

THROUGH THE BIBLE REVELATION 12-13

A war correspondent is a reporter who's embedded with the troops. He wears camouflage and a flack jacket. He works on the front lines - in the line of fire.

His job is risky... It takes nerve... But because of his courage we get an unprecedented view of the battle.

In this section of Revelation, John is acting as **God's war correspondent**. He's reporting on *a spiritual battle*.

In fact, his assignment is THE spiritual battle - the battle of all battles - the battle of the ages - the war between God and Satan, and its culminating conflicts.

In Chapter 11 John is in Jerusalem, embedded with God's two witnesses. At first, it's a slaughter in the streets. Satan kills his two targets. But God says, **"No!"** and raises them up. *God proves He has the final say!*

In Chapter 13, John goes behind enemy lines to bring us an up-close expose' on an emerging tyrant he refers to as **"the Beast."** It too is a chilling chapter...

But of all John's journalism chapter 12 is where he wins a Pulitzer. What happens in chapters 11 and 13 don't just break out with the two witnesses. It's a long-running conflict. It's been brewing since the beginning.

And John knows if we're to really grasp the nature of this conflict we need some **background on the battle.**

The Earth is in peril. Tiny Israel is the focal point of the conflict. **And the question that begs to be answered is - *how did we get here?*** Chapter 12 is an overview.

Verse 1 reveals that the struggle of the ages begins with a woman... Chapter 12 opens, **“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.”** And this isn't just any woman.

She's a lady - a spiritual debutante.

And that's not all. She is pregnant. **“Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.”**

Here's the first question, *who is this woman?*

Recall, John received the Revelation on the island of Patmos, a Roman penal colony. He's surrounded by prison guards, and to avoid censorship, he disguises his message. As a Hebrew, John writes in OT symbols and idioms. Thus, the OT becomes the decoder ring.

And where in the OT do we find this woman?

Genesis 37:9 quotes the Hebrew forefather, Joseph, **“I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.”**

That's when Joseph's dad, the Patriarch Jacob - who later has his name changed to **“Israel”** - asks Joseph...

“Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed bow down to the earth before you?” Joseph had eleven brothers - and Jacob saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars

as the Jewish family. Biblically speaking, it's clear, the woman in Revelation 12 is the Jewish people.

One Bible teacher once told me, "You can learn a lot about a person's entire theology by how they interpret the woman in Revelation 12." And I've come to agree...

There are folks who interpret the woman of Chapter 12 as **the virgin Mary**. Since her child turns out to be Jesus it's understandable. But Mary was a mother on Earth. Notice, this woman is occupying Heaven. Mary is never pregnant in Heaven. She delivered on Earth.

Roman Catholics refer to Mary as "the mother of God." But this is a title the Bible never bestows.

Mary mothered God's Son on Earth, but in Heaven she's one of many believers - a *child of God, not the mother of God*. Mary was a godly lady, but never make more of her than the Bible does. *Don't embarrass her*.

Other folks see this woman as **the Church**. But this can't be. *Here's why...* The Church didn't birth Jesus. The opposite occurred, Jesus birthed His Church!

I believe strongly, this woman is **Israel!** John couches her in unmistakable symbolism. Genesis 37, and the patriarch's dream, clearly affirm her identity.

It's interesting, humans stay pregnant for 9 months - rhinos for 15 months - elephants for 21 months...

Ladies, be glad you're not an elephant!

But the nation Israel was pregnant with promise for 4000 years. God promised to the founders of the nation - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - and still later to King David - that through their collective lineage a Savior would be born. Salvation would come through their descendent. Jesus was born of Jewish stock.

Jesus was the promised child of Lady Israel.

If I were President of the USA my first proclamation would be special treatment for all pregnant women.

Pregnant women could park in handicap spots...

They could go to the head of all check-out lines...

Pregnant women would be given guardianship of the remote control... *as long as it wasn't football season!*

If you know a pregnant mom I hope you're treating her with extra special care... *But that wasn't the case with this woman in Revelation 12.* When she was ready to deliver she was threatened by a devouring dragon.

Verse 3, "And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads." This seems to be something out of a Jurassic Park movie.

A seven-headed dragon is stalking the woman.

And there's no need to speculate over the identity of this dragon. Drop down to verse 9 and John mentions him by name, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan..."

The first time we see the devil in Genesis he appears in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve as a “*dragon.*”

Of course, you’ll say, *I thought he came as a snake?*

He did, but when the serpent was cursed, *he belly flopped.* He ate dust and crawled on his stomach.

Beforehand he must’ve had legs - *and what is a dragon, but a snake with legs!* This is why Chinese Restaurants creep me out. They’re all decorated with dragons - the biblical and ancient symbol for Satan.

Verse 4 provides us some history on the dragon. “*His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.*” In both Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 we learn of the dragon’s, or Satan’s origin. He was formerly *the archangel, Lucifer* - a beautiful, musical creature.

Some folks think he was Heaven’s worship leader.

That is, until pride entered his heart. At that point he stopped worshipping God and worshipped himself.

That’s when God gave Him the boot. In Luke 10:18 Jesus said, “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*” Jesus was there at the expulsion of Lucifer.

And it wasn’t just Satan that fell, according to verse 4, Satan took “*a third of the stars of heaven*” with him.

The “*stars of heaven*” is a biblical idiom for angels.

When Satan fell a third of God’s angels joined the coup. Today these *fallen angels* are *Satan’s demons.*

The dragon stalks the lady until she gives birth - then tries to harm the Child! John tells us in verse 3, “**And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.**”

When we're in Israel we visit the Olive Wood Store on the Mount of Olives. One year, I bought Natalie a Nativity Set made from real Israeli-grown olive wood.

Most Nativities come with a Mary, a Joseph, an angel, shepherds, a few barnyard animals. If you're a good haggler you can even get a few camels thrown in.

But I've never seen a Nativity display with a dragon? Yet it's biblical. Here's the real nativity scene...

The battle of the ages didn't negotiate a Christmas cease-fire. Messiah is born while a dragon with seven sets of sharp teeth is licking his chops. Instead of bowing to this Baby, Satan tries to devour Him. He prompts King Herod to slaughter Bethlehem's toddlers.

As John overviews the spiritual war of the ages, he correctly sees the birth of Jesus as the pivotal battle.

Apparently, Satan sensed it as well. That's why he was there in full dragon-mode to resist Jesus' coming!

This was the one victory that signaled a turning point in the war. In this Child, God slipped behind enemy lines. If Satan had thwarted Jesus' birth, he could've kept God from invading his turf, and insured his gains.

But this is now the beginning of the end for Satan.

There'll be more skirmishes, but now that Jesus has invaded, it's only a matter of time before victory is won!

The dominoes have started to fall... *Jesus' sinless life, His miracles, His teachings, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, the establishment of His Church...* It's all leading to Jesus' triumphant return!

Verse 5 tells us, “**She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.**” Here's language right out of Psalm 2:8-9. The Child promised to Israel will rule the nations with “*a rod of iron.*” This is what all history is barreling toward - **the kingdom of the Christ!**

When Jesus returns it'll be His way or the highway. He's not running for office. He is the King of the Jungle!

Ultimately, **the male-Child** will rule all the nations of the world, but what about **the woman** who birthed Him? What will happen to the Jewish people?

John tells us in verse 6, “**Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there 1,260 days.**”

Here John fast-forwards from the time of Christ to the end of the age - from 32 AD to a time still future.

If this were a movie a caption would appear between verses 5 and 6 that read, “**Thousands of years later...**”

The timeframe “*1,260 days*” refers to the scene we saw in Revelation 11. Daniel 9 predicts a final 7 years in which God will wrap up His plans for His people Israel, and the world at large. This 7 years starts with a treaty. A Roman leader strikes a deal with Israel. And at that point you can mark off 7 years to Messiah’s return.

Daniel also tells us a terrible deed will occur at the midpoint - at the 1,260 day mark. The leader that Israel trusted, enters the Temple and desecrates God’s altar.

This betrayal scares Lady Israel. She’ll flee into the desert to a refuge God has prepared. Israel will be supernaturally fed and protected for a final *1260 days*.

Recall after the Hebrews exited Egypt, God fed them in the desert for 40 years... *He can handle 42 months.*

Well, this future Roman leader is not only going to scare Lady Israel, but also cause turmoil in Heaven...

Verse 7, “*And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*”

Apparently, the Beastly blasphemy that occurs in the Temple, is what causes war to erupt in heaven. The angel, Michael, bounces the dragon and his cronies.

And what does this war look like? How do angels and demons do combat? I have no idea, but I bet its vicious. It makes an MMA cage fight look like a ballet.

In 2 Kings 19 a sole angel killed 185,000 troops in a single night. Angels have serious swag. This Battle Royale makes a Star Wars movie look like a dart throw.

But in the end, Satan gets kicked out of heaven. From this point onward whenever Satan swipes his pass to heaven, the monitor reads, “access denied.”

Verse 9 sums it up, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Isaiah 14:16 speaks of Satan when we finally lay eyes on him, “Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities...’”

“Is this the man?” Satan was stripped of his power at the cross. He’s now puny and feeble. When we see him it’ll dawn on us the only power he had was *what we gave him!* Our lack of faith allowed him to bully us.

Obviously, no one in Heaven is crying over Satan’s banishment. In verse 10 Heaven erupts in joy and praise, “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.” The name “Satan” means “adversary” - “Devil” means “accuser.”

Satan wants to bury us under an avalanche of guilt and condemnation. Yet, *Jesus was buried so we don’t have to be!* He died in our place to gain our pardon.

Hang your hopes on Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ...”

Don't let Satan use *your failures* to destroy *your faith*. Here's a great quote to memorize, "*Whenever the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.*"

Our keys to victory are in verse 11, "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*" Here's how you build a strong faith...

You cultivate three attitudes... First, you lean on "*the blood of the Lamb!*" God's power is in Christ's blood!

Second you speak "*the word of their testimony.*" It's been said, "*A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.*" There's no denying a testimony. When we share our testimony it reaffirms even to us the reality of our relationship with God.

And the third attitude that makes faith strong is a selfless life. "*They did not love their lives to the death.*" Knowing that some things are more valuable than life itself strengthens our faith. Live as an overcomer!

A crowd now appears in Heaven. These are people who've tangled with Satan before and overcome. Verse 12, "*Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.*" This is not a good time to be alive on planet Earth.

From here on out Satan is on the warpath. Seething, frothing with resentment Satan will try to strike back at God as viciously and violently as he possibly can.

He'll go for the jugular. He tries to hit God where it hurts Him the most... *and guess where he aims?*

If you wanted to hurt me, you'd go after my kids! I'd die a thousand deaths before I'd see harm come to my kids. And here Satan goes after God's kids - the Jews.

I believe all bigotry is sinful, but Anti-Semitism is especially sinister. *Satan hates whoever God loves...*

The Devil crucified Jesus, but now Jesus is out of the devil's reach in Heaven... He persecuted the Church, but the rapture will take us to heaven out of line of fire.

So Satan zeroes in on the one people group left on Earth that God has chosen to favor - that's the Jews.

Satan will try to destroy *"the woman"* who birthed the *"male-Child."* Satan is no gentleman. He'll try to rough up Lady Israel. *He's never learned you don't hit girls.*

This is what we're told in verse 13, *"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child."* His evil reflex is to attack God's people, Israel.

Recall what Jesus told the Jews in Matthew 24:16.

When you see the Antichrist defile the Temple *"let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."* *Run for the hills...* Terrible persecution is on the horizon.

This is what happens, verse 14, *"But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place..."* With speed and agility the Jews vacate Jerusalem - head for the wilderness.

Some folks identify the “*great eagle*” in verse 14 as a first century description of a modern military transport plane. Perhaps the Jews left in Jerusalem get airlifted.

There is a passage that may identify the location of the end times hideout God has prepared for the Jews.

Isaiah 16:3-5 predicts, “Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end.” In Isaiah 16:1 the prophet mentions the Moabite city “Sela” or “Petra.”

You’ve probably seen Petra. It’s the backdrop for the final scenes of “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.”

The city of Petra is in a valley about a mile square.

A canyon a mile long, by a few feet wide serves as its entrance. It’s narrowness makes it easily defensible.

This may be where God keeps the Jews out of Satan’s reach during the last half of this terrible time.

In the wilderness the woman “is nourished for a time and times and half a time...” Here’s a third way John earmarks the same timeframe - 1,260 days, 42 months, now a Hebrew idiom that equals 3.5 years. God protects Israel “from the presence of the serpent.”

Yet after the Jews evacuate, Satan opts for Plan B...

Verse 15, “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.” “A flood” is another biblical symbol - used for an invading army.

This could be a genocide squad sent to exterminate the Jews who dared to flee. At first, Antichrist pretends to be peaceful, but in the end he’ll turn into a Hitler.

In verse 16 God again comes to their rescue. “But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.” Sounds like a Middle East earthquake at the right time and the right place...

A fissure in the Earth’s crust rescues the Jews.

“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” When the dragon fails to spill Jewish blood, he’ll go after any and all believers.

Anyone who embraces Jesus as Lord is a target.

Chapter 13 begins, “Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea...”

Throughout the Bible “*the sea*” is symbolic of a vast ocean of people adrift. We still use this idiom when we speak of “*the sea of humanity*.” Here John sees a global leader rising onto the world’s political stage.

In popular culture this diabolical leader is most often referred to as “the Antichrist,” but throughout the pages of Scripture he goes by a whole host of various titles...

“Adversary, Assyrian, Belial, Bloody and Deceitful Man, Branch of the Terrible Ones, Crooked Servant, Cruel One, Destroyer of the Gentiles, Evil Man, Little Horn, Man of the Earth, Proud Man, Spoiler, Destroyer, Extortioner, Vile Person, Violent Man, Wicked One, Willful King, Lawless One, Man of Sin, One who comes in his own name, Son of Perdition, the seed of the Serpent, and Unclean Spirit...” *to name a few...*

Here is a person so evil, so wicked, so ruthless, so vile, so unconscionable, so animalistic - Revelation 13 refers to him by the unflattering term... “the Beast.”

And like most beasts he travels in a pack. He heads a Satan-inspired gang of three. Chapter 13 spotlights *the beast, another beast, and the image of the beast.*

I call them, “**The Beastie Boys.**”

And they’re far more sinister than the blasphemous band that goes by that name. The goal of **the Beastie Boys** is to deceive, and extort, and eventually devour.

The world is a jungle, and jungles are full of beasts. Be thankful that Jesus is the King of the Jungle! And as we’ll see in the coming chapters - at a time and place of His choosing He’ll hunt down **the beastie boys!**

Now this beast comes “**having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.**” ...*this Beast is a reflection of the dragon in chapter 12 with his heads and horns...*

“Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.” Here’s a ferocious beast... with *a leopard’s speed - a bear’s paws - a lion’s teeth.*

His power and authority is from the dragon or Satan.

This beast John sees from the seashore is a man, but this man parallels nations described in Daniel 7.

The Prophet Daniel was given a vision of 2500 years of Gentile world domination. He saw four beasts rising out of the sea. The first three empires were easily identified – *the lion was Babylon, the bear was Persia, the leopard was Greece* – but the fourth animal was what Daniel called, “**a beast, dreadful and terrible.**”

And it’s during the days of this last beast that God sends Messiah to establish His kingdom on the Earth.

In a sense, this “**terrible beast**” was Rome. Ancient Rome was known for its ruthlessness and cruelty, but the Roman empire crumbled in the sixth century AD.

And still God’s Kingdom has yet to come...

That’s why Daniel 7 implies a future revival of the old, Roman empire. It’s “**beast, dreadful and terrible**” is a last days resurgence of what was ancient Rome.

This is why Bible students have been looking for centuries for the emergence of a European superstate.

And today, for the first time in 1400 years we have just such an entity... Rent a car in Madrid and drive it to Rome, then Paris, then Berlin, then Prague, and Budapest. You won't have to stop at a national border.

And you can pay for meals and lodging with a single currency, the Euro. *Welcome to the European Union...*

And here John sees the leader of this last days Rome. *A Beast with “seven heads and ten horns...”*

In Revelation 17:7 we'll learn that *“the seven heads”* represent a **geographical place**. They're seven hills.

In the writings of antiquity, Rome was almost always referred to as *“the city on seven hills.”* The political entity that Satan seizes control of and uses in the last days is a revival of Rome. It'll be centered in Europe.

The *“ten horns”* represent a **political base**. It seems, the European confederacy that becomes Satan's end times power block consists of ten nations or divisions.

And the Beast will be the ruler of this future empire.

Today, European countries are looking for a dynamic leader to address its political and economic problems.

Fifty years ago, Paul-Henri Spaak, a early organizer of the European Union, was quoted, *“We don't want another committee. We want a man of stature to hold the allegiance of the people and lift us up out of the economic mess we've gotten ourselves into. **Send us a man whether he be God or a devil, send him.**”* And it's still true today - Europe is desperate for a leader.

In the 1930s when Benito Mussolini took over in Italy he was asked how he was able to rise to power so quickly. He replied, “I found Europe full of empty rooms, and simply walked in and took one of them.”

“*The Beast*” will exploit a leadership vacuum. He’ll come to a Europe in disarray, and provide answers.

Ironically, Jesus has been faithfully knocking at the door of every human heart for the last 2000 years. He has timeless, eternal answers - not temporary patches.

Most folks keep their door bolted - and Jesus on the outside. *Yet when the Beast knocks they’ll fling it open.*

And verse 3 reveals why *the Beast* is so persuasive..

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”

What if John Kennedy had walked out of Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas?... *Survived a bullet to the brain?* Such a recovery would be hailed a miracle.

And this is what’s going to bump up the approval ratings of *the Beast*. He’ll recover from a potentially lethal wound. Perhaps, survive an assassin’s bullet.

Notice, verse 3 doesn’t say *the Beast* rises from the dead. Nowhere in the Bible is Satan given power over death. It’s “*as if (he) had been mortally wounded...*”

This might just seem to be a miracle, yet it does the trick. His recovery rockets him to superstar status.

Zechariah 11:17 speaks of his injuries, “His arm shall completely withered, and his right eye shall be totally blinded.” The Antichrist loses an arm and an eye.

Jesus lost far more for our us.

And His crucifixion was no illusion! Yet the world has and will ignore His scars, while they run after *a Beast*.

Verse 4, “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast...” This is Satan’s ambition. From His days as heaven’s choir boy he’s wanted men to worship him. Now *the Beast* gives him what he wants.

As Jesus draws men and women to the Father - the Beast captures souls and enslaves them to Satan.

In Revelation 13 we learn Satan wants all the world to worship *the Beast* - not *the Babe* in the manger.

John finishes verse 4, “And they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

Again, this is the timeframe we saw in the previous two chapters - 42 months, or 1,260 days, or 3.5 years.

Remember Revelation 6-19 records God’s judgment of this world during a final **seven year** period called “**Great Tribulation**.” Chapters 12-13 are a parenthesis that zero in on events that occur at the halfway point.

Up until now the Antichrist has preached tolerance. He's solved mankind's problems. World religions are cooperating. Jews and Muslims are living in harmony. Perhaps they're even co-existing on the Temple Mount.

When the narrow-minded Christians are taken in the rapture the Antichrist can sell his "coexist theology."

He'll probably explain the rapture as an evolutionary leap that eliminated the bigoted Christians. They were stunting human potential by insisting on only one right way. Everybody will sport the bumper sticker - coexist.

The world will be poised for a New Age, but then at halftime of these final seven years, *the Beast* will show his fangs. He's not the peaceful ruler he claims to be.

The personification of evil will murder God's two witnesses... He'll set up an image of himself in the Temple, and require the world to worship him...

Matthew 24 calls it "the abomination of desolation."

According to Revelation 12 it's after this blasphemy that war erupts in heaven. Michael boots out the devil. And to retaliate, Satan attacks God's people, the Jews.

There's a quote by Revolutionary War leader, William Penn, "Those who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants." Never in history will this be more applicable than in the 42 months prior to Jesus' return.

Under *the Beast* the world will be ruled by pure evil.

Verse 6 reveals more, “Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.” Suddenly, this *Future Fuhrer* will oppose everything that’s of God.

He’ll trash God’s name, and His Temple, even His saints. He’ll look to heaven and ridicule you and me.

And “It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.” In the Tribulation the followers of Jesus will be in the Antichrist's crosshairs...

Here’s a great proof-text for a pre-Tribulation rapture. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

“Prevail” in Matthew 16, and “overcome” in Revelation 13 are the same Greek word. Here, the Antichrist prevails against the saints, yet Jesus said the gates of Hades would never prevail against us. Thus, “the saints” in verse 6 can’t be part of the Church.

I believe these are the folks who are saved in the Tribulation, while the Church is in heaven with Jesus.

“And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.” The Beast will rule globally.

What Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great, and the Caesars of Rome, and Genghis Kahn, and Napoleon, and Hitler, and Stalin all failed to achieve - *a world dictatorship*... this future leader will accomplish.

Recall the story of Nimrod and the tower of Babel. It was man’s first attempt at globalization. Nimrod brought culture, commerce, language, government, even relig-

ion came under one big tent. Nimrod was a unifier of mankind, yet he had ulterior motives. He wanted to sub for the Savior - be worshipped by men.

Nimrod defied God's decree to scatter and multiply. And the world today is still under that command.

Nothing is wrong with cooperation among nations.

The United Nations is not inherently evil. But when efforts are made to abolish national boundaries and consolidate governments that's when we need to question the motive. Inevitably, Antichrist will somehow seize authority over *“every tribe, tongue, and nation.”*

We're told in verse 8, *“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.*

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

Suddenly, God's judgment will be swift and decisive. There'll be less room for repentance and second chances. Life will be hard. It'll take *“patience and faith.”*

Remember, Chapter 13 isn't just about *the Beast*, but *the Beastie Boys*. That's why verse 11 reads... *“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.”*

This second beast is the Antichrist's ecclesiastical sidekick. He's a religious leader who appears gentle as a lamb, but he speaks the threats and lies of Satan.

Jesus had a forerunner. It was John the Baptist who paved the way for the Messiah. This second beast will provide a religious sanction for the Antichrist's regime.

Imagine this man in the world's great cathedrals, mosques, temples encouraging all people to lay aside their differences and rally together under one banner!

Verse 12 tells us more, "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." This man will become the High Priest of heresy and apostasy.

In Revelation he's also called "the false prophet."

"He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." *The priest of the Beast* will even work miracles.

Remember, Satan is the great deceiver. He doesn't just do miracles, he tries to replicate biblical miracles.

Malachi 4:5 predicts that Elijah will appear "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

This is why the second beast calls down fire from the sky. He's not an *Elvis-impersonator* - but an *Elijah-impersonator*. Malachi predicted Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah. This guy claims to be him.

Verse 14, “And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

Here’s where the plot thickens... When we think of idolatry we think of a statue or trinket on a mantle, but here is an animated image - the “*image of the beast...*”

It has “*breath.*” It speaks. It discerns worship. It enforces mandatory allegiance. It executes people who refuse to bow to *the Beast...* Here’s *high-tech idolatry*

What is this third *Beastie Boy... this virtual idol?*

We’re not sure. But today’s technology provides us all kinds of possibilities. Is it a *touch-sensitive screen? Or a computer-generated hologram? Or a robot with artificial intelligence?* Imagine, millions of folks on the worldwide web simultaneously, interacting with this image. Idolatry goes live stream. It’s online worship.

John continues speaking of “*the image of the beast*” in verse 16, “He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” A hundred years ago this would make little sense, *but not today!*

In 2012 this kind of technology is all around us. Money and info are constantly passed electronically.

In a cash-oriented society you could never control commerce with a mark on an your body? But today, cash is a relic of the past... *My kids don't carry cash.* In the future, buying and selling will all be done digitally.

When I ran the Reagan 5K I put a microchip in my shoe that recorded my official time... One day soon we'll inject a silicon chip under a baby's skin to keep track of our child... *If you've ever momentarily lost a kid in a crowded mall you realize this has an upside.*

It makes sense. The technology itself isn't bad.

But this is what the Antichrist will use to blackmail the world into worshipping him. To get the mark you'll have to bow... you'll have to pledge allegiance to *the Beast*.

Imagine, the excruciating choices people will be forced to make... *Stand for Jesus, and watch your baby starve?... Sell your soul to Satan for a bowl of soup?* I don't want to be around when that choosing starts!

Finally verse 18, *“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”*

If we gave out an award for the verse that has drawn the most speculation, it would have to go to verse 18.

Everyone from *Nero* to *Hitler* to *Kennedy* to *Kissinger* to *Gorbachev* to *Clinton* to *Tony Blair* to *Obama* have been associated with the # 666 and inserted here.

Yet here's a different concept to mull over...

Throughout the Bible the number “six” is the number of man. “Six” is one less than “seven” - the number of God’s perfection - and man at his best still falls short of God’s ideal... Yet next to Jesus, the one man in the Bible who may’ve come closest was King Solomon.

In Luke 12:27 Jesus said of the lilies, “**even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.**” In Luke 11:31, Jesus praised “**the wisdom of Solomon.**”

In the OT Solomon had the distinction of being the wisest of the wise. He was world renown for his insight. King Solomon was the epitome of human achievement.

Now remember, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible - and there’s only one other place in Scripture where the number “666” appears. 2 Chronicles 9:13 lists Solomon’s yearly allotment of gold as **666 talents.**

There’s another connection between Solomon and this number. In 1 Kings 10 when you looked at Solomon’s throne you saw *six lions* on the left, *six steps* in the center, *six lions* on the right. Again a “**666.**”

Here’s an idea... when you think of the Antichrist don’t think of Darth Vader, or Osama bin Ladin, or Hitler - *think King Solomon.* There’re lots of parallels...

David was a man of war, but because of it he couldn’t build the Temple. Solomon was a man of peace and a Temple-builder. That’s how ***the Beast*** will start out... with a false peace and a rebuilt Temple.

Both will be admired for their wisdom... Both will start out as God-fearing people, but will eventually lead people into idolatry... Both will amass great fortunes...

The parallels are numerous. Suffice it to say, *the Beast* doesn't show his fangs, until he has the world in his clutches. Evil is not always so easily identified.

And the Antichrist will be further proof that man apart from God - *even at his wisest - even at his very best* - is still corrupt to the core and brazenly rebellious.

In the end the great human hope will turn beastly.

Chapter 13 closes with the Antichrist on top of the world, *but don't worry when evil rises!* Jesus is the King of the Jungle, and He's returning to cage the beasts!