

Rev 26-03-11a

Greetings, this is the 11th of March, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation. We're in chapter 13, and tonight we will look at the famous, infamous mark of the beast.

This is the means of identification, so it is thought, and we will see what there is to be said and known and applied as we look at this portion of the chapter. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for this time of spiritual nourishment and encouragement.

We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit. We thank you for the power that comes into our lives, the understanding of our purpose and our function in this life, all of which comes to us from relationship to you through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him.

We thank you for his merciful and loving work on our behalf and his continuing ministry of intercession and representation, and we pray tonight that our time of study will prepare us for service and function now and in the ages to come, that we will be ready for his return and prepared for every good work in the time that remains to us in this life and all of that in the next. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Let's quickly survey what we have seen in Revelation chapter 13.

I'm not going to read every word, just hit the highlights. The dragon stands on the sand of the sea. He seems to initiate this beast that rises out of the sea that is in his image and likeness, seven heads, 10 horns, and on his heads, a blasphemous name.

You might put a little asterisk next to the blasphemous name. This chapter is going to begin and end with this blasphemous name. It's not just a name, it's a blasphemous name.

One of the clues that's often overlooked when you get to the final verse in this chapter is the first verse in the chapter. So the beast is like a leopard, a bear, a lion, has power, throne, and great authority. These things somewhat line up and correspond.

We saw the corollary back in Daniel chapter seven. One of the heads mortally wounded, deadly wound is healed. The world marvels and follows the beast.

The marveling seems to be not only its formidable appearance and characteristics, but this particular coming back from a seemingly fatal wound somehow astonishes and impresses the world and they admire and follow him as a result. And then in verse four, they move from marveling and following to worshiping. The dragon who gives authority to the beast.

So the beast who is the fullness of the dragon in bodily form, if you will, is led to worship the entity, the invisible entity, the dragon who has given rise and shape, authority, and so on to this earthly manifestation. They worship the dragon who gave authority to the beast and they worship the beast. Not unlike, you can hardly help but see the parallels and the counterfeiting

of Christian worship where the unholy trinity is made to mirror and to, in a pale way, reflect God the Father, God the Son here, who is able to make war with the beast, who is like him.

He's given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Another instance of blasphemy. Another reference to his mouth.

In verse two, he has a mouth like the mouth of a lion. When a lion roars, everyone pays attention. There used to be an investment firm that said, when these people talk, everyone listens.

When the beast opens his mouth, everyone is going to pay attention. Speaking great things and blasphemies, and he is given authority to continue for 42 months. You have a textual variant that says, make war, continue is the better text.

This is the space in which he is going to maneuver. God gives Satan space to operate. Could have removed Satan during the first advent of the Lord Jesus.

Instead, allows Satan to take him into the wilderness, actually to overtake him in the wilderness where the spirit led him, where the purpose was to be tested by Satan. And other examples come quickly to mind, Job and elsewhere. So verse six, he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

God in heaven, the tabernacle, which represents his presence on earth and is the place of meeting, the place of encounter, the place to establish and express relationship with God on earth. Then those who have done so in the past and are in heaven, both humans who fall under that particular description and the unfallen angels, those who dwell in heaven. There are two civilizations, two classifications of creature, if you will, angelic and human, who given the content of the preceding 12 chapters, we know are before the throne and elsewhere in the heavenly realms.

It's granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. It is granted, it is given, it is granted, it is given. This language both explicitly and implicitly tells us that it is God who is allowing and sponsoring this particular set of events and the arrival and the sway and influence of the dragon and his doppelganger, his creation, the beast.

God allows this, it is given. Some of these things are given to the earthly beast by the dragon, authority of throne and so on. Other things are, especially in terms of time and non-judicial intervention are granted by God.

So it is granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. This is not for the entire time. If he started out on day one with war, it would be a little bit complicated going back to verse four, who is like the beast who is able to make war with him.

If he's going to war against the saints, then there's a bit of tension between those verses, but there will come a point where it is granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome

them. If he attacks them, overcomes them, then he's not at war for the entire space of time. This seems to happen rather quickly.

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. We are left to speculate at this point on the nature and extent of this book. It is going to be described later.

John does not give us a description at this point. He figures we know the source of life is God the father through the lamb as it had been slain. The celebratory and worshipful expressions in preceding chapters have ascribed honor, glory, and so on to the lamb for redeeming and rescuing those who now dwell in heaven and his promise to those who are martyred, whose souls await recompense and divine judgment upon those who slew them.

The ones we have just seen that are defeated are in that category as well. But there are names that are written in the book of life of the lamb slain, the lamb as it had been slain. And it is a question that people raise and you can see it here when you look at verse eight.

Are the names written in the book from the foundation of the world? This is Calvinist reformed theology view. God wrote your name in the book of life before you were ever born, before you ever made a decision. Your name was already entered.

The elect are known foreknown by God before the world was ever created. You're already going to be saved. There's nothing you can do about it.

That is not what this verse means. That is not what John intended. It isn't what the Holy Spirit intends.

It is not factual. Looking at this carefully, especially if you understand a little bit of Greek grammar, it is the lamb whose redeeming, atoning, sanctifying death was woven into God's plan and purpose before the world came into being. The Lord Jesus participated in the creation of this earth, John chapter one, without him, nothing was made that was made, knowing that there would come a point where he would enter this world, take on human form and suffer death on behalf of all of us.

This was the plan from the beginning. God wasn't surprised when Adam and Eve fell in the garden. It was known ahead of time.

And the atoning work of Christ was fixed in the plans and purposes of God before the foundation of the world. So you can circle lamb slain and draw a line to before the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear.

This is a reminder that the overcoming that is spoken of here by the beast is not the overcoming that counts. Where's the last time you heard, he that has an ear to hear, let him hear. Every letter in chapter two and three, this is what the spirit says to the churches, to him that overcomes, I will grant.

He that has an ear to hear, let him hear. This is a reminder to think back. It is sobering.

It may be shocking. It may be a cause for dismay, disappointment, discouragement, worry, confusion to see that the dragon is going to overcome God's saints and kill them. He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.

Don't we see this so many times in the New Testament? There will be a little quote and it's, they used to say in Latin, op sit or cf, confer, go see, go find the reference and read the full text of what is being quickly footnoted here, quickly referred to. He that has an ear to hear, let him hear comes right after the dragon overcoming the saints. It is the saints who are faithful and obedient that will overcome.

And will enter into eternal life and will not be harmed by the second death. We'll have the white stone, the new name, pillar in the temple, rule with a rod of iron, all of those other promises. That's why verse nine is here.

Be not deceived. Be not discouraged. Let no one trouble you.

Let not your heart be troubled. Remember, if you have an ear to hear, what you have already heard. Verse 10, and I would put out beside verse nine, see chapters two and three and circle the word in the preceding verse, overcome, actually in verse seven.

It is granted for him to overcome them. This is a temporary overcoming. Our overcoming is permanent and so on.

You get the point there. Then in verse 10, he who leads into captivity shall go into captivity. He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.

Here's the patience and the faith of the saints. This is an expansion on what we just talked about. There may be those who can kill the body.

We don't fear them. We fear God who has power over them and can take them and kill their body and their soul in the lake of fire. Play the long game, take the long view, look at the ultimate resolution that is accomplished by God himself.

So verses nine and 10 are an encouragement and the application for us is anything that happens to us in this life that qualifies as a setback, a hardship, a difficulty, a trial is short term. Paul calls it momentary light affliction in Romans that is working for us an eternal weight of glory. Momentary setback, eternal weight of glory that is a direct fruit and result of faith and patience on the part of the saints.

These saints in verse 10, you can circle that and go right back up to verse seven. Saints are overcome in verse seven, but there's patience and faith on the part of those saints and they will ultimately overcome. This brings us to verse 11, another beast.

And this is the third member of this unholy triumvirate with a correspondence to the Holy

Spirit, counterfeit Holy Spirit, if you will. Horns like a lamb trying to adopt the appearance of the lamb, this is quite parallel to a wolf in sheep's clothing, representing himself somehow as bringing the lamb before the attention of people, invoking the authority of the lamb. Remember, Jesus said, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

I will send you another comforter. He will lead you into truth. He will take of the things of me and communicate them to you.

Well, this second beast purports to be an entity that has the authority of Jesus Christ, horns like a lamb. But what he says is not from Christ, it's from the dragon. Master deception, people will be taken in because they did not like to receive a knowledge of the truth.

So important for us to never lose our enthusiasm, our hunger, our quest, our appreciation for the truth of God. To lose it is to be fooled into accepting Twinkies, that which is momentarily attractive and tasty, but isn't from God and isn't good for us. I've often reflected on my perception of where fellow pastors, fellow communicators of the word of God, it seems like many of us started out in my particular generation around the same time.

A lot of us had the same background and training. And along the way, my perception, they may be looking at me and perceiving me in the same way, but it seems to me that in one way or another, they have become casualties. And I ask myself, how can you depart from the basic truths of the faith and end up where some, even some that I know well and have been dear to me in the past have ended up? It seems tragic to me.

And the one common denominator that I can find, and I am not trying to sharpshoot them, I am trying to administer preventative measures to myself. I don't want to make the same mistake someone else made because I failed to pay attention. Where did they go wrong? I think it is in becoming casual or beginning to take for granted the word of God and losing that sense of absolute dependence and craving to understand God's character, his love for us, his plan for us, his purposes to enter into the things that our heavenly father values and is accomplishing.

I don't want to just look at where he's at work and try to join him in his work. I want to understand his thoughts and see his glory revealed. Remember when Moses is on the mountain and he says, Lord, show me your glory.

We should all want that. And I think when you lose it, if you start getting occupied with more mundane things or begin to take that for granted, take the word of God for granted, the availability of it for granted, it is the first step off the narrow road and you can end up in a completely different place. It's the only common denominator I have observed.

And I ask God pretty much every time I pray, don't let me outlive my love for you, for your word, for your son, for the presence and power of your spirit, for the potentials and opportunities that you have given me and given us in this time. Unparalleled access to the word of God. What excuse do we have? I don't want to be here if I wind up getting fooled and fumble

away my inheritance, fumble away my opportunity to be useful and of service to God.

So when you read this section, look at what the dragon does. We have to be faithful unto death as these individuals are. They don't compromise, they don't cave, they don't go along to get along.

They are targets because they stand out as saints of God. Be faithful unto death if you want the crown of life. And many times it's just the death of distraction, entertainment, preoccupation with earthly temporal things.

This is something that we saw years ago when we studied Kohelet, Solomon's call to take the bigger view. Another beast, 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. We are reminded again that this is a faux crucifixion-like situation.

He performs great signs. Jesus said, if you don't believe me, believe the signs. They are done by the finger of God, the spirit of God.

Jesus said, I'm going to leave and you disciples of mine will do works even greater than I have done because it is in the power of the spirit. The Lord Jesus did not invoke the power of his divinity in his humanity. He was enabled and empowered by the spirit just as we are.

And when you see what he was able to do to accomplish his mission, the wonders that the Holy Spirit performs in our lives may not be miraculous sign healings, but they are every bit as much expressions of divine power, God's love for us and his enablement so that we can fulfill our function the way the Lord Jesus and the early apostles fulfilled theirs. This is a counterfeit. And by making these great signs, fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, this mimics Elijah on Mount Carmel.

It mimics the two witnesses who have testified in this same historical context and the world is aware of them. He may claim to be somehow involved in their mighty works and signs to deceive, because he does. He deceives those who dwell on the earth by these signs, which he's granted to do.

Notice once again, it is granted. God doesn't snuff these out. He doesn't send a big thunderstorm to quench the fire that this thing calls down.

He's granted to do in the sight of the beast. And this is the second time. There's so many things.

If you had a sack full of colored markers, you could mark all of the things that get repeated. This is the second time it says in the sight of the beast. He makes an image to the beast in verse 14, who is wounded by the sword and lived.

Second reference to this deadly wound that is healed. 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. This is a power of life and death.

We're gonna look at this a bit more fully momentarily, but notice so many things that are associated with our heavenly father, almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, are assumed, are taken into the reputation and the claims of this unholy trinity. So the image of the beast can speak and causes many who do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. Causes all small and great, rich and poor, free and slave to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.

What does this remind you of? Think Old Testament. Do you remember when God exhorted Israel to bind his word on their foreheads and on their hands? He meant this in spiritual terms. Have it be a part of your thinking, have it be a part of your actions.

Nail it to your doorposts was another indication. This is where the tradition of the mezuzah comes from. The phylacteries that were a literalization of what God meant to be a practice of thought and of action.

But here, there is an echo of the forehead and the hand involved. Receive the mark so 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. This may be and or there's some variance in the texts on whether or not the word or is there any one of the three or are these all more or less synonymous? I don't think it makes a big difference because here is wisdom.

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

Let's talk a little bit about this number, this very famous and oft spoken of number. Some manuscripts have this number as 616. And this has been known since the second century.

You've heard of Irenaeus, one of the quote unquote early church fathers. In the second century, which is the 100s, AD 100s, Irenaeus was aware that there was a variant and he talked about it. And he said, it is a copyist's error and that the true text is 666.

And the most common interpretation, and I think there's a lot of traction to it, is that this is a reference to gematria, which is the Hebrew practice of taking a name or a word spelled in Hebrew and then use the numerical values of those letters so that Aleph is one, Bet is two, Gimel is three, Dalet is four, and so on, and add them together to get a number. In the day in which this was written, by far the most prominent of the Caesars, fresh in the memory of those who would have received this letter, whether you subscribe to the notion that it was written in the AD 60s or the AD 90s, I'm of the latter persuasion. That being said, the gematria for Neron Caesar, Neron Caesar, if you render that name, Nero, Caesar, Nero, Nero, Caesar, into Hebrew and add up the letters, it is 666.

The 616 variant is infrequent, but the earliest copy of Revelation that we have, a papyrus fragment has the 616 variant. So it's P115, if you want to make a note. Papyrus 115 is the oldest

surviving fragment of Revelation, and it very clearly reads 616.

And it dates from anywhere in the late first century to early second century, and it is a reflection of what Irenaeus was familiar with. There were some notions that that was the number. If you use the Latin form of Nero's name, the only difference between Neron Caesar and the Latin version is it is Nero Caesar.

It's when you convert it to Hebrew, you take out the letter N, which has a value of 50. You can add this up if you know your Hebrew alphabet, but noon in Hebrew means 50. So if you take the noon off of the end of Nero, you add it up and it's 616.

In short, without going through all the agony of the pros and cons and the reasonability of it, the idea is that a copyist writing to an audience that was familiar with Latin and Nero's name in Latin, which was the lingua franca of the Roman world, would have been the Latin version. And so they said, to be sure you understand that this is Nero, I'm gonna say 616. I think the variant may exist and be known all this time to ensure that whichever way we take it, you end up with Nero, and there are reasons for that.

The preterists use this to say John was all about the Roman Empire as it existed in his day. He wrote during the reign of Nero and he didn't want Nero to know that his name was being invoked, unlike Cyrus in the Old Testament prophecies, where his name is given 100 years before he shows up, and he is impressed when the scribes come and show him his name in God's prophetic scriptures before he ever arrives on the scene. This would have been an artful dodger way of avoiding direct imperial scrutiny to say here's the number of his name, and those who are familiar with Hebrew gematria, you can't prove I was talking about Nero, but I really am.

I think that the notion that this is intended to be associated with Nero is valid. Looking at the history of Nero without going into his persecution of Christians, his burning of Rome and blaming it on the Christians, he really is the start of intense persecution outlawing Christianity because he is the only divine entity on earth. Nero really pushed the notion that the Caesar is divine and blasphemous names and so on.

However, as with so much of scripture, when we have talked about pattern, prophetic pattern, John the Baptist is Elijah if you recognize it. And Nero, I think, is intended here as a reference, but he does not exhaust the prophecy. He is someone who embodies the characteristics that are going to come to even fuller expression when the beast arrives.

So he is the archetype. He foreshadows in many ways. And if you want to understand the power, the domination, the death penalty and persecution for those who resist and will not say, you know, kurios kaisar, we say kurios yesu, and you die because you will not acknowledge the divinity of Caesar, this sets the pattern.

It invokes the weave that is gonna recur in an even more robust, fulsome and final form in the

time of the end. We have a lot more to say about this. We're gonna pause here and take our break, but is it Caesar or is it not? Yes, it is.

And yes, it is not. More when we come back from the break.