

Revelation 13:10–18

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

The Patience and Faith of the Saints — Against the Fury of the Beast

Verse 10 closes the section on the first beast with a word to the saints of that day: *here is the patience and the faith of the saints*. Darby renders it endurance. The endurance required is not passive resignation but active trust in God — the faith that believes He has said *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*, and is content to leave the reaping to Him. The beast who kills with the sword will be killed with the sword. The beast who leads into captivity will go into captivity.

God is not mocked.

The contrast is vivid: against the fury of the first beast, who has power and throne and authority from Satan, who makes war on the saints and overcomes them — what stands on the other side is patience and faith. To the world this looks like nothing. But these two qualities belong to those who are separated unto God, and in God's sight they are everything. David in the days of Saul is the great Old Testament picture of this: patient, faithful, refusing to take the kingdom by his own hand even when opportunity offered, waiting for God to act in His own time.

The Slain Lamb and the Book of Life — The Broad Reach of Redemption

The book of life belongs to the slain Lamb. This connects the judgments of Revelation 13 directly with the one who stands in the midst of the throne in Revelation 5 — a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes. In Revelation 4, God is worshipped as Creator, the one who has creatorial rights over all His creation. In Revelation 5, the slain Lamb comes forward as the Redeemer, the one who has purchased by His blood the right to open the sealed book of judgment.

The blood of the Lamb has a very broad scope. The death of Christ provides specifically for Israel as a nation — Caiaphas prophesied it, though not knowing what he said (John 11). The deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; all Israel shall be saved; they shall all be righteous (Isaiah 60:21). The death of Christ covers that national provision. It also covers the Gentiles who come out of the great tribulation and wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). And it covers the redemption of the entire creation. There is no blessing for any soul, Jew or Gentile, in any age, apart from the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Second Beast — Director of the False Worship

The destruction of the harlot — the apostate church riding the beast during the first half of the week — creates a religious vacuum at the middle of the week. That vacuum is filled by the second beast, who rises not from the sea (the Gentile nations in commotion) but from the earth — suggesting a more local, Palestinian character. He is the Antichrist, the false prophet, the director of religious affairs in the western empire. He has two horns like a lamb — the priestly and kingly power that properly belongs to the true Messiah — but he speaks as a dragon: the source behind his words is Satan. He is the false Christ who has the outward form of the offices that Christ will fulfill, while being their very opposite in substance.

The mark of the beast and the number of his name enforce the system through economic control. No one can buy or sell without the mark. The whole coercive power of the empire is behind this. Six hundred and sixty-six: the number of a man, the number that falls short of the perfect seven in every direction — the fullest possible expression of the power of fallen man under direct satanic energising, and still only six.

A False Triad — Imitation Without Unity

The dragon, the first beast, and the second beast form a triad — an imitation of the divine Trinity. Satan, who is a spirit being, plays the role of the one behind all things. The first beast is the great political power. The second beast is the religious voice, the false prophet. All three are worshipped — the dragon openly, the first beast for his incomparable might, the second beast claiming divine honours in the temple.

But this imitation lacks the one thing that distinguishes the Trinity: an intrinsic, organic unity of persons in one God. What unites the three members of this triad is not union but common wickedness — and wickedness does not produce unity.

Bands of thieves and partners in evil consistently end up swindling one another, betraying one another, because what each one worships is himself, not the others. The second beast in 2 Thessalonians 2 exalts himself above all that is worshipped — above the dragon and above the first beast. He does not share power; he grasps for supremacy. Even within the triad there is no peace, only the temporary alliance of three wills each ultimately directed at its own exaltation.

Over against all of this stands the Lamb as it had been slain — whose book of life records every name that will not be found worshipping the dragon and the beast. That is what the chapter leaves us with: the beast with his mark and his number, and the Lamb with His book. Two registers, two companies, two destinies. *If any man have an ear, let him hear.*

— Study ends —