

FBS “When All of Hell Breaks Loose on Earth—The False Prophet & the Mark of the Beast”
Joel Breidenbaugh (Revelation 13:11-18) 3-22-15

Intro. As we continue our series on “When All of Hell Breaks Loose on the Earth,” today we look at the end of Revelation 13 & “The False Prophet & the Mark of the Beast.” When we think about the mark of the beast & the number 666, some people get overly concerned & wrapped up in it. One man went so far as to label certain elements of the beast (the Antichrist) in the future. He said “the way of the beast is route 666;” the area code of the beast is 666; “the gasoline of the beast is Philipps 666; “the retirement plan of the beast is 666k; the Australian number of the beast is 999” & more (see Hitchcock, *The End*, 332). I want you to understand up front: I won’t be able to give you all the answers on end-times issues, but there are some things I can help you with, so let’s look at the text together.

Theme: The work of the false prophet

Background: Chapters 12-14 seem to go together as a unit, introducing, in sequence for us, Satan’s work & persecution of Israel & the Church, summoning the Antichrist to do his work, aided now by the work of the false prophet.

➤ Because this passage is so misunderstood, let me walk you through it & then give you a couple of areas of application.

Explanation of the Text:

I. The beast from the land is Satan’s false prophet (13:11-15)

- He is called “false prophet” 3x in Revelation (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)—he is the final person in the unholy trinity (Satan, the dragon as a fake God the Father; the beast from the sea, the Antichrist as a fake Son of God; & the beast from the land, the false prophet, as a fake Holy Spirit of God)

A. He displays strength (13:11)

- The two horns symbolize strength, like the two-horned ram of Daniel 8:3
- “like a lamb” simply means he is deceptive, for he will not be meek & mild

B. He displays authority (13:11-12)

- He speaks like a dragon & has authority while in the presence of the Antichrist

Illus: Though the false prophet has authority, it only has it for a season & doesn’t have all authority. Much like the donkey in Aesop’s fable, who put on a lion’s skin & succeeded in terrifying his fellow animals until he had the poor judgment to undertake an impressive roar—the false prophet’s true colors will come out

C. He displays influence (13:12)

- He makes others worship the Antichrist

Illus: In ranching there’s a special animal known as the Judas goat used in herding animals. Named after Judas Iscariot, this goat is trained to mix with the sheep & lead them around, often into pens & onto trucks. One of the functions of this goat is to lead the unsuspecting sheep to the slaughterhouse (Hitchcock, 273)

D. He displays miracles (13:13-15)

- He seeks to counter the miracles of the 2 witnesses in chapter 11
- Just because miracles occur doesn’t mean they are necessarily of God—the Egyptian magicians Jannes & Jambres repeated some of the miracles done by Moses, but they served false gods (see Exodus 7:8-12; 2 Timothy 3:8)

Illus: Some health-wealth-prosperity preachers claim to heal the sick & raise the dead, but there is little evidence & even if solid evidence exists, one must still be careful of the message they share

- He is deceptive with his miracles, because those who dwell on the earth (unbelievers) follow him

Illus: You are familiar with different parodies—comedians making fun of a certain song or tune by incorporating new words (like Tim Hawkins’ “The Government Can”)—while parodies can be funny, the false prophet tries to parody the Holy Spirit & fire from heaven (like Pentecost) but it isn’t a laughing matter, because he will deceive many

II. The image of the Antichrist is probably computer-related (13:15-18)

A. It can speak (13:15)

- It may be robotic with its movements & the image may be placed in the new temple in Jerusalem, elsewhere referred to as the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15)—like the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3 to be worshiped or face execution

B. It affects buying & selling (13:16-17)

- People from all walks of life will be affected (small, great; rich, poor; free, slave)
- Some scholars underscore the word for “mark” at a tattoo or etching on the skin (like Ezekiel 9:4) while others say it could be placed under the skin (like a microchip, used in some pets to help restore them to their owners should they get lost)

Illus: Maybe the mark is a once-bitten apple worn as a wristwatch or as glasses!

- Whatever the mark is, it affects one’s ability to buy & sell & those who receive the mark are destined for eternal punishment (see 14:9-11)
- The right hand or forehead may be the least likely portions of the body to be covered

C. It is an unholy man (13:18)

- Thousands of speculations have been made about what the number 666 means and who it references. Some point to the 1st century Nero and others point to various popes. Still others point to Napoleon, Hitler, JFK, & much more.

Illus: The day after Barack Obama was elected President, the Pick 3 number in the Illinois lottery was 666, leading many to think we had just elected the Antichrist!

- I believe it is helpful to use gematria here, the study of letters symbolizing numbers. So in our English alphabet, A=1, B=2, C=3, J=10, K=20, L=30, S=100, T=200, Z=800. John wrote in Greek, which uses a different alphabet, but he often referenced Hebrew, still a different alphabet. Nearly everyone’s name has a different value in a different language, because of spelling differentiations & number of letters in that language.

Illus: After careful study of this number, I conclude it is the Anglicanized version of the Latinized version of the Greek of Rogers Chase, but I could be wrong

- The number at least refers to imperfection, because 7 is the number of perfection throughout this book & 6 falls short of it, just as imperfect man falls short of God
- I believe the reference is still future & therefore, is not known for now

Application of the Text:

I. Believe in miracles but trust in Jesus (13:13-14)

- Some people don’t put any stock in miracles, but God is still in business & can perform miracles whenever He wants to do so. Miracles can happen because God exists!
- As we have seen, however, miracles can be deceptive, so we must put all our trust in Jesus, who performed the greatest miracle in the history of the world by rising from the dead never to die again—so put your trust in Him, bank everything you have on Him

II. Beware of the dangers of technology (13:15-18)

- Notice what I did not say—I didn't say "stay away from technology"—I believe God has given man creative abilities, which include advancements in technology.
- What I said was "Beware of the dangers of technology"—I don't believe it is out of bounds to think technology will be used by the false prophet & Antichrist in the end
- Moreover, technology can be addictive & we can have our lives revolve around it—video games, Facebook & other forms of social media, music, movies & more
- Parents are wise to limit their kids' use of technology so they don't get sucked into the trap further & further

Conc. You may have seen the video online of the dad on a riding lawnmower who is sick & tired of his grown son sitting around & playing video games all day, so he puts them in a big pile in the yard & wakes his son up & tells him to go get a job as he runs over the video games spitting out broken parts everywhere—he didn't do it to be mean to his son, but to help his son re-focus in life & realize what is going to waste away.

Because Satan's deceptive devices continue to grow, the wise thing for you to do is trust in Jesus & grow in your commitment to Him. Don't let anything stand in your way of being fully obedient to Him. Turn from you sins & trust in Jesus. Follow Him in believer's baptism by immersion. Join with a Bible-teaching local church. Fellowship with other believers. Read the Bible & pray each day. Tell others about Jesus. Put password protection on your Internet & TV services (I encourage men to have their wives do it). Get rid of anything which pulls you away from your walk with the Lord. I don't tell you to do these things to be legalistic, but to help you live for the Lord by faith & faithfulness.