**Revelation**

*Lesson 27 – Revelation 13:11-18*

1. We saw last time that Satan calls forth a beast out of the sea to help him in his war on and persecution of the Church. This beast is evil earthly governments that oppress and martyr Christians. Now Satan is going to call forth a second beast out of the land to help him. Together, these 3 form an unholy Trinity that imitates and mocks the Trinue God. The Father who elects is opposed by the dragon, Satan. The Son who rules and reigns on the Davidic throne is opposed by the sea-beast which is false authority and government on the earth. And the Holy Spirit who causes us to worship Christ in spirit and truth is going to be opposed by the land-beast who provokes false worship. This land-beast represents false teachers (heretics) and false religions and is the other prong of Satan’s war on the Church. This is confirmed by Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10 all which call this beast “the false prophet.”
2. William Hendricksen writes, “This is, perhaps, the most difficult paragraph in the entire book of Revelation. The main ideas are clear; the details are obscure. In the explanation [his explanation] of the details, certainty is wholly lacking.”
3. These 2 horns mimic the 2 witnesses of Revelation 11 which are also called 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands. These 2 witnesses represent the witness and testimony of the Church to Jesus Christ. So this beast has 2 horns “like a lamb” which is another imitation of Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain. Though this beast may look like Christ, it speaks like a dragon. It speaks lies and deceit just like the master it serves, that serpent of old Satan. It looks harmless and like a pet, yet it is full of venom and death. Even Jesus said that false prophets would come in sheep’s clothing but inwardly be wolves (Matt. 7:15).
4. And this blasphemous imitation of Christ who speaks lies and deceit exercises the authority of the first beast, the sea-beast and it makes or causes those who dwell on earth (unbelievers) to worship the first beast. Vern Poythress says that this beast “is the propagandist for the [First] Beast.”
5. Again, there’s more imitation and mockery of the Trinity. The first beast (opposed to the Son) gives authority to the second beast (opposed to the Holy Spirit) just as Jesus sends the Spirit as “another Counselor” with His own authority (John 16:13-15). The second beast promotes worship of the first beast, just as the Holy Spirit promotes worship of Jesus Christ. Together, these beasts also counterfeit the offices of Christ – The first beast is a counterfeit king, the second beast is a counterfeit prophet and counterfeit priest.
6. This second beast even performs great miraculous signs (verse 13) just as the Spirit empowers the miraculous signs that we see in the book of Acts. These false miraculous signs are likened to the signs that God’s true prophets performed, especially the prophet Elijah who called down fire from heaven in his opposition to Baalism. Now this false beasts mimics and imitates this to try to deceive people with its false religion.
   1. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 – “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,”
   2. Mark 13:22 – “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.”
7. So this second beast from the land represents all false teaching and religion that attacks the Church, that arises from within the Church, between Jesus’ first coming and His second coming. In John’s day, this would have been emperor worship of the Roman Caesar. In the time of the Reformation, the Reformers saw this beast as the Roman Catholic System and the Pope. The original WCF said that the Pope was the Antichrist, but this was removed in 1903 by the American Presbyterian churches. The Pope and Catholics persecuted Protestants through the use and influence of both church and state.
8. And in verse 14, this second beast points people to the first beast because it performs these signs in the presence of the beast and it calls people to make an image (idol) of the beast. Here we see anti-Christian religion/philosophy working in cooperation with anti-Christian government and causing people to see government as an “idol.” That’s not applicable at all for us today, right? We see secular humanism and atheism and even Jewish and Muslim people appeal to the American government and the courts to attack and oppress Christians.
9. On August 30, 2019, the Democratic National Committee passed a resolution praising “nonreligious” people and criticizing those “religious” people who “threaten” minority groups.
   1. “WHEREAS, those most loudly claiming that morals, values, and patriotism must be defined by their particular religious views have used those religious views, with misplaced claims of 'religious liberty,' to justify public policy that has threatened the civil rights and liberties of many Americans, including but not limited to the LGBT community, women, and ethnic and religious/nonreligious minorities….”
10. This second beast is given the power to give breath to the image of the first beast. Notice here that first, this power is delegated to the second beast. All of this is under the sovereign authority of God. This beast would have no power if God had not allowed it to have power. And this beast mimics the creative activity of God who breathed into man (created in His image) the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), so the beast breathes and seems to give life to a false image, the image of the beast. Greg Beale says that this “is a metaphorical way of affirming that the second beast was persuasive in demonstrating that the image of the first beast represented the true deity, who really stands behind the image and makes decrees.” In other words, this is another deception.
11. The image seems to be alive in that it makes authoritative declarations (who can opposed the power of anti-Christian governments and authorities) and kills those who refuse to worship it. Here we see echoes of Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar had an image made and forced people to bow down and worship it lest they be thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Daniel too was thrown into the lion’s den because he would not pray to the king (Daniel 6).
12. And then in verses 16-18 we see the second beast administers the number of the [first] beast, marking people of all types so that only those with the mark can buy and sell. In the ancient world of John’s day, slaves were marked to show ownership of property and soldiers or worshippers were marked to show their devotion. Beale writes, “Here, the mark is clearly figurative for the way in which the state keeps check on whether people are submitting to compulsory idol worship.”
13. 6 is symbolic of the number of man so this number shows that it is man’s number who falls short of God’s number, which is 7. Additionally, we see more imitation of the Trinity as 666 would imitate the Triune completeness of 777.
14. This mark is a mockery of the “seal” of God which is written on the foreheads of His people (Rev. 3:12; 7:3-8; 14:1; 22:4). God’s seal is a spiritual and invisible reality, so this imitation mark of the devil also must be a spiritual and invisible reality. Beale writes, “Believers are protected by the power of Christ’s name, which is His presence with them. They may suffer and even die, yet they will receive the ultimate reward of eternal life. Unbelievers may receive temporary prosperity, but will be punished ultimately with eternal death.” That this mark is spiritual is confirmed by Revelation 14:9 which begins, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand…” This seems to equate worshipping the beast with receiving the mark. The forehead represents one’s mind/thought/intellect and the right hand represents power and action. So those who belong to the beast think his thoughts after him and carry out his actions. Or as Joel Beeke puts it, “When people’s thinking and actions are controlled by someone who hates Christ, they bear the mark of the beast.”
15. And so in verse 18, the people of God are called to exhibit spiritual wisdom and understanding in order to see through all of these deceptions and satanic mockeries of our God. These beasts are detailed for us and laid out for us, both what they look like and what they do, so that we can be aware and stand against them. We are to beware of false religion and satanic government as they work together through religious, economic, and culture to promote idolatry and human wisdom as opposed to cultivating Godly wisdom.

**Message for Us**

1. “The two beasts, which look so different, warn us not to be ignorant of Satan’s devices. The devil can be perfectly beastly at times, but he can also be positively charming. It is easy to recognize an attack of the devil when he comes at you as a beast with seven heads and ten horns or as a roaring lion. But it is not so easy to recognize Satan in the guise of a lamb. Some of us are woefully ignorant when it comes to discerning truth from error. If something looks like a lamb, we pat it on the head. If a church calls itself Christian, evangelical, or Reformed, we are prone to embrace it. We must remember that though the devil comes like a roaring lion, he can also appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14)—or as a wooly lamb. People in the media who broadcast Christian messages seem nice and sincere, but often what comes out of their mouths is unbiblical. We must exercise discernment in regard to what we hear or read. We must be on our guard against Satan’s devices.” –Joel Beeke
2. “Fallen mankind substitutes Satan-worship for God-worship. That is evident all around us today, as people do what they think is right in their own eyes. All the while godly people are judged as intolerant when they refuse to bow down to the forces of humanism that degrade the Bible, mock Christians, promote unbridled sex, kill unborn babies, promote homosexuality, and desecrate the Lord’s day. Similarly, millions of people exalt the papacy as Christ’s infallible spokesman on earth, all the while blind to the fact that the papacy—as the Reformers and Puritans show so poignantly in their writings—manifests every quality about the antichrist that the scriptures set forth. Then too, many false religions can live quite happily with a wicked and tyrannical government, and many pastors and priests, including some claiming to be Christians, willingly become the tools of an intolerant state and culture.” –Joel Beeke
3. “Successful modern democratic governments are not literally killing people. They do not need to, as long as their idolatrous programs are so successful! The state undertakes to help you by stuffing you with what is good for you, according to its supposedly enlightened, beneficent judgment. And if you do not agree, you are socially unfit and maladapted. The old ‘you’ must be ‘killed,’ socially speaking, by social engineering, in order that the new ‘you’ may function as a upstanding, healthy citizen of the state. To this end, the state uses education, financial penalties, financial inducements, endless regulations, and bureaucrats overseeing and directing your decisions. Society regards the Christian as a misfit, a misanthrope, a victim of insanity. Thus, a consistent Christians will find it difficult to fit in and mix with pagan society.” –Vern Poythress
4. “Rejoice, O Church of God! The victory is on your side. The number of the beast is 666, that is, failure upon failure upon failure! It is the number of man, for the beast glories in man; and must fail!” –William Hendriksen
5. “It is possible to profess that you belong to the Lamb while thinking and acting like a dragon. When you habitually behave like dragon people, speak like dragon people, or think like dragon followers, your profession is false. May God help those who delude themselves and those around them that they are sealed by the blood of the Lamb.” –Joel Beeke