

Revelation 13: The antichrist and the false prophet. KV 1 and 11

The chapter now provides background of the main evil participants in the tribulation.

**1. Vision of the beast from the sea, which is the antichrist. 1-10**

Visions continue to appear and as in chapter 12, allowing some form of figurative interpretation. John first saw a beast ascending from the sea **(1-2)**. In 11:7 and 17:8 it is stated that he is from the abyss which is what the sea represents. The beast is empowered by the dragon or Satan and he is thus the antichrist. Small wonder he looks very similar to the dragon in 12:3. The various animals reflect his strengths, namely the lion's authority, the bear's strength and the leopard's agility; and the antichrist will have all these attributes. As for the horns, they represent the 10 kingdoms he controls while the heads are seven kings that are under him. The tragedy is that the entire world will worship him and it is mainly because of an apparent "resurrection" **(3-4)**. There is a fatal wound due to a sword in v14 probably during warfare and could be related to the battle described in Ezekiel 38-39. However he came back alive and is even victorious. It is likely to be false for v3 uses the phrase "as if" but the world will be so beguiled that even the dragon or Satan himself will be worshipped. He then turns arrogant and blasphemous against God and His tabernacle **(5-6)**. This must be related to his demand for worship in the temple. It also harmonizes well with the antichrist taking Jerusalem and controlling the temple for 42 weeks in 11:2. At the same time in **v7-8**, he will war against the saints leading to their elimination beginning from the fifth seal in 6:9. The section ends with an exhortation for the saints to endure by faith **(9-10)**. There is some textual variation in v10, on whether "kill by the sword" is active or passive but the best support is for the latter, as used in the NIV. Note that the beast is also depicted as an empire in 17:8-12 which some described as the revived Roman Empire for the emperor and his empire can often be inseparable.

**2. Vision of beast from the earth, which is the false prophet. 11-18**

A second beast appears, also called the false prophet in 16:13 and 19:20, indicating that he is some kind of religious leader **(11-12)**. Furthermore he appears as a lamb and yet his words are satanic. He is from the earth, indicating that he is not directly linked to the abyss as the first beast. Rather, his great demonic power is indirect, working only through the presence of the antichrist, the first beast (12). He is basically the antichrist's aide, enticing the world to worship him. A key performance of his power will be making an image or a statue of the antichrist to talk **(13-15)**. Surely the feat could easily be conjured with modern technology but it will defraud the entire world into adulation. The killing of those refusing to worship must again be the martyrdoms of the saints in 6:9 but this will be his method for revealing them. Finally he will introduce a mark that is needed for all buying and selling **(16-18)**. It actually means the full control of the world and achievable today by implanting a computer bar code. In v18 the number of this mark is stated as 666. It then calls for wise and intelligent "calculation" of the number. The Greek is "psephizo" meaning to work it out by mathematics. So the number will not be obvious but can be deciphered and thus be identified. So we should be watching out for it.

**Lesson to Ponder:** It is always difficult when we fully obey God and yet have to suffer for it as in v8-10. Understanding that this is destined by God for our own good (Romans 8:28) will be a great encouragement. Yet in the end, the call is still to endure by faith.

## 第十三章：敵基督和假先知

鑰節；1, 11 節

本章揭示在大災難中邪惡一方的主要參與者。

### 1. 海裏出來的獸，那是敵基督—1-10 節

異象繼續出現，像 12 章那樣，我們可以以喻意來作出解讀。約翰首先看見一隻獸從海裏上來（**1-2 節**）。在 11:7 和 17:8 都講到牠是從無底坑出來的，所以海也就是無底坑的代表。這獸的權力來自龍或是撒但，因此他一定是敵基督。無怪乎他那麼像 12:3 所形容的龍。不同的動物是用來反映他的能力的，獅子代表權柄，熊代表力量，而豹則代表矯健；敵基督會有著這所有的屬性。至於那些角，它們代表牠所控制的十個國家。而七個頭是在牠下面的七個王。可悲的是全世界都會敬拜牠，主因是牠那在人前“復活”的把戲（**3-4 節**）。在 14 節牠有一致命的刀傷，這大概是因戰爭而得，而那場戰事可能和以西結書 38-39 章所形容的相關。只是牠活著回來了，並且是以勝利歸來。這致命傷可能是假的，因為第 3 節用了“似乎”一詞，但世界還是那麼容易受騙，連龍和撒但都去敬拜。牠變得驕傲，褻瀆神並祂的帳幕（**5-6 節**）。這一定是和牠要求在聖殿接受敬拜有關，這樣就和 11:2 敵基督佔據耶路撒冷，控制聖殿 42 個星期的事互相吻合了。與此同時，在 **7-8 節** 牠會和聖徒作戰，讓他們從 6:9 第五個印章時開始被消滅。這段最後是對受苦的信徒予以鼓勵（**9-10 節**）。在逼迫底下，信徒無法掌握自己的命運，但牠們需要以信心來堅忍。一如既往，堅忍和信心必需是相輔同行的。留意在 17:8-12 是以王權來形容那獸，有人認為那是指復興的羅馬帝國，因為君王和牠的王權往往是分不開的。

### 2. 從地裏出來的獸，那是假先知—11-18 節

第二隻獸出現，牠就是在 16:13 和 19:20 被稱作假先知的，表示著牠可能是個宗教領袖（**11-12 節**）。還有牠外表像羔羊，但話語卻屬撒但的。牠從地裏出來，顯然牠並非像頭一隻獸那樣和無底坑直接有關。反而牠強大的惡魔力量是間接的，必須通過敵基督即第一隻獸才能行使出來（12 節）。基本上牠只是敵基督的助手，引誘世界去敬拜牠。牠最主要的能力表現將是替敵基督立像和讓像說話（**13-15 節**）。無疑這種把戲用現代科技很容易就能做到，只是全世界卻受迷惑去向牠獻媚。那些拒絕敬拜獸像的都被殺害，那一定是 6:9 所講的殉道聖徒，敬拜獸像的要求只是獸用來認出聖徒的手段。最後牠會強迫所有人接受記號才能做買賣（**16-18 節**），這其實是牠掌控了全世界的意思，今天只要植入電腦條碼就可以達成了。18 節說這記號是數字六百六十六，需要用智慧和聰明把它“計算”出來。希臘文“psephizo”是表示用數學的方法得出結論。所以這號碼不會很明顯但卻是可破解的，也因此可以被辨認出來。所以我們要留心它的出現。

**思想心得：**從 8-10 節看到當我們全然順服神卻遭到苦害時，這永遠都不是件容易的事。惟有明白這是神的定意是為了我們得益處（羅馬書 8:28），這才會成為極大的鼓勵。不過至終，我們還是得憑信心來忍受苦難。