

Rev 26-03-08b

We're ready now to resume our study in Revelation chapter 13, and we are looking at this ultimate fulfillment of a pattern that has been present in history, going back all the way to Daniel's day. The rise of these empires, we don't really see this in the earlier days. You see Egypt, you see tribal kingdoms in the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but Egypt is the first sort of superpower that we see in biblical history.

But by the time of the latter days of the monarchy in Israel, you have the rise of the Assyrians, then along with Egypt, you have the battle of Carchemish, you have many things happening around the 600s BC, down to 605, and because of Carchemish and the defeat of the Egyptians and so on, you have Nebuchadnezzar, whose actual name, just for so you know, is probably Nebuchadrezzar. You find it that way a few places in scripture, but we'll call him what we always call him. But in the days of Daniel, now you have the rise of empires, and we begin to see a more global view.

And God brings this to the fore in prophecy so that from that time forward, believers, Old Testament and new, will understand the spiritual conflict that is massive and its reflection, the shadow of it that is on earth. Jesus told his disciples to pray that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. And we see the shadows in the same way that we have a three-dimensional object, you hold it in the sunlight and look at the shadow, you can turn it enough and move it enough to begin to see what shape it is, what object it is just from the shadow, but you can never fully appreciate the reality unless you can see it in depth and in full dimensionality.

We have difficulty sometimes understanding the shadows that are cast. You can understand many truths about the Lord Jesus in the shadows of Levitical offerings and sacrifices and feasts. God's dealings with Israel, strike the rock, speak to the rock.

Here is a dove that is slain and its blood is mixed with water and sprinkled. And here is another dove that is set free. Here's a goat that is slain as a sacrifice.

Here's another one that is identified with his blood and set free, the Azazel goat. And would have been difficult to see the full-orbed ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, except in retrospect. You look at Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers, the blood on the coat presented to the father, the son is dead and yet the son is alive again and becomes the savior of his brethren.

You meant it for evil, God meant it for good. All of these wonderful examples that we can learn from in the Old Testament are continued and brought to fruition and fulfillment in this wonderful revelation that we now turn our attention to. But many of the interpretive rules and the experience we have in parsing and decrypting prophetic information in the Old Testament apply.

And we are given those clues here in the revelation. So this dragon, seven heads, 10 horns,

Daniel gives us the clue. And as we continue here, we see that the dragon is standing on the sand of the sea at the beginning of the chapter and he calls forth this first beast.

One of the reasons I asked myself, why didn't God make this a little more clear? I'm not real sure. At times the heads seem to be hills or they are rulers or they are entities. And we see this coming and going.

The reason it is a bit flexible, I think, is that we are not to focus so much on explicit identification, because for the last 2000 years, you can't tell explicitly what is this going to look like? Who is it going to be? But it is an exemplification of the pattern and the pattern we can identify. Every generation of believers, from the time John put this on paper and sent it to the churches until now, I say paper loosely, it was probably parchment. But from the time that the message was initially delivered until now, every generation, every believer in the church age that comes to this book and claims the blessing of reading and hearing the words of this prophecy can benefit from the pattern.

Whatever the geographical location, whatever the geopolitical scene, whatever is happening with fellow believers, antagonists, and those who attack and persecute and even murder believers in the Lord Jesus, this is critically important to understand to claim the peace of God, to understand the preparation for this kind of opposition, which whatever physical form it takes and whatever the names are for the entities that are at work in our day, in days gone by, in the future days when we are already in glory and these unfold in the final and ultimate fulfillment, the promises and the principles and doctrines of the word of God pertain. It is a spiritual struggle. This dragon is not just trying to conquer the world so that he can have economic success, riches, glory, and power.

It's spiritual. That is why as we pick up our study, he opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, chapter 13, verse six. This is a shadow, a pale reflection, if you will, of a spiritual conflict.

The reason the dragon stands on the sands of the beach and calls forth and engineers and enables and empowers this first beast is part of his opposition to the God of glory. God almighty, our God and father, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one that the Lord Jesus died to bring us into relationship with. You come to the father through me, Jesus said.

I'm the way, I'm the truth, and I'm the life. Geopolitics is one thing. Who's attacking whom? Where's the territory? What are the weapons? What are the movements? What are the strategies? What are the goals and objectives? For us, we never wanna lose sight of the fact that this is a reflection in material, physical terms of a spiritual struggle.

You are engaged. I am engaged. We are engaged in the spiritual equivalent of this struggle every day.

It defines us as believers in the Lord Jesus. And to understand the nature of the opposition and the provision of God that sometimes preserves and takes us into the wilderness. We are in the

cleft of the rock and covered there with his hand.

He who abides in the secret place, abides in the shadow of the Almighty, he's my rock. He protects me from the snare of the fowler and so on. This is the preserving side of God's plan and purpose for us.

There are other times where in the larger spiritual strategy, he will allow us to be in the cleft allow us to be opposed, attacked, and seemingly overcome. That's what we see in verse seven. It is granted to this beast to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

It was granted. This is a part of God's larger plan. Talked about this before those of you that have ever dallied with chess or have played it to any level.

One of the most well-known strategies in chess is the gambit, G-A-M-B-I-T, a gambit. This is where you are deploying your pieces. You're doing offense and defense at the same time.

You don't wanna leave your king unprotected and get checkmated. You want to make progress and checkmate the other guy. And you wanna take control of the center of the board.

You wanna watch your diagonals and your files and so on and try to prevent bishops and rooks from taking control of areas of the board and limiting your movements. But ultimately at some point, you begin to exchange pieces. And so you can move a piece out there.

And if you put it out there and it is seemingly exposed and your opponent says, I can take that piece, I will remove that piece from the board and this will give me an advantage. But if you have thought a few moves further ahead than your opponent, by taking that piece, you now have your opponent's flank exposed. You have opened up an avenue of attack.

And by sacrificing a piece, you gain an advantage that will ultimately lead to victory. That's the gambit. There are times when God will sacrifice a piece, most obviously the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

In other cases, these are the martyred saints. His two witnesses are gonna accomplish their testimony and then it will be given to their enemies to overcome them. And they will be an example of a short-term apparent victory for three and a half days.

Their bodies will lie unburied. It will be Christmas. People are gonna wrap gifts and exchange them.

They are so happy that these two individuals are off the scene. It's a gambit. And when God raises them as he raised the Lord Jesus, these witnesses that have drunk the cup of the Lord Jesus and been baptized with his baptism are going to be raised, are going to be vindicated.

And this seemingly total defeat turns into victory. Death is not the end. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory.

Death, where's your sting? Grave, where is your victory? It's gone because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not despair if there are times when instead of being delivered and being given a wonderful answer that results in additional productivity and peace, we have something that looks like a setback, looks like a defeat. It looks like the bad guys win.

It looks like circumstance and opposition have overcome us. Believers who are faithful to God, not requiring him to do their bidding and achieve what we would consider to be a wonderful goal and objective, but let God determine the goals and objectives. And if we need to be the piece that is put out there and taken, just remember, God's gonna set up a whole fresh board.

All of those pieces that get taken in chess, when the game is over, you set them back up, they're right back on the board again. We don't crush them with a hammer and they're never to be seen again. But we have to trust.

This is the ultimate test of faith. Be faithful unto death. This doesn't have to be physical death.

It can also be the end of employment, the end of association, the end of relationship, the end of good health, the end of whatever it may be. There are opportunities and potentials that you could say, well, that has died. That is no longer open to me.

I think about this every time conflict breaks out and I realize that my opportunities as a well-trained military individual are dead. There is no circumstance, there is no occasion where they're ever gonna say, Sam, put on a uniform, grab your gear, we need you to enter the conflict. There was a time when that was a potential and there was a time when it actually happened and I was able to serve.

That by time and circumstance is over, it is dead. And whatever enthusiasm, however much fervor, however well I think I could do, that opportunity no longer exists. And I look elsewhere for what God would have me do and hopefully I can be even more effective in the potentials that remain.

Anytime we look and say, well, I have suffered a loss, that particular avenue is closed and finished. Death, of course, closing off pretty much all avenues in this life, but it is put for any potential that is suddenly no longer available to us or gradually no longer available to us. We trust God that if He allows us to be overcome, to be limited, to be cut off from some potential, He has another purpose and we trust Him and we want to be ready to serve, ready to fulfill whatever role we now are fitted for and called to and purposed and arranged and equipped and provided to accomplish.

God knows what He's doing. We can be disappointed, we can be discouraged, we can even be tempted to be depressed and think it's all over now. Not so.

Look at these who are in the mix, in the conflict. Why are they targeted by this dragon from the sea? He is blaspheming, he is opposing God. Blasphemy, blasphemy, blasphemy, four times we've seen that.

He is absolutely anti-God and anti-people of God and he is anti-Christ, anti the people who are affiliated, associated, who are believers. That's us and that's now. There are spiritual forces, the prince of the power of the air, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age are targeting you and targeting me.

There are times and places where we feel like we've suffered a massive defeat, but it is given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. This is a part of the plan and purpose of God. This is going to be the basis for the ultimate final judgment of this beast.

All that it represents, everyone who participates, the devil who enables and inspires are going to be condemned on the basis of this overt action. And those who are seemingly the victims are going to be raised, glorified, blessed, given an inheritance that will never end. A momentary light affliction working an eternal weight of glory.

This is the pattern throughout history. This pertains to us now. It is given material form in this future time.

Authority was given to him over every tribe, people, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him. That is all whose names have not been written in the book of life of the lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.

This is the first mention of the book of life in this portion of Revelation. And the fact that these names are written, we will do a brief review of the book of life upcoming, but I wanna move forward this morning. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

In case you think that this was written by a different person, remember Revelation 2 and 3, seven times, he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. This is still being addressed. This is just a short form of the same exhortation.

And it doesn't say if you happen to live in the final seven years of the age of Israel, pay attention. If you have an ear and you've made it to chapter 13, pay attention. There are certain things that are said in this book that sort of step back and the play is taking place on the stage or on the screen.

And then someone turns to the audience and breaks the fourth wall and talks to you personally and says, are you getting this? This is one of those occasions. Do you and I hear and understand what we are being told here? And that's what this verse nine is for. If anyone has an ear to hear, pay attention.

This is us. This is for now. This is for your life and my life.

There are times when you are seemingly overcome by circumstance, by opposition. This is not personal failure. I'm overcome by my fallen nature.

That's a different scenario. There are other dynamics and remedies for that. This is when the

world seems to prevail.

The guy you think is going to be the best office holder for your senator, your congressman, your governor, your president gets defeated and a rascal comes in. We've got elections coming up here and it could be that the entire momentum and direction of our government will radically change before Christmas, Groundhog Day. This could be an entirely different country.

Are you discouraged or do you understand that there are times when God will allow a victory in the short term for the bad guys because it's going to seal their fate? God is in control and God's got it. So he that has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity.

This victory is going to be reversed. And the one who is taking prisoners is going to be taken prisoner. The one 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 faith of the saints. Once again, are you a saint? Yes.

Are we required to have both faith and patience? This is the durability. This is what makes us last. This is what characterizes those who are truly in love with God and his word and his son.

I don't know exactly why God is allowing this particular set of circumstances. It seems like evil has prevailed. Those who blaspheme and oppose have the upper hand.

Though he slay me, Job says, yet will I trust him. And the patience of Job has literally become proverbial, hasn't it? Faith and patience. Job, at the end of the book, is vindicated.

He offers sacrifices on behalf of the three friends who endeavored to understand what God was doing, endeavored to make application of what they understood, but fell short. Job, at the end, says, Lord, I still don't understand what you're doing, but I shut my mouth. I've got nothing more to say.

Thy will be done. Job, at the end of the book, if you remember, doesn't say, oh, now I get it. You have persuaded me that your strategy is good.

He says, it was wrong of me to question you. I should just have faith and patience. And we'll understand it by and by.

And when he comes to that point of acknowledging that God knows what he's doing and his ways are higher than our ways, and we don't have to understand everything, we don't have to parse every cause and effect, we trust God, Job functions as a priest for those who are still trying to map cause and effect. And well, God did this for this reason, and he did that for that reason. It's wonderful to understand as much as we can.

And the three friends are wonderful believers, and they have many great and valid and truthful things to say. It is in the application where they fall short and where they enter into sin, because they end up imputing sin to a fellow believer where it doesn't belong. They impute sin

to Job.

This is the sin for which Job will offer sacrifice to restore these three men to fellowship and function before the Lord. And of course, never forget the fourth friend. That's one of the more amazingly unexpected things I've ever come across in the word of God is Elihu, for whom Job does not offer sacrifice at the end.

That was an amazing part of the study. Here is the patience and faith of the saints. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

We were talking about this on the break. It is so important for us to apply what we are learning from Revelation. And we have that opportunity.

So now, verse 11, then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He has two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. Two horns like the lamb.

What lamb have we seen prominently in this book? He's going to have the appearance of being in harmony with and a reflection of a savior, the Christ, the lamb, but he speaks like a dragon, the dragon. We've only seen one dragon. We know who he is.

He's Satan, the devil, the serpent, the deceiver. So he's going to speak. 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.

Once again, this is a signature identification of the first beast. Deadly wound is healed. It is inflicted on one of the heads, but it is apparently the prominent one.

And we saw this last time, Zechariah 11, 17, very fascinating idea that the mark that we're going to see is associated with this deadly wound that is healed. But this is your pseudo figure. We've seen the counterfeit of God the Father in the dragon himself, Satan, who wants to be God in his own way and in his own right and in his own realm.

And the first beast is raised up. And this is the false Christ, the incarnation of the invisible seven-headed, 10-horned dragon, the physical manifestation. This is his Christ raising up out of the sea.

Now out of the land comes this second beast that is a counterfeit Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do? The Lord Jesus said, he will not speak from himself. He will take of the things of me and will communicate them to you.

He will lead you into all truth. When the comforter comes, he will encourage you in your faith. This is the false Holy Spirit, exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.

The earth dwellers, as we have seen, are a constant theme all the way through. Too much in this world, defined by their connection to this world and their associations and their goals and

priorities in the earth. Earth dwellers, people who think this earth and this life is all there is, these are your secular humanist, materialist, atheist, evolutionist people.

Everything is molecules. Everything is science. And they will be won over by this messaging from this beast from the earth.

You get the idea that as God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, the devil is going to form this second beast out of the earth. One comes out of the sea, one comes out of the earth. He performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

When Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh, throw down the rods, they turn into snakes, pick them up, they turn into rods again. The magicians in Egypt reproduce this miracle. It could have been sleight of hand, it could have been a mechanical trick, it could also have been a manifestation of demonic power.

Demons do have power to move around materiality. There are poltergeists, there are in Gospel of Muthos, demons, poltergeists move physical objects around. In Gospel of Muthos, they can use the vocal cords of humans and speak, these that peep and mutter and so on.

They're well-known in Scripture. And there is a limited ability to interact with the physical world on the part of these demonic minions of Satan. And this one has all of the authority that Satan gave to the first beast and fire from heaven is called down.

This is manipulation of the physical world by Satan and Satan's created Holy Spirit beast. So mimicking what the two witnesses were able to do, they call down fire from heaven, I can do that too. If you were impressed by the two witnesses, well, that's not unique, that's not only possible by someone who represents God.

Here is my version of fire from heaven. Do not be surprised when secular humanism or demonically inspired alternate views of the world are able to explain, convince, oh look, I made life quote unquote in a test tube. I can do anything that you say your God can do.

So this goes, you can see reflections of this even in the temptations of Christ. So makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 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.

Notice this fatal wound, this lethal wound that is healed, that we saw perhaps foreshadowed and described back in Zechariah. Now this isn't he gets a disease, it is a sword wound. He is struck with the edge of the sword.

This is a perpetration of violence of some sort. In the modern day, this could be any military weapon, this could be any lethal attack on a physical body or entity. But we find out here for the first time that this fatal wound that was healed was inflicted by a sword.

Beast was wounded by the sword and lived. He is granted power to give breath to the image of the beast. So notice we've got the beast from the sea.

And it seems to be an invisible entity. Otherwise you wouldn't need to make an image of it that can be seen. There is an emphasis that begins to develop here on appearance, appearance.

So he makes a fire come down from heaven in verse 13, on the earth in the sight of men. And this is, seems to be something new. Now there is a visible sign where previous to this, the opposition to the saints and the blasphemy and the worship, this is all in something of the immaterial realm.

It seems to be an idea or a philosophy or a collection of beliefs that comes to the fore. It doesn't have embodiment yet. So this beast that comes out of the sea at the behest of Satan, and that is a reflection of him, we find out now isn't actually visible.

It seems to be in the realm of ideas. You think about the rise of socialism. You think about the rise of Islam as a religious belief.

You think about the philosophies that pertain relative to secular humanism, to evolution that spreads beyond the biological world, even to other aspects and scientific disciplines. It's all about evolution, but it doesn't have a material form and shape. It is a persuasion.

It has as much force or more than something that might be visible, but it is now going to become embodied with the rise of the second beast. Now we have signs that are done in the sight of men, verse 13. He deceives those who dwell on the earth by these signs which he has granted to do in the sight of the beast.

In the sight of the first beast, in the realm of this persuasion, this philosophy, this political agenda, now there is material execution of it in a way that is seen, that can be caught on camera. On the earth, 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. Need to make an image because the beast itself is not tangible and visible.

So make an image. He was granted 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. I think this could easily be technology.

If you make an image, you make a material representation of something that is immaterial and invisible. Dagon is an invisible God, you make an image of him. Baal is an invisible storm God, you make an image.

Molech is invisible, you make an image. Who is it that brought us out of Egypt? He's invisible, let's make a golden calf and make him visible, and then we will worship the image instead of the actual God. This was Aaron's mistake.

Aaron, the priest of God, the first high priest Israel ever had is the manufacturer of the golden calf. It's miraculous that he survived that to go on and be fitted out with the breastplate and the Urim and Thummim and so on, because he perpetrates the first major instance of idolatry in Israel. But he is repentant, he is redeemed.

It tells you how far we can recover by God's grace. But this is given some material embodiment. I personally think that if this were to happen anytime soon, this could be the employment of our current communication technologies, our computerized social media, artificial intelligence and so on, can be co-opted, can be employed, can be implemented to give embodiment and actionality, agency, if you will, actionality is a word I just now made up, agency to make things happen.

And of course, this is what our information technology does now. So, gives breath to the image, gives life, we have the very similitude of life even now. You have agentic AI that has the appearance of being sentient, has the appearance of being aware, seems to understand what you are saying, seems to sympathize and empathize and to respond in very human terms and ways.

It is programmed to do so. There is no actual mind, grasp, understanding or sentience involved, but it is the very similitude. We have that now and the second beast hasn't appeared.

What's going to happen when life and breath are given to something like this? If time goes on very much longer, there will be actual robots walking around, powered by AI, serving as butlers and so on. You could have a large version of this that is piped into everything the internet knows and everything that agentic AI can feed into it. And it can be the very similitude of life.

This is the counterfeit Adam. God breathed into Adam's nostrils, the breath of life and he became a living soul. Now, this neshama will be counterfeited and the Holy Spirit equivalent is going to breathe life into this created image.

It is manufactured by human hands. They make the image at the behest of the second beast in the service of the first beast, all of which is in the service of the great dragon, Satan. So he gives breath to the image of the beast, verse 15, that the image of the beast should speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

You can find and punish those who do not comply. Only in the last few decades have we had the ability to locate and punish someone who fits a certain criterion with cameras everywhere, facial recognition, digital footprints, social media profiles, how easy it is to find someone. It is almost impossible to move in the world today without leaving some sort of footprint that can be tracked, traced.

You can be found, you can be brought to accountability for real or imagined situations. Those who do not worship the image of the beast, what does it mean to worship? Worship means obeisance. Think about the devil demanding from the Lord Jesus, all of the kingdoms of the

earth will be yours if you will fall down and worship me.

What would that worship look like? What was the devil tempting the Lord Jesus to do? To decide that, well, he's actually the creator of the universe, he's actually the one who can grant wishes and answer prayers. What does it mean if the Lord Jesus had failed the test and had worshiped Satan? What does that look like? Comply with my wishes, perform my will instead of your own. When the Lord Jesus worships his father, not my will, but thine be done.

If he had had that attitude and been willing to trade away, pleasing his father for the kingdoms of the world without the cross, he would have placed himself under the authority of Satan. To place yourself under the authority in this scenario is to worship. There are those who will see that there is an immoral regime that demands that you inform on your neighbors, that you out Christians, that you betray your relatives for their faith.

This has already happened in history, it is happening now, and it will happen exponentially in this time. So do you respond and submit to this authority that is immoral and opposed to God, has blasphemous objectives, wants to put itself in the place of God, serve me, don't serve him, that is worship. So just to be clear, they worship the image of the beast.

This is the immediate manifestation of the invisible entity, thinking, strategy, plans and purposes of Satan and this non-visible entity that is going to take visible form through a manufactured presence. And now, instead of worshiping the invisible entity that we saw up above in verse eight, all who dwell on the earth worship the invisible entity. You start with winning their hearts and minds, then you bring it down to physical compliance.

So they worship the abstraction in verse eight. They are now worshiping the image in verse 15 and 16. Causes all, small, great, rich, poor, free and slave to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.

And it's, again, I think it's difficult to not think about Zechariah 11, 17, once you see it, that this shepherd for fools is struck evidently with a sword and the right eye and the right arm are withered. And so those, this, you think of the counterfeit. In Christianity, people who want to have an emblem of their faith wear a cross.

I won't go into the abuse of that idea, but if you have a cross, people say, well, you must be at least sympathetic to Christianity if not actually a Christian. This is going to be associated. This wound that is healed is going to be associated with the beast and the image of the beast.

And so if you are worshiping Him in sympathy with Him, supporting Him, and following His will and function, you have this mark. Yeah, I've got a little, some sort of representation. Could just be a little tattoo.

Could be a chip. I'm sort of off that idea now. Chips are old fashioned.

This is like saying everyone's gonna play cassettes in the time of the end. Well, you know,

they've come and gone. CDs have come and gone.

Chips have already started to go. You can do a lot just with a barcode, with a QR code. And this could just be a little pattern that is readable.

It could be something we haven't yet seen. As an aside, the development that is upcoming and something to watch in terms of a quantum leap forward in information technology, computer technology, this is going to transform the internet. It is going to accelerate exponentially.

Artificial intelligence is optical computing. They've reached the limits of what you can do with silicon chips and electrons passing through wires. Computing is going to shift in the near future.

This could be in production because they don't have to change the factories. They can start making these with the existing infrastructure. And it's gonna change from electrons to photons.

Orders of magnitude faster, more powerful, less energy. All of these solar farms they're building, all of the, we need 10 nuclear power plants to power these vast farms for AI computing is gonna go by the wayside. Mark my words, anybody that's investing in that stuff needs to pull their money and either conserve it or don't put it into power for AI because that's going away.

As early as 2028, they expect to have servers powered by optical GPUs in production, in service. And they draw a tiny fraction. They don't have the heat.

You don't have the water cooling requirements. You don't have the vast power plant requirements. These solar farms they're putting in will have to be put to other uses.

But this is going to create a computer environment that is unlike what you see now. It is the difference between wired telephone hanging on your wall and the iPhone. It is that order of magnitude of change.

It is coming. You don't have to fear it, but don't be surprised by it. And I think it is going to undergird much of what we are seeing here.

Well, I've run a little bit over this morning. I wanted to get through this second beast. Let's just look at the last two verses.

No one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Three different options. Do you want to insert, swipe or tap your credit card? You got three different ways to implement the very same technology.

That's what this is. Three different forms. Depends on the part of the world.

Depends on the existing infrastructure. Whatever it is, it all feeds into the same system. Here is wisdom.

Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast. It is the number of a man. His number is 666, maybe.

This is what we will pick up on Wednesday. This is the heart and soul of what everybody who gets their adrenaline pumping in prophecy wants to get to is the beast, the mark of the beast. That's where we are.

That's where we'll pick up on Wednesday. But in conclusion, who are we? Why are we here? Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. If God be for us, who can be against us? It is all a matter of ensuring that we qualify ourselves to receive the grace and the provision of God.

The promises are conditional. Meet the conditions and relax. We are held in God's hands and it makes observing the unfolding and the consummation of history exciting to watch.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and sound mind, sobriety, self-control, standing over our feet, well-balanced, ready to implement the full armor of God in defense and in offense. The sword of the spirit is the word of God. The power of God comes into our lives through the word and the spirit.

Cultivate those. We are in the cleft of the rock. We're in the shadow of the almighty.

Don't have to worry about the perilous pestilence. Psalm 91. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for your promises. Thank you for the peace we have in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank you for him, for his incredible work on our behalf, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, solving the problem of sin, bringing us into relationship with you, giving us a bright hope, a great anticipation of the future, both in this life and in the life to come.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will make us aware of the reality of the potential that we have in these areas and that we can grow in grace and knowledge. We can be fruitful and be ready for service and function now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.