule over God's new creation, like a mad, psychotic wizard, Satan crafts a grotesque, distorted parody of the Trinity—a self-image—with himself as father; the antichrist as son and the false prophet as holy spirit.

Although defeated in heaven, Satan launches a new offensive against God on earth, and he vows to win this new war, with the souls of all humanity as the prize, transforming God's creation into a living hell, with himself as king.

“Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear’s, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, ‘Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?’”

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- Satan summons a terrifying beast to attack God's people. The word "beast" is θηρίον [thay-ree'-on], and it is a neuter noun, properly referred to as an "it, not a "he" or "she."
- In ancient Near Eastern literature "the sea" represents chaos, the primal soup, the habitation of Leviathan, the "coiled serpent," the "dragon in the sea" (Isaiah 27: 1). It is a fearful place, and here the beast with ten horns and seven heads (closely resembling its master, Satan, in appearance), comes out of the sea. The Greek word is ἀναβαίνω [a-na-bye'-no], and it pictures "rising up," "climbing," or "emerging": in your mind's eye imagine a huge, grotesque hydra-headed monster, rising from the roiling sea, fangs barred and snapping, drool and slime oozing from its gaping maw, spewing blasphemies.

“Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear’s, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, ‘Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?’”

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## This recalls another of Daniel's visions:

*"In the vision I saw during the night, suddenly the four winds of heaven stirred up the great sea, from which emerged four immense beasts, each different from the others. The first was like a lion, but with eagle's wings. While I watched, the wings were plucked; it was raised from the ground to stand on two feet like a human being, and given a human mind.*

*The second beast was like a bear; it was raised up on one side, and among the teeth in its mouth were three tusks. It was given an order, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'*

*After this I looked and saw another beast, like a leopard; on its back were four wings like those of a bird, and it had four heads. To this beast dominion was given.*

*After this, in the visions of the night I saw a fourth beast, terrifying, horrible, and of extraordinary strength; it had great iron teeth with which it devoured and crushed, and it trampled with its feet what was left. It differed from the beasts that preceded it. It had ten horns."*

(7: 2-7)

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**Although John's beast draws heavily upon the imagery in Daniel's vision, it is not an exact parallel; rather, John's beast is meant to be a composite that embodies all of history's demonic and human opposition against God, all rolled up into one horrendous, frightening and terrifying image.**



***La Bête de la Mer* [“The Beast of the Sea”] (tapestry), c. 1377-1382.**

**Chateau d’Angers, Angers, France.**

[The *Apocalypse Tapestry* consists of 90 different scenes from Revelation in 6 sections, each 78 feet wide and 20 feet high. It was lost during the French Revolution, but found and restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only 71 of the original 90 scenes still exist.]

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Recall that in Daniel the “Ancient of Days” gives “power” and “authority” to the “Son of Man,” a scene that we have noted several times in our previous studies, for Jesus identifies himself as this very figure from Daniel, calling himself “Son of Man” throughout the synoptic gospels:

*“As the visions during the night continued, I saw coming with the clouds of heaven—*

*One like a son of man,  
When he reached the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him,  
He received dominion, splendor, and kingship;  
all nations, peoples and tongues will serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not pass away,  
his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed.*

(7: 13-14)



**John's gospel reaffirms this delegation to Jesus of God's power and authority:**

***"The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him."***

**(3: 35)**

***"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."***

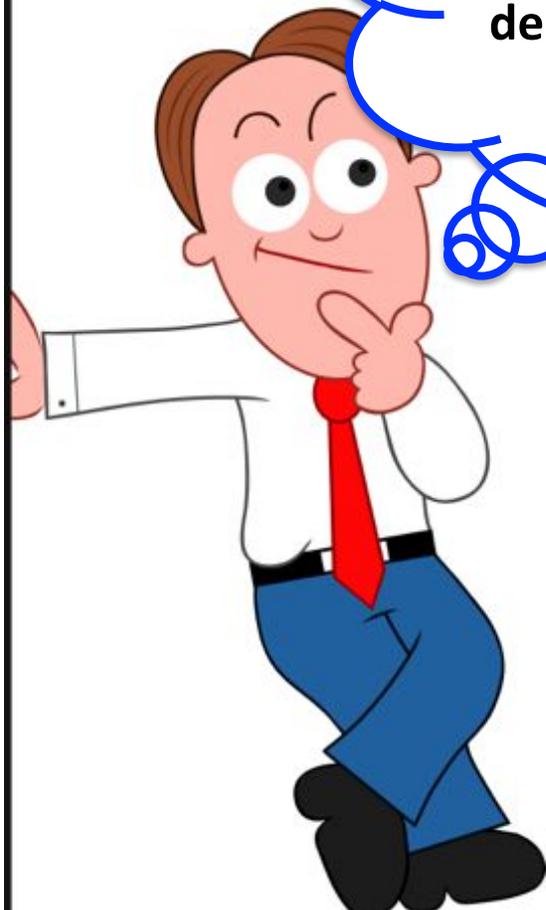
**(5: 21-23)**



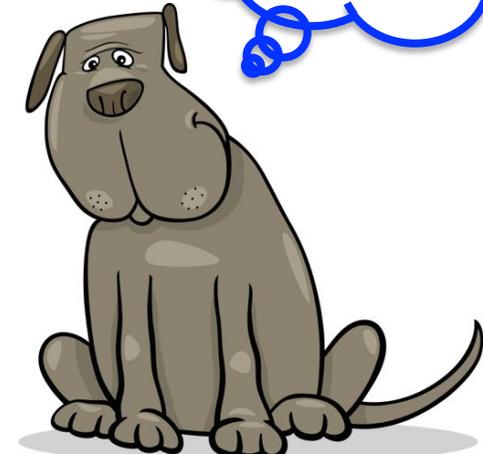
And the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Church understood this delegation of God's power and authority to Jesus, as is evidenced by St. Paul in his epistle to the church at Philippi:

*“Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

(2: 9-11)



So, it's not surprising then that the dragon, Satan, delegates his own power and authority to the first beast, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of his infernal trinity, just as God delegated his authority to Christ, 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the authentic Trinity.



That's creepy!

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“Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear’s, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, ‘Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?’”

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Nor is it surprising that one of the heads of the beast appeared to have been mortally wounded. The Greek word is σφάζω [sfah'-zo], "to butcher" or "to slay violently," the same word used of the Lamb in 5: 6 who "seemed to have been slain [σφάζω]."

As Christ was slain on the cross and then raised from the dead, so it appears that the beast had received a mortal wound ["had been slain," the past perfect tense], but had been raised, as well.

The parallels between the two are explicit . . . and chilling.

“Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear’s, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, ‘Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?’”

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**“Worshipping the Beast,” *Apocalypse with Commentary in French Prose* (fragment) (illuminated manuscript, Add MS 38842, fol. 5r), early 14<sup>th</sup> century. British Library, London.**

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The crowds are fascinated by the beast. The Greek word is θαυμάζω [thau-mah'-zoh], “marveled” or were “filled with wonder,” a word often used of the crowd’s reaction to Jesus in the synoptic gospels.

And that “marveling” led people to worship both the dragon—who had delegated his power and authority to the beast—and the beast himself.

Watching Satan’s grotesque parody of the Trinity take shape is, indeed, fascinating . . . much like watching in slow motion a violent train crash!



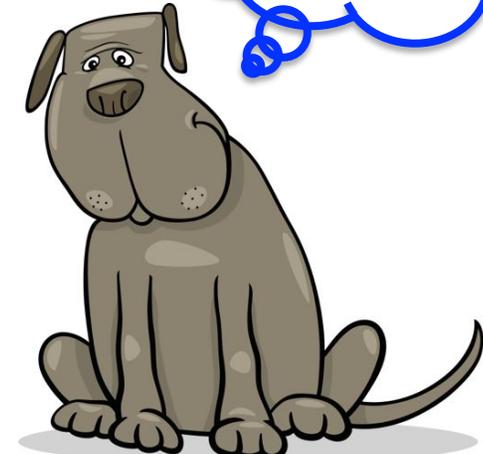
In the apocalyptic genre, the beast represents the end-time adversary of God and his people, all the forces of evil and demonic power, rolled up and personified in one character.

In Christian writing this character became known as the “Antichrist” [ἀντίχριστος, “an-tee’-khre-stos”]. John used the *general* term “antichrist”, in 1 John 2: 18, 22; 4: 3; and 2 John 7, where he groups the “antichrists” with the “deceivers” [πλάνος, “plah’-nos”], those who, like Diotrephese, lead people astray by their false teaching.

But here we meet *the* Antichrist, 2<sup>nd</sup> person of Satan’s infernal trinity. No doubt, John’s readers would view this person as the embodiment of the Roman Empire, perhaps even of the Emperor himself.



With such imagery we can well understand the people saying, *“Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it”* (13: 4)?



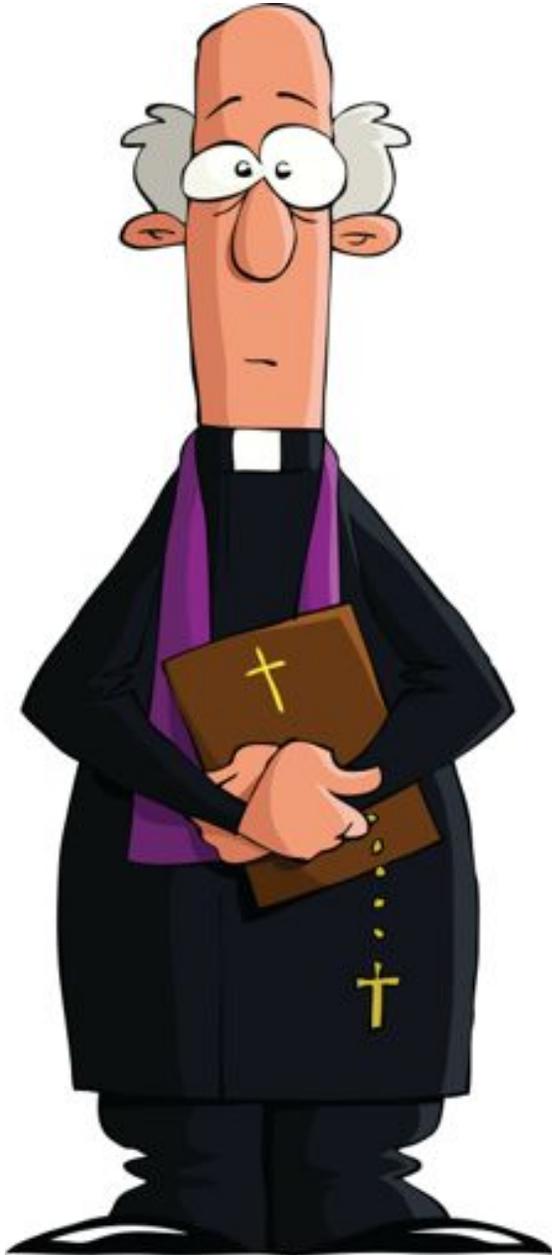
I'd bite him!

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“The beast was given a mouth uttering proud boasts and blasphemies, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling and those who dwell in heaven. It was also allowed to wage war against the holy ones and conquer them, and it was granted authority over every tribe, people, tongue, and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship it, all whose names were not written in the book of life, which belongs to the Lamb who was slain. Whoever has ears ought to hear these words. Anyone destined for captivity goes into captivity. Anyone destined to be slain by the sword shall be slain by the sword. Such is the faithful endurance of the holy ones.”

(13: 5-10)

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The fact that the beast utters blasphemies, suggests that he makes overt claims to being divine, to being the object of worship.

According to the historian Suetonius, the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) believed that the Empire should be a divine monarchy, not a Republic, proclaiming himself *dominus et deus*, (“Lord and God”), moving the center of government to the imperial court, rendering the Roman Senate impotent and expelling those senators whom he deemed troublesome.<sup>1</sup>

Trajan (A.D. 98-117) followed Domitian, and as we learned in Lesson #4, Pergamum, the third of the seven churches of Revelation, became an Asian center of the Imperial Roman cult, boasting the beautiful Temple of Trajan on its acropolis.

<sup>1</sup> E.P. Janzen offers numismatic evidence for Domitian’s claims of divinity, citing coins struck during Domitian’s reign that refer to him as “divine Caesar.” “The Jesus of the Apocalypse Wears the Emperor’s Clothes.” In *SBL 1994 Seminar Papers*, ed. by E.H. Lovering Jr., 637-661. Atlanta: Scholar’s Press.



**Approaching the Acropolis of Pergamum from the lush plain below.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

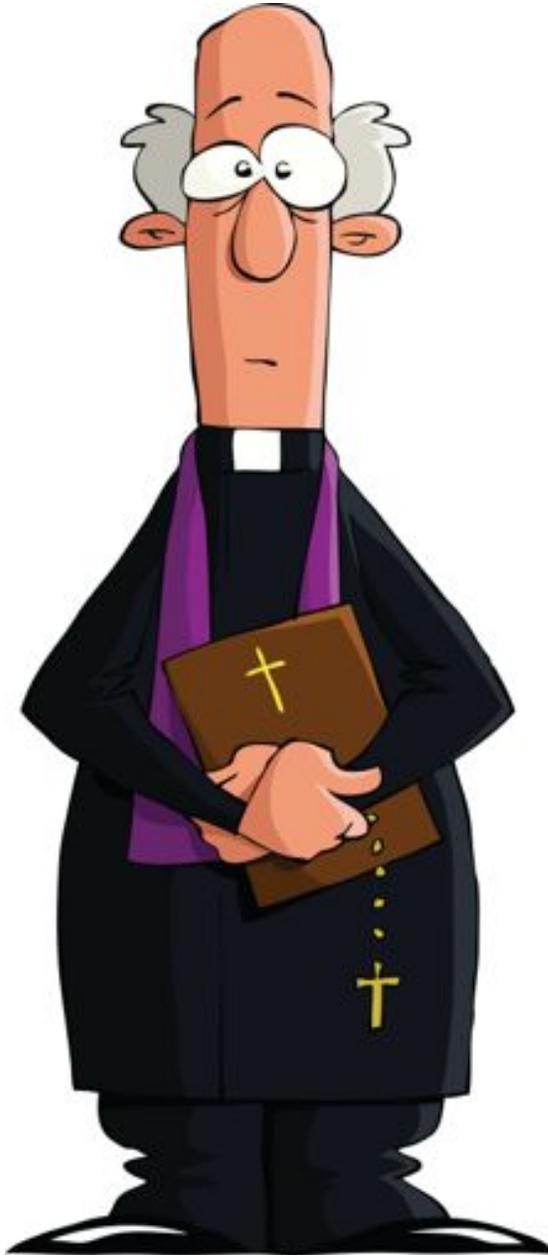
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**The Temple of Trajan attests to the strength of the Roman imperial cult in the city.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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## Here's what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about the Antichrist:

*“Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the ‘mystery of iniquity’ in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.*

*The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment.”*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 575-576*

“Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb’s but spoke like a dragon. It wielded all the authority of the first beast in its sight and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. It performed great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. It deceived the inhabitants of the earth with the signs it was allowed to perform in the sight of the first beast, telling them to make an image for the beast who had been wounded by the sword and revived.”

(13: 11-14)



**The first beast, the Antichrist that arises from the sea, wields political power, while the second beast, the False Prophet that emerges from the land, wields religious power.**

**Combined, Satan's grotesque parody of the Trinity is complete:**

**Satan = Father**  
**Antichrist = Son**  
**False Prophet = Holy Spirit**

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(13: 11-14)



**Having two horns, the False Prophet has the faux appearance of a lamb, but its words reveal its true character: it spoke like a dragon, like Satan himself. The False Prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing.**

**Recall Jesus' warning:**

***"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves."***

**(Matthew 7: 15)**



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(13: 11-14)



The False Prophet wielded all the authority of the Antichrist, and it made the earth and all its inhabitants worship the Antichrist. The Greek word “made” is ποιέω [poi-eh’-o], a word widely used, but here in the sense of “influenced” or “convinced.”

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(13: 11-14)

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The False Prophet performed great miracles, even making fire come down from heaven, as Elijah did on Mt. Carmel in his duel with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18.

Again, we should remember Jesus' warning in the Olivet Discourse:

*"If anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect."*

(Matthew 24: 23-24)

The False Prophet in Revelation goes so far as to make a physical image of the Antichrist, an image to be worshiped.

“It was permitted to breathe life into the beast’s image, so that the beast’s image could speak and [could] have anyone who did not worship it put to death. It forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to be given a stamped image on their right hands or their foreheads, so that no one could buy or sell except one who had the stamped image of the beast’s name or the number that stood for its name. Wisdom is needed here; one who understands can calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number that stands for a person. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

(13: 15-18)

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(13: 15-18)



**Holy cow!  
A talking statue!**



**We are told in 1 Maccabees that “*On the fifteenth day of the month of Kislev in the year one hundred and forty-five [December 6, 176 B.C.] the king erected the desolating abomination upon the altar of burnt offerings*”(1: 54).**

**Daniel makes reference to the same event, in Daniel 12: 11. At that time Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Temple by setting up a statue of Zeus at the altar of burnt offering, in part triggering the Maccabean Revolt of 167-160 B.C.**

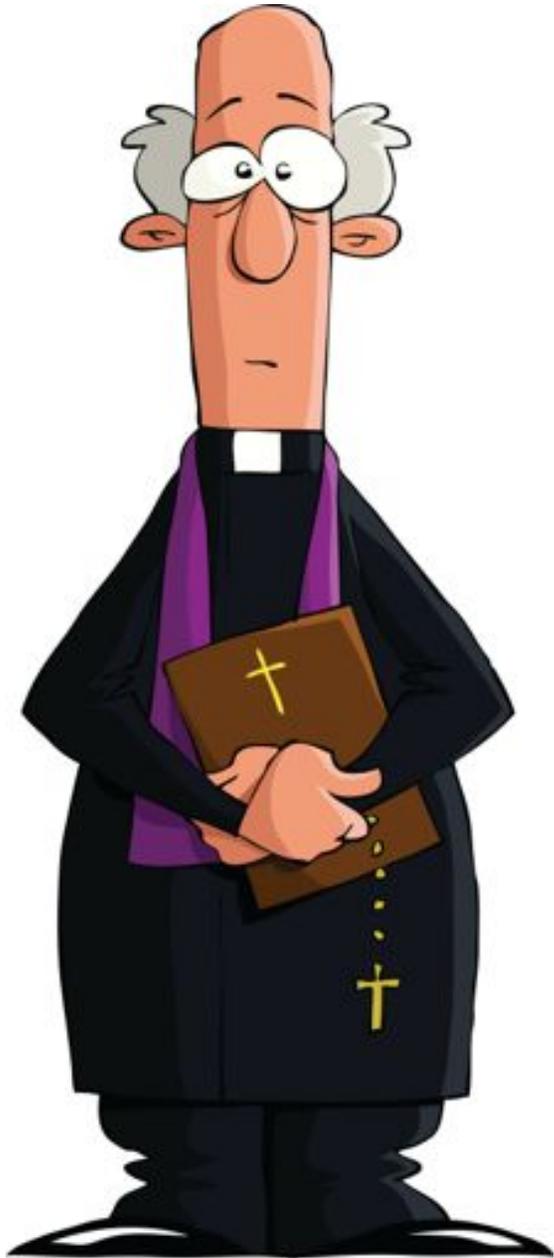


**In his day, Jesus warns:**

***“When you see the desolating abomination spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place . . . then those in Judea must flee to the mountains . . .”***

**(Matthew 24: 15-16)**

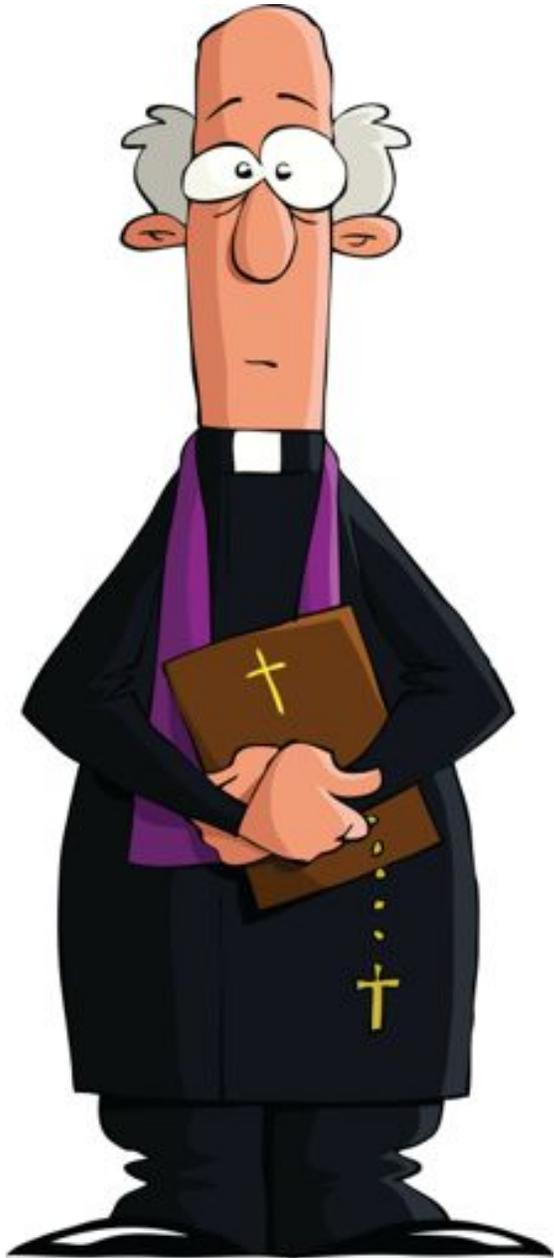
**For when this happens, Jesus says, all hell is about to break loose; it is the beginning of the “great tribulation,” the three and one half years portrayed in Revelation 6-19.**



It was common in ancient times for divine statues to “speak,” either through rather cryptic “signs,” such as patterns of birds in flight, or through the mouth of a prophet or oracle.

The Pythia (or “oracle”) at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi is one such example. It was the most famous oracle of the ancient world, consulted by thousands since the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. through the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. A supplicant would journey to Delphi, make preparation by purifying himself and making offerings to Apollo, visit the oracle, receive an answer given by the Pythia (the priestess of Apollo, who spoke from behind a veil), and then return home.

Cicero notes that no expedition was undertaken, no colony sent out, and no affair of any distinguished individual was undertaken without first consulting the oracle at Delphi.



**The Oracle of Delphi was the most well-known, prestigious oracular site in the ancient world, mentioned by such luminaries as: Aeschylus, Aristotle, Clement of Alexandria, Diodorus, Diogenes, Euripides, Herodotus, Livy, Ovid, Pindar, Plato, Plutarch, Sophocles, Strabo, Thucydides and Xenophon.**

**The early Church Fathers, unable to explain the efficacy of the Oracle, attributed its function to Satanic forces, demons who spoke through the mouth of the pagan Pythian priestess.**

**The image of the Antichrist crafted and placed in the Temple by the False Prophet—an image that speaks—reflects this line of thinking.**



**Remains of the Temple of Apollo on the slopes of the Parnassos mountains in Greece. The Temple was active for over 1,000 years, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. through the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*  
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**Dr. Creasy and his intrepid Logos students pause for a group photo at the Temple's entrance.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*  
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“It was permitted to breathe life into the beast’s image, so that the beast’s image could speak and [could] have anyone who did not worship it put to death. It forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to be given a stamped image on their right hands or their foreheads, so that no one could buy or sell except one who had the stamped image of the beast’s name or the number that stood for its name. Wisdom is needed here; one who understands can calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number that stands for a person. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

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William Blake. *The Number of the Beast is 666* (watercolor, ink and graphite on paper), c. 1805.  
Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia.

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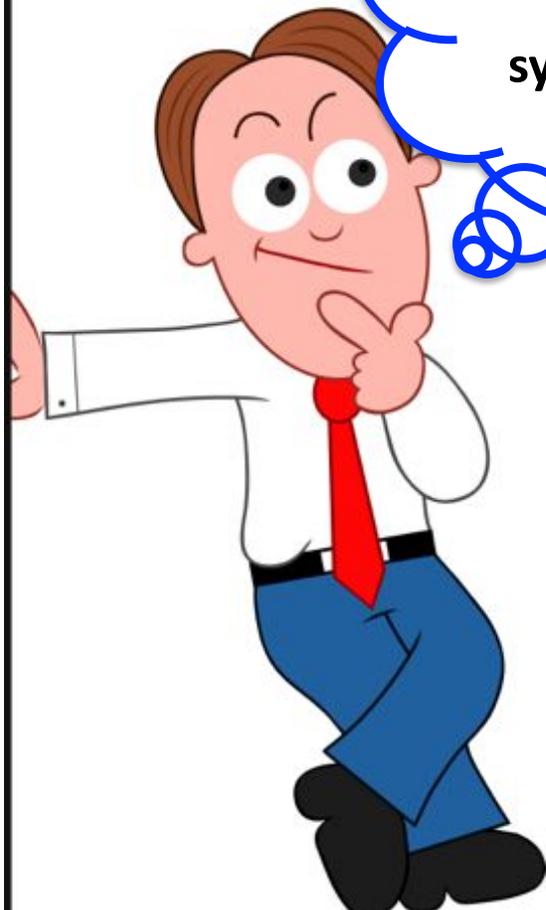


**The number of the beast has caused more speculation than any other topic in Revelation, and perhaps more than any other topic in all of Scripture!**

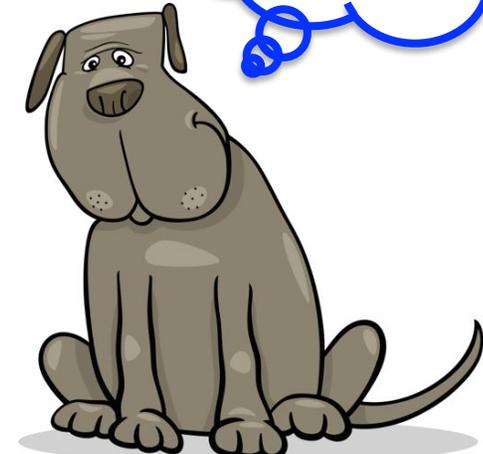
**We are told that “*wisdom is needed here*” (14: 18), and indeed it is, if we’re to avoid much of the silliness that accompanies the number.**

**At the most basic level of biblical symbolism, 7 is the number of completion and perfection; thus, 6 is the number of incompleteness and imperfection, a number that falls haltingly short of perfection.**

**If we understand that Satan has constructed a grotesque parody of the Trinity, with himself, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, then we can understand the number 666 as representing this incomplete, flawed attempt: a set of three sixs.**

A cartoon illustration of a man with brown hair, wearing a white shirt, a red tie, and blue pants. He is leaning against a vertical line on the left, with his hand on his chin in a thinking pose. A large blue thought bubble is connected to his head.

But didn't the text say that  
666 *"is a number that stands  
for a person"* (14: 18)? I  
understand the 666  
symbolism, but who is the  
person?

A cartoon illustration of a grey dog sitting down, looking towards the man. A smaller blue thought bubble is connected to the dog's head.

Very good  
question!

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**Bust of Nero (marble), 17<sup>th</sup> century.  
Capitoline Museum, Rome.**

**In both Hebrew and Greek, each letter of the alphabet has a corresponding numerical value; thus, summing the numerical values gives a number to a word or a name.**

**So, whose name might total the number 666?**

**When the Greek word for “beast” [θηρίον, thay-ree’on] is transliterated into Hebrew, the numerical value of the letters is 666. Likewise, when the Greek version of the Emperor Nero’s name is transliterated into Hebrew [Nron Qsr] the numerical value of the letters is also 666.**

**In the eyes of the early Church, the Emperor Nero, who reigned from A.D. 54-68 and initiated the first state-sponsored persecution against the Church, A.D. 64-68, was the very embodiment of the “beast.” Although written in the 90s during the persecution under Domitian, Nero’s reputation cast a long shadow, and his name became a code word for the Antichrist, himself.**



**When President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, left the White House in 1989, they moved to 666 St. Cloud Road in Los Angeles' ritzy Bel Air neighborhood.**

**Notoriously superstitious, Nancy Reagan had the address changed to 668 St. Cloud Road before they actually moved in.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Laurie Beckland [Times Staff Writer]. "Reagans Easing into Private Life as Californians," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1988. An irrational fear of the number 666 is called *hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia*. Try pronouncing that one!

# Questions for discussion and thought

1. Who is the first beast that rises out of the water?
2. Why does Satan delegate power and authority to the first beast?
3. Who is the second beast, and what is its function?
4. Why would the people of the earth worship the first beast?
5. If the second beast is so evil, how can it perform miracles?

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