

Rev. 12:13-17 describes the persecution of God's people by the dragon, Satan.

¹³And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, [3 ½ yrs.] from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Rev. 13 > Persecution Of God's People By The Dragon-Energized Beasts

Rev. 13 describes Satan's strategy and plan to persecute God's people and worship Satan.

The Dragon uses 3 political/religious powers to carry out the plan.

- Rev. 13:1-10 The Beast From The Sea Antichrist
 - 13:1-2 Its identity
 - 13:3-10 Its activities
- Rev. 13:11-13 The Beast From The Earth False Prophet
 - 13:11 Its identity
 - 13:12-13 Its activities
- Rev. 13:14-18 The Image Of The Beast
 - 13:14 Its identity
 - 13:15-18 Its activities

Satan on earth, unleashing his massive effort to defeat God & set up his own kingdom. In order to work out his diabolical plan in the world, he has to do it through humanity. He needs a man to lead other men. There will come a demon-possessed man.

Rev. 13:1-2 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having 7 heads and 10 horns, and upon his horns 10 crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Rev. 13:11 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. [referred to 3x as the "false prophet." Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10]

- Another" = Greek allos meaning, "another of the same kind." He plays a different role, but in character he is another one who is beastly, rapacious, cruel, and hostile to the flock of God's people like a wolf, though dressed in sheep clothing.
- 2 horns but no crowns = suggest he has authority and power

- Character of a lamb> sacrificial animal of the Jews; counterfeit the gentle character of Christ

Person #3 of the Unholy Satanic Trinity = False Prophet = Anti-Holy Spirit
 Holy Spirit False Prophet

Exalts Christ	John 15:26	Exalts Antichrist	Rev. 13:12
Gives Divine Revelation	John 16:13	Gives Satanic Revelation	Rev. 13:13
Enlightens with Truth	John 14:17	Deceives With Error	Rev. 13:14
Builds Body Of Christ	I Cor. 12:13	Builds Body of Antichrist	Rev. 13:15-16
Marks Us As Christ's	II Cor. 1:22	Marks Us As Antichrist's	Rev. 13:18
Secures Us For Heaven	Eph. 4:30	Secures Us For Hell	Rev. 20:4

Matt. 3:16-17 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

¹⁷ And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

- The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus at the beginning of his 3 ½ yr. earthly ministry.
- The False Prophet joins himself to the Antichrist at the beginning of the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation Period.

Note: He will speak with frightening authority like a hissing dragon.

- Connects him in character with THE DRAGON, Satan
- Gets his power from Satan

Consider: Most religions will claim to be humanitarian, loving and concerned for society.

In reality, since Satan is always at the root of the system [I Tim. 4:1-3; II Cor. 11:13-15], they can become vicious, cruel and murderous as a wild beast when people do not toe the "party line."

Persecutions that have occurred in the name of religion:

- Inquisitions of Rome in 1233 and 1542
- Persecutions of Spain in 1478 against Jews and Moslems.

Rev. 13:12 And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him and CAUSES the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

The purpose of this beast or false prophet is to promote the authority and worship of the first beast, just as the Holy Spirit works to bring glory to Jesus Christ [John 16:14].

"Whose fatal wound was healed" indicates that this deception is part of his propaganda program to sell people on the beast. The Holy Spirit truthfully, by contrast, uses the resurrection to convince men of the person and work of Jesus Christ. As in the early church, the resurrection of Christ was followed by sign miracles to authenticate the message of Christ and His prophets [Heb. 2:4], so the false prophet does the same in his deception.

False Prophet > Dazzle & Deceive

Rev. 13:13-14a And he doeth great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; [establishes credibility] "Deceives" = Greek planaw = "to lead astray, cause to wander, mislead, deceive.

Warning! Miraculous signs are not in themselves a proof that whatever is going on is from God. Experiences alone can be deceiving. However, we live in an esoteric, mystic oriented age where reality is too often reduced to a personal experience or some kind of enlightenment. Even within the body of Christ, the emphasis has moved away from the Word of God as our authority to an emphasis on phenomena and subjective experiences

Matt. 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

[Note: Context: This is during the Tribulation Period]

The Antichrist and the False Prophet are the prototypes of these two classes of deceivers.

Consider: When Jesus ministered on earth, Jewish leaders often asked Him to perform some sign to prove that He was indeed their Messiah. Jesus refused. But the false prophet will perform deceptive signs that will lead the world into devil-worship.

II Thess. 2:9-10 Even him [Antichrist], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

- God had Aaron cast his rod down before Pharaoh and it turned into a serpent.
- Then Pharaoh's magicians did the same things with their rods.

Rev. 14b saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

- Men must have some **VISIBLE** God to worship. [Golden calf]

Alford: The second beast, in its zeal and action, wields its authority, works miracles in its support, causes men to make and to worship its image; nay, itself is lost in the splendor and importance of the other.

Rev. 13:15 And he had power to give life [BREATH] 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.

- Greek = pneuma = spirit or wind > It will appear to come to life.
- Greek = zoe = LIFE

It is not real life, zoe, but only breath, pneuma. Since breathing is one of the signs of life, men think the image lives, but John is careful not to say that he gives life [zoe] to the image.

Only God can do that. It is something miraculous, but also deceptive and false.

Up to this time, the two witnesses have been ministering at the temple in Jerusalem, but "the beast" will slay them and take over the temple. When God raises the two witnesses from the dead and takes them to heaven, the false prophet will answer that challenge by giving "life" to the image of "the beast." Not only will the image move, but it will speak!

Rev. 13:15b 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.

Rev. 20:4 mode of execution for those who do not worship the image of the beast is beheading. Paying obeisance to the image of the beast is how the deceived people of the world will worship the "man of lawlessness" [II Thess. 2:3] who sets himself up as a god in the temple in Jerusalem

Jesus Warned Of This Persecution: Matt. 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

Those who do worship the image of the beast will suffer the Wrath Of God, which is far worse: Rev. 14:9-11 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

All Christians and Jews will become outlaws and need to hide in the countryside and live off the land. They will be hunted down like animals. Most will be killed.

It will be a horrible period of unparalleled persecution of believers in the true God.

Is There An Alternative? Focus on what is unseen rather than what is seen. The apostle Paul endured beatings, shipwrecks, stoning and more, yet he was not deterred from serving the Lord. He explained the source of his hope that sustained him.

II Cor. 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Rom. 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Those who refuse to bow the knee to the Antichrist and the image of the beast may be persecuted on earth, but they will be rewarded in heaven:

Rev. 15:2-3 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

Rev. 13:16-17 And he causeth all, both small and great [status], rich and poor [possessions], free and bond [state in society], to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
17 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.

Just as the angel marked the names of Jesus and the Father on the forehead of the 144,000, the false prophet will seal his servants.

Ed Hindson: These prophecies speak of religious, political and economic control of the world at the end of the age.

Reasons For The Mark:

1. To counterfeit the mark God will give to the 144,000 Jews.
2. To extend favors to those who support the world government.
3. To identify and eliminate opposition to the world government.
4. To track and control commerce.
5. To force people to stop worshiping God.
6. To force people to worship Antichrist.
7. To permanently tie people to the Kingdom of Antichrist.

Those who take the mark will face the WRATH OF GOD.

Rev. 13:18 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.

Question: Why 666? Some suggestions:

1. Goliath, opposer of God's people and type of Satan, was 6 cubits in height, his spear's head weighed 6 shekels; had 6 pieces of armor.
2. Nebuchadnezzar's statue, type of image of the beast, was 60 cubits high, 6 cubits wide and 6 musical instruments beckoned its worshipers.
3. Since man was created on the 6th day, 6 is the number of man, just short of perfection.
 - The Satanic Trinity cannot claim the number 7. It must settle for 666.
 - This man and his system can never do that which God has promised.
 - He promises peace but brings war. He promises life but brings death. He promises liberty but brings slavery. He promises happiness but brings misery. He promises significance but brings the loss of true meaning & purpose in life.
 - The beast [in place of Jesus] is only a man who is evil and Satan controlled. He is far short of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

David Jeremiah: Mark = Greek charagma

In antiquity, this word was always associated with the Roman Emperor. It often contained the Emperor's name, his image and the year of his reign. It was necessary for buying and selling and was required to be affixed to documents to attest to their validity.

During The Tribulation, every living person will be required to take the Beast's mark.

As in the days of Rome, it will be the only way to function in society.

The Roman Cult of Emperor Worship

Many scholars see worship of the emperor as the background for the worship of the Beast in Revelation 13:4, 15-16; 14:9-11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4. Roman Emperors were believed to be mortal manifestations of the divine and were worshiped as gods. Some emperors made worship of themselves mandatory, a problem for monotheistic groups like the Jews and, the Christians. The standard view of Emperor worship found in many popular commentaries comes from William Ramsay, writing at the turn of the 20th century:

"...in no part of the world was there such fervent and sincere loyalty to the emperors as in Asia. Augustus had been a savior to the Asian peoples, and they deified him as the Savior of mankind, and worshiped him with the most whole-hearted devotion as the 'present deity'."

W. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909)

As the Roman Empire developed, the Imperial cult gradually developed more formally and constituted the worship of the Roman emperor as a god. This practice began at the start of the Empire under Augustus and became a prominent element of Roman religion.

How prevalent was the imperial cult in Asia Minor? Of the 7 cities mentioned in Revelation 2-3,

- 5 had imperial priests and altars [not Philadelphia or Laodicea]
- 6 had imperial temples [not Thyatira]

Center of Religion of Emperor Worship - Center of Imperial Cult of Evil

1. Pergamum [City of Serpent] distinguished itself by becoming the site of the first cult of a living Roman emperor. 1st city in ancient Roman Empire to build a temple to Caesar in 27 BC.
 2. Three temples were devoted to worship the emperor who was viewed as a god.
 3. The Pergamum Council was given the right of the sword = the right to sentence to death
- Note: Pergamos, as the official office of the Proconsul of Rome, was very powerful in Asia Minor. Proconsul made laws and decrees for all. He held a sword. As long as he held it upright, everything was fine. If he suddenly went down with the sword, it meant off with their head.

Rev. 2:12-13 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; ¹³ I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

- Satan's seat > where Satan dwells > Satan's influence [evil] controlled the city.

This church operated in the middle of a city chosen by Satan as his headquarters on earth.

The religious climate at Pergamos was not conducive to the Christian life. Pergamos symbolized secular power and civil religion working together to accomplish Satan's plan.

Satan's Tactics

Orchestrated the worship of Caesar from Pergamos to flow out to the Roman world.

All the Satanic policies emanated from here to attack the whole Church of Asia Minor.

Acropolis rises triumphantly over the ruins of the city.

One of the most dramatic structures of the acropolis was what scholars believe to be the Altar of Zeus, supreme ruler of the gods. The altar to Zeus was one of the most significant places of worship in Anatolia (or Turkey). Zeus, said to have been born in Pergamos, represents the strongest and most powerful of deities; he was to be feared and served. The emperors and all other deities were subject to his power as well. Zeus has always been a significant deity worshiped by political leaders who need power and control to remain in their positions.

- His altar stood on a hill 1,000 feet high, which rose behind the town.
- 800 feet up, a ledge jutted out from the mountain, and on it stood the altar of Zeus.
- Only the massive foundations remain on the southern slope of the site. 125'x115'x 50' tall.
- All day long this altar smoked with the smoke of endless sacrifices.
- It dominated the city, like a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night.

"It was one of the darkest, eeriest cities in the whole Roman Empire. The city reeked with the stench of its heathenism; evil hung in its streets like a clammy fog."

Question: Could this massive altar refer to Satan's throne in Rev. 2:13?

Many scholars believe it refers to the great altar of Zeus which was on the hillside looming over the city.

Christ's Commendation:

Rev. 2:13a I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne (seat) is.

He Knows Their Steadfastness -They "dwelled" in Pergamos. "to settle down to stay;

They settled down in Pergamos and were not running away from the trouble around them.

Note: This is a true growing church waging an uncompromising war at the throne of Satan.

"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith."

Note: At the very time John wrote these words, Christians were suffering persecution for refusing to worship the emperor Domitian [A.D. 81-96], who insisted on being worshiped as "lord and god." The highest capacity in mankind, the capacity to worship, was degraded into corruption.

Rev. 2:13b did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Consider: Faith is tested so it might be proven to be genuine. A faith that cannot endure trial is really no faith at all. True faith is not fragile, it is indestructible.

It survives everything, even the onslaughts of hell.

According to church tradition Antipas, a contemporary with the Apostles, lived during the reign of emperor Domitian in 83 AD. He was consecrated bishop of Pergamos by the Apostle John.

1. Church tradition says Antipas was a physician suspected of secretly propagating Christianity. The Aesculapeans (the medical guild) accused Antipas of disloyalty to Caesar.

2. When he was old, he was caught by the idolaters of Pergamos. The demons, whom they worshipped, appeared to them and told them they could neither live in that place nor accept their sacrifices because Antipas was forcing them out.

Renner: "He had cast out so many devils the demons had been complaining to pagans, saying, 'You've got to do something about this Antipas'."

3. The pagan priests went to the Roman governor and complained that the prayers of Antipas were driving their spirits out of the city and hindering the worship of their gods.

4. As punishment, the governor ordered Antipas to offer a sacrifice of wine and incense to a statue of the Roman emperor and declare that the emperor was "lord and god." He refused.

5. When the governor and the Greeks heard this answer they burned with anger.

6. Antipas was sentenced to death on the Altar of Zeus.

At the top of the altar was a hollow bronze bull, designed for human sacrifice.

Antipas was placed inside a red-hot bronze bull and was roasted alive.

Renner describes the method of execution suffered by Antipas. "They would take the victim, place him inside the bull, and they would tie him in such a way that his head would go into the head of the bull. Then they would light a huge fire under the bull, and as the fire heated the bronze, the person inside of the bull would slowly begin to roast to death.

As the victim would begin to moan and to cry out in pain, his cries would echo through the pipes in the head of the bull so it seemed to make the bull come alive."

Note: Even in the midst of the flames, the elderly bishop Antipas died praying for his church. The year was AD 92.

A few years later, the Apostle John wrote Revelation, mentioning the death of Antipas in Pergamum.

Rev. 2:13b *did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

Jude 1:3 I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Antipas means "against all" and he stood against all odds for the faith that was once and for all handed down to him by the Apostles.

On April 11 the memory of the martyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamos is still celebrated by the Orthodox Churches around the world.

II Tim. 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

I Pet. 4:12-16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

¹⁶ Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

I Pet 2:20-21 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Heb. 13:5b-6 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

II Cor. 12:9-10 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Christian life does not guarantee an absence of trials and tribulations. It does not offer us a life where we won't encounter failures and pains. But it offers is that we will never have to walk alone amidst any of these. When our burdens increase, God will supply us with strength. In afflictions, God will shower His mercy upon us. When we feel that we cannot take any more, God is willing to take over because His power has no boundary.

All the hurdles we encounter and all the obstacles that we face have a divine purpose: We may be transformed into the likeness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. We need only submit ourselves before a loving, merciful and powerful God.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added afflictions, He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;
Learn hard on the arm everlasting, availing -
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.

Chorus:

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.