

Revelation Chapter 13 - John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called, "Consider the Alternative".
 - a) In this lesson, the relatively easy thing is to say this chapter deals with the antichrist, the famous number "666". We have visions of beasts and dragons. If those are the "easy" things to understand, wait until I explain the tough part. ☺
 - b) To me, the tough question to ask is, "How does this apply to my life today?" Let's face it, if you or I meet the antichrist, we would run the other way. ☺ I'm sure this lesson applies well to someone living through the Great Tribulation. Assuming most of us never have to live to see the antichrist, how does this chapter apply to us today? In other words, I want to get practical before we discuss "beasts and dragons".
2. With that said, let me explain what I mean by that title, "Consider the Alternative".
 - a) I have yet to meet one Christian who doesn't go through periods of doubts. Even if we don't doubt the existence of Jesus, we go through doubts about how seriously we need to take our faith. I find this is true during tragic times. We can easily blame God or say in disgust, "So that's the thanks I get for years of worship!" ☺ Remember we do not give our lives to Jesus for material benefits. If that were true, people would become Christians to get rich (or whatever) instead of giving gratitude for Jesus paying the price for our sins.
 - b) When I say "Consider the Alternative", Think about the alternative of walking away from Jesus. This may sound silly when things are going well. It is when the world is falling apart and you wonder where is God, that is a time to "consider the alternative". I'm not talking about losing one's salvation as much as I'm talking about not living in obedience to God's will for some time frame.
 - c) I bring this up because in this chapter we deal with "Satan's hour". What is key to understand is everything we read here is God-allowed. There are hints of that statement in this chapter. It is God saying in effect, "You don't want to live by my rules? Well then, let me give you people what you do want and see if you like it!" ☺
 - d) People who don't want to live by God's rules essentially want to do it "their way". It is to say in effect, "Yeah, I believe God exists, but I don't want to live by His rules. I believe my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds and God will judge me accordingly". That is probably Satan's greatest lie right there: That God judges on a curve and God will just accept one's faults. If that were true, we would never know if our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds. There is no assurance of salvation. Further, how can a perfect God simply "forgive" sins without there being some sort of punishment for that sin? If God just forgave, He would not be perfect in justice.
 - e) This chapter deals with the Antichrist. Personally, I don't see the guy denying God exists or putting down the God of the bible. People won't accept it. What I do see here is this guy saying, "All religions are right and all religions lead to God. As long as you're a good person, God will accept you just the way you are!" That has universal appeal. It tells people they can live however they want and still satisfy that deep down urge to be pleasing to God. People want world-peace without having to change their lifestyle. God gives people what they want by allowing Satan to work through this guy.
3. What we are going to see in this chapter is "Satan's Trinity".
 - a) Just as Christians believe in "the" Trinity, this chapter presents "a" trinity with Satan as the godhead, the antichrist as the "son of God" and a worship leader as the "Holy Spirit-role".
 - b) No, this group is not equal to God. It is a cheap substitute.
 - c) The first half of Chapter 13 deals with "Satan's son" which is the antichrist. The second half of Chapter 13 deals with "Satan's holy spirit" which is the worship leader of this trinity. Again, these 3 are not equal in any way to "the" Trinity. It is a cheap substitute.

- d) These two are not literally an offspring of Satan. A better way to think of them as being Satan-controlled human beings. When Judas betrayed Jesus, the bible says Satan entered Judas. (Ref.: Luke 22:3, John 13:27). The same principal applies here.
 - e) The point is, which gets back to the start of this lesson, is that Satan is "more than willing" to offer a substitute to those who don't want to turn from God.
 - f) God created us with a need to worship something. Satan himself is well aware of that need, and thus creates his own version of a promised Messiah as well as a worship leader.
4. Let me get back to my introduction: "Consider the Alternative":
- a) Let's suppose we do walk away from God in terms of our lifestyle. We might get smug and say, "Well, I know I won't go as far as worshipping the devil".
 - b) What it means to a Christian is Satan is more than willing to offer a substitute if we are willing to walk away from God. Satan's goal is to get as few people as possible to turn to God. With the believing Christian, Satan's goal is to make us an ineffective witness. Sometimes simple deceit is sufficient by offering an alternative lifestyle.
 - c) Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13 NIV). In the direct context, Jesus was talking about serving either God or money. Remember money is just a tool to buy things. The principal is everyone has a god in terms of one's all consuming passion. The question is whether one had to choose between money or God, which would you choose? If one truly has a love for God, worshipping (being consumed) with anything else will eventually make one miserable.
 - d) Many people wonder, "If I walk away from God for awhile, does that mean I can lose my salvation? It's a classical debate question. My view is people who know enough about God eventually become miserable when they walk away from God for a while. That is the principal behind Matthew 6:24. My view in those cases is those people, "deep down" know the truth of God and even though they are rebelling for the moment, when push comes to shove, they would choose God again.
 - e) My point here is even during such times, what God is teaching us is how miserable our lives become without Him. Sometimes the best thing a parent can do for a child is let them "mess up" and let them learn the hard way what they did wrong. God can and does do that with out lives as well. Remember confession is simply agreeing God is right and we are wrong and then asking God for help to change toward His way of doing things.
 - f) The point as it applies to Chapter 13 is God is telling the world in effect, "You don't want me? Terrific, let Me give you what you think you want and see how it works." That is what the antichrist is all about: It is about allowing Satan to offer his cheap substitute and letting the world collectively know what a wrong choice this is.
5. One more point and then I'll get started. Satan read Revelation. The book says Satan will lose in the end. Why would Satan go through the motions? ☺ If God says it is going to happen this way, wouldn't Satan want to avoid this scenario to begin with?
- a) As I like to state through these lessons on Revelation, a key is to understand Satan's motivation. The number of people in heaven is not infinite, but finite. If it is finite, there must be a last "x" person to get saved. Satan understands at that point he becomes the chief prisoner of hell, as predicted in Revelation and elsewhere. Satan's goal is to delay that "x" person from getting saved as long as possible. Dead people don't give their lives to Christ, so He attacks people. Persecuted Christians are ineffective witnesses for God.
 - b) Back in Chapter 12, Satan was kicked out of heaven. (Ref.: Rev. 12:9). Satan understood his time on earth is near the end. This is why some believe he develops the desperation of a cornered animal. It is his last gasp attempt to delay Jesus Second Coming. Thus, Satan organizes the events surrounding the Antichrist to get as many people as possible to turn from God and turn to Him. Maybe Satan thinks he can "beat the odds" and then does what is predicted about him in Revelation, thinking the outcome will be different.

- c) God knew in advance all of this was going to happen. Having Satan on the loose is a motivational tool to keep us close to God. The details of Revelation are for us to understand that despite Satan's best efforts to stop the inevitable, he will lose.
 - d) Which leads me back to the title, "Consider the alternative": During those moments when we are hurting and angry at God, consider the alternative! Look at what ultimately happens to those who decide to turn from God. Whether one believes the Great Tribulation is a single future event or a Christian-history-long tribulation, the application to the believer is the same: Consider the alternative if one turns away from God!
 - e) Gee, on that happy note, let's turn to Verse 1! ☺
6. Verse 1: And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea.
- a) Let's discuss where we left off in Chapter 12:
 - i) Chapter 12 was this strange vision about a pregnant woman, a dragon who wanted to devour the baby and the baby itself.
 - ii) Chapter 12 was in "signs". This was stated in Chapter 12, Verses 1 and 3.
 - iii) The child refers to Jesus Christ as Rev. 12:5 said this child is to rule all nations.
 - iv) The "women" was interpreted to be the Nation of Israel. It is not stated in the text, but that is a majority opinion of bible commentators (and myself).
 - v) The dragon was stated to be Satan in Chapter 12 Verse 9. This "dragon" (Satan) and his demonic forces were kicked out of heaven and are now on earth.
 - vi) The last part of the chapter is about how the dragon came to earth and "made war" with the rest of the child's offspring. This refers to Christians who are around when Satan is kicked out of heaven and is now on the earth.
 - vii) This leads to Chapter 13. We are still dealing with a vision John saw, beginning in Chapter 12. Verse 1 starts with a dragon. That same dragon is still Satan.
 - b) The first sentence said the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.
 - i) There is a debate among bible scholars whether the dragon stood on the shore of the sea or if John, the writer of Revelation stood on the shore of the sea. The King James Version says, "I (John) stood on the shore of the sea". Personally, I think however you translate this part is irrelevant. Either way, John is watching this vision and either way, Satan is a key player in focus, described as a dragon.
 - c) The word "beast" can literally mean a monster. The idea is that from God's perspective, whatever this is, or whoever it is, this is something terrible to mankind.
 - d) The next sentence is, "I (John, the writer of Revelation) saw a beast coming out of the sea".
 - i) Remember that Chapter 13 speaks of two separate "beasts".
 - a) The first beast is described in Chapter 13, Verses 1 to 8.
 - b) The second beast is described in Chapter 13, Verses 11 to 18.
 - c) The first beast comes out of the sea (Verse 1).
 - d) The second beast comes out of the earth (Verse 11).
 - ii) Whatever the "sea" means, the idea is it is different from the "earth" in Verse 11.
 - e) A debate question among bible scholars is what did John mean by the term "sea"?
 - i) If you read Revelation 11:7 and Revelation 17:8, it says this same beast comes out of the "Abyss". The Abyss is also translated "the bottomless pit". The idea is some "hell-like" holding tank where demonic beings are kept. Since Revelation Chapters 11 and 17 say this beast comes out of the bottomless pit, then some scholars believe "the sea" is another word-picture for this bottomless pit.
 - ii) There is another chapter in the bible that is very similar to Revelation 13: Daniel 7. In that chapter, Daniel saw four "beasts" rising out of the Great Sea (Daniel 7:2). The reason Daniel 7 is compared to Revelation 13 is that in both chapters, this beast is compared to a lion, a bear and a leopard. The point here is in Daniel 7, "The Great Sea" would refer to the Mediterranean Sea.

- iii) The idea is the Mediterranean Sea represents the world as John knew it. Think of the Roman Empire and that it ruled the world that surrounded that sea. The point of all of this is this "beast" does not come from Israel, but from "the world", or at least from the world as John knew it. This view is that the "sea", as mentioned in Revelation 13:1 refers to the "world" or at least the Gentile (non-Jewish) world.
 - iv) So, which is it? Does this antichrist come from some Abyss-hell-hole or from the "Gentile world"? The answer in a word-picture sense is both. The idea is this is a "terrible hell-like monster" that has a worldwide domination. The antichrist is hell-based as Satan enters him, but he is also what the "world" wants in a leader.
 - v) Remember this "beast" represents the antichrist. It also represents some world-wide government lead by the antichrist. We'll develop this more as we go. Just as a great king or emperor is associated with their kingdom, so is this antichrist.
 - f) OK, John, what is the point of all of this? Remember that the rise of the antichrist is all about "giving the world what they want". What the world (i.e., nonbelievers) want is world peace, but at the same time, without having to change one's lifestyle in order to get that peace. From God's perspective, the antichrist sets up a worldwide government that does, for a period of time, bring world peace and tells people what they want to here. In many word-picture ways, this is "from hell" and at the same time, it is a "world-based" system as opposed to a true-God based system.
 - g) The real bad news of course, is that we are still on Verse 1. ☺
7. Verse 1 (cont.): He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.
- a) The first word is "he". The "he" refers to this beast that rose out of the sea.
 - b) Next, let's discuss the ten crowned horns and the seven heads. The good news about this sentence is the bible defines the horns and heads in Chapter 17:
 - i) "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour as kings along with the beast". (Revelation 17:12, NIV)
 - a) This means the ten "horns" are ten "assistants" to the antichrist.
 - ii) "The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. (Revelation 17:9-10, NIV)
 - iii) Revelation 17 says the "seven heads" represent seven hills. Rome was and is known as the "city on seven hills", which may be John's "code name" for Rome.
 - iv) This verse mentions seven kings. Revelation 17:10 states that "five kings have fallen (past tense), one is (present tense to John) and one is not yet (future)".
 - v) As I've stated in the last lesson, there were five great empires that ruled over Israel in past tense to John, one great empire in present time to John (Roman Empire) and there will be one future, that scholars call "A Revised Roman (like) Empire".
 - c) In the last lesson of Chapter 12, we read that the "dragon" had seven heads and ten horns. Here in Chapter 13, we read of the "beast" with the same seven heads and ten horns.
 - i) The idea is the dragon represents Satan as stated in Revelation 12:9. Satan is the one who gives his power to this "beast". Therefore, it would be logical that this beast represents Satan in all of his power. Their word pictures are similar.
 - ii) If you recall from the introduction, this chapter forms the "unholy trinity", or Satan's cheap substitute for God. Just as Jesus resembled the Father in every way, it would be logical that the antichrist is Satan "manifested in the flesh". My point is that the "seven heads and ten horns" applies to both Satan and this "beast".
 - iii) Back to the ten horns, Revelation 17:12 says they are "ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast." The idea is that when this antichrist comes to power, he has 10 leaders that are under him. The number "ten" is also associated with human perfection (i.e., ten fingers, ten toes). It is the antichrist ruling "humanity".

- d) Let's put this all together and then mercifully move on to Verse 2. ☺
 - i) John, the writer of Revelation saw this vision of a beast rising out of the sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns.
 - ii) This "beast" is "the" antichrist. The word antichrist is not used in this chapter, but is used in John's other writings to describe the same guy. This will become clearer in the next set of verses. This describes both a future worldwide empire and the leader of this empire. This empire is Satan-based in that Satan gives the antichrist his power and the power to dominate the world for a specific time frame.
 - iii) Let me define "antichrist": It means one who comes in the place of Christ. John, who wrote Revelation said in another letter that there are many antichrists, but also stated there would be only one "the" antichrist. (Ref.: 1st John 2:18, 2:22).
- 8. Verse 2: The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.
 - a) Let's take the last sentence first, as it is easier. The "dragon" gave the beast his power and his throne. We've already shown that the dragon represents Satan. The idea is that all of the power Satan has is on this "beast". In other words, Satan is "betting the house" on the antichrist. ☺ This man is Satan's cheap substitute of "God the Son".
 - b) Now we can go back to the first sentence of this verse: This "beast" resembled a leopard, except the feet look like bear's feet and the mouth looked like a lion's mouth.
 - c) I mentioned earlier that many scholars compare Revelation 13 to Daniel Chapter 7.
 - i) In Daniel Chapter 7, Daniel saw four different beasts. One of them resembled a bear, another was compared to a leopard, another to a lion and the fourth was not compared to any specific animal. Here in Revelation 13, John saw a single beast with characteristics all three of those animals.
 - ii) At the time of Daniel, there were still to be four empires that would rule over Israel. The first was the Babylonians who ruled at the time of Daniel. That was compared to the lion. Next would come the Medo-Persians, which is compared to a bear, and then the Greek Empire, compared to a leopard. The "fourth beast" in Daniel's vision was greater than the other three, and ties to the Roman Empire. The reason scholars believe the antichrist leads a "Revised Roman Empire" is based on Daniel 7:12, where the "other 3 beasts" are still alive, but give their authority to this "great beast". Some believe that's the "Revised" Roman Empire.
 - iii) In Revelation 13, the animal order is reversed:
 - a) In Daniel 7, Daniel first saw a lion, then a bear, and then a leopard.
 - b) In Revelation, John first described a leopard, with bear and lion features.
 - c) Some suggest this is a "time reversal". Daniel was looking forward in time while John looks backwards at history.
 - iv) Confused? Let me put it together: God wants to be control of our lives. God allows these great empires to rule over His people in order to motivate His people to turn back to God. Each of these empires are called beasts (think of monsters) in that they were human based and got people to turn from God to follow their leaders or their own religious pagan rites.
 - a) John is describing a single, final empire, with references to the past empires all rolled together into a single "animal".
 - d) What we have is this final world empire and its leader explained in word pictures:
 - i) A leopard is the fastest of the land-based animals. This beast looked like a leopard. It may be describing just how fast this final world empire grows.
 - ii) This beast has feet like a bear. A bear's has powerful claws. This may be describing a bear-like grip this empire has on the world.
 - iii) This mouth has a lion's mouth. A lion has a powerful roar. One thing coming up is how this antichrist verbally blasphemes the name of God.

9. Verse 3: One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.
 - a) Remember that this beast had seven "heads". Chapter 17:10 described the heads in effect as "five in past-history, one in present time (Roman Empire) and one in the future."
 - b) Apparently, when this antichrist rises to power, he will suffer some fatal wound, and miraculously live through it. That ties to the "fatal wound" reference of this verse.
 - c) This sentence is here to distinguish the antichrist from other world leaders. I can't think of any great world emperor that had his head mortally wounded than lived through it.
 - d) Again, think about the "unholy trinity" and Satan trying to offer his cheap substitute. Just as Jesus died and rose again, so this antichrist will appear to have risen from the dead.
 - e) Some people believe this ties to the fact the Roman Empire rises again in the final days and that is how this great leader rises again. Personally, I see it as a person who is the antichrist being resurrected.
 - f) In our world of modern medicine, we don't think much of a person who is almost dead and then lives again. We just shrug it off and say, "It's a miracle they survived through that tragedy". My view is this antichrist literally dies and is resurrected like Jesus or that he is loved so much as a world leader, he gets a lot of sympathy for what he has suffered.
 - g) Believe it or not, this prediction about the wounded head goes back to the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Even sinned, God in effect "declared war" on Satan. God made this prediction about the "future seed" of Satan as compared to Adam and Eve:
 - i) And I (God) will put enmity (distance) between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and between your offspring (antichrist) and hers (mankind). He (mankind) will crush your head, (this wound, here in Revelation 13) and you (Satan) will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15 NIV, with everything in parenthesis added.)
 - ii) My point is this head wound as described in Revelation 13 was first predicted way back in Genesis Chapter 3. God allows this antichrist to survive ultimately to fulfill God's purposes with this final world empire.
10. Verse 3 (cont.): The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. ⁴ Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"
 - a) Imagine this antichrist being shot at. This antichrist gets hit and loses a part of his brain. Despite that, this antichrist still lives (or is resurrected). You can imagine the world saying, "How can this guy ever lose? His head gets blown off and he still lives! I'm backing a guy like that because he can't lose!"
 - b) The text says the world follows this guy and "worship the dragon" who gave this antichrist the power.
 - c) As I stated in the introduction, I don't see people saying, "Praise the devil". What is more likely is they praise the "god" who gave the antichrist his power. They don't realize they are worshipping the devil in disguise.
 - d) This leads me back to my introduction of "Consider the Alternative". Anytime (yes anytime) one is turning from God to worship something else (worship means one's all consuming passion in their life) they are worshipping false gods. Whether one realizes it or not, the devil is behind it. Satan's goal is to make Christians ineffective witnesses for God. If Satan can get us to focus on "other things", we are indirectly, worshipping him whether we realize it or not.
 - e) Getting back to this "beast", I am convinced this guy will have some sort of miraculous power. What is to be applied here is to remember the fact that Satan himself is granted special powers. Just because a miracle occurs, one has to listen to the message attached to that miracle before determining it was from God.

11. Verse 5: The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.
 - a) One of my favorite teachers, Chuck Missler, gave me my favorite nickname for the antichrist. It is "Mr. Big Mouth". His point is whenever you read references to the antichrist in the bible (E.g., Daniel 7, 11 and 12; 2nd Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13). The one common trait is the antichrist is always "boastful" in speaking.
 - i) To use a modern cliché, "He's the kind of guy who is in love with his own voice". You get the impression he loves to talk and people love to hear him speak.
 - b) It's probably a good idea at this point to define the word "blaspheme".
 - i) It does not mean to use certain swear words. The idea of blasphemy is to say and mean certain things that go against one's religious beliefs. To say and mean that Jesus is not God would be blasphemy to a Christian. To say and mean that Mohammed was not sent by Allah would be blasphemy to a Muslim.
 - ii) So how does this guy blaspheme God? Let me try to give an example. Imagine this guy saying, "God loves everyone just as they are. We can all live in peace. All religious lead to God and we can respect each other. We have to reject the fundamentalist view that there is only one way to God. God is willing to accept you just the way you are and you don't have to change". That concept is blasphemy to the Christian view of salvation.
 - c) Now we get back to our favorite time frame: forty-two months. ☺
 - i) You get the impression that Revelation is obsessed with this time frame of three and one half years. It constantly expresses that time frame in different ways.
 - ii) Reviewing a little, the "Great Tribulation" is believed to be a final 7-year period based on the last few verses of Daniel Chapter 9. The book of Revelation constantly refers to "half" of this time frame. Apparently, during a 42 month (i.e., a three and one half year period), this antichrist is ruling the world. Some argue it is the first half, some argue it is the last half.
 - d) The point is God "allowed" this antichrist to speak against God for 3.5 years.
 - i) Have you ever wondered, "God, why are you allowing "this" to happen to my life right now"? The answer is God has a plan and God is working on His timing.
 - ii) God allows the rise of the antichrist, ultimately to show that God is greater than anything Satan can bring to power. God allows this "substitute" to rise up to ultimately show God is greater.
 - iii) Now let's go back to my theme of "Consider the Alternative". During times when God does not answer our prayers on our timing, is when we want to give up on God. Just because God is not working on our timing does not mean God is not working at all. Satan is more than willing to offer up a substitute for those willing to give up on God for a time being.
12. Verse 6: He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.
 - a) Verse 6 is another reference to the antichrist, who we have nicknamed, "Mr. Big Mouth".
 - b) Apparently, the antichrist, when he comes to power, spends a lot of time putting down God, heaven and "those who live in heaven".
 - c) If you think about it, if a world leader comes out and says, "God is wrong and those who live in heaven are wrong", nobody is going to follow that guy. That is why I believe this is a more of an indirect blaspheme than as indicated by the text.
 - i) More likely it will be something like, "You people are so good just the way you are. You don't have to listen to some fundamentalist religious extremist telling you that you have to change your lifestyle in order to please God. He loves you just the way you are and you don't need to be forgiven of anything. You can have peace among yourselves if we just accept everyone just the way we are".

- ii) False teachers mix some truth with lies about God. That is how Satan blasphemes God. "The" truth is that a perfect God does love us perfectly, but also cannot tolerate any sin and still be perfect. That is why the price for sin must still be paid in order to spend eternity with God.
 - iii) My point here is that God's name is blasphemed just as the text says, but it will be done in a more subtle way. If Satan tells people just to turn from God, nobody will do so. If he can do so slowly and subtly, people will.
 - iv) Let me give you another example: Suppose I tell you, I want you to spend all of your money on drugs and alcohol, have your whole family hate you and have a miserable life. You would never believe me. No person at that low of a state starts off that way. It always starts with a "little bit" and grows progressively worse. My point is when one "considers the alternative" to God, it starts a downhill spiral.
 - d) Back to the text, it says this "beast" blasphemes God and those who are in heaven.
 - i) How does this antichrist blaspheme those who else are in heaven (besides God)?
 - ii) Well, heaven is for "saved" people. It is for those who trust in Jesus as payment for their sins. It is for those who believe in God and changed their lifestyle because they understood they are accountable to God. This beast speaks against such people by telling the world in effect, "God loves you just the way you are and you don't have to change." That is contrary (blasphemy) to saved people in heaven.
13. Verse 7: He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
- a) Let's start with the "he". The "he" refers to this final world empire and specifically to the leader behind this empire. It refers to "the" antichrist.
 - b) In this verse, this "beast" was given authority to do two things:
 - i) The first is he had the authority to make war against the saints and conquer them.
 - ii) The 2nd is he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
 - iii) Before we analyze what that means, consider the word "authority". Yes, Satan gave this beast, a.k.a., the antichrist the power. I will argue it is God who gives this guy the authority. It is God saying in effect, "OK, Satan, it is your hour. Give it your best shot!" Yes, God ultimately wins, but God also allows evil in the world because He allows free-will. God wants to see who will turn to Him. God wants to test our faith. In order to test us, God has to allow the devil to "do his thing".
 - c) Let's discuss the fact this beast can make war over the saints and conquer them.
 - i) Doesn't that sound contradictory to the rest of the bible? Doesn't the bible say that nothing can stop us from the love of Jesus? (See Romans 8:39). If that is true, why would God allow the antichrist to make war with the saints and conquer them?
 - a) The answer is that God still loves the saints, but during the Great Tribulation, God allows Satan to temporarily "win". Those saints still go to heaven, so in a sense, Satan loses the ultimate battle. My point here is during this time period, Satan is granted this power from God.
 - d) Jesus once said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18 NIV)
 - i) Jesus is saying Verse 18 that "Gates of Hades (i.e. Hell) will not prevail over the church." Here in Revelation, the antichrist is prevailing over the saints!
 - ii) There are two ways to explain this: One is to argue there is more than one group of saints. The saints that are the church are "raptured" prior to the Great Tribulation, and this is a different group of saved people that have to live during the time of the Great Tribulation.
 - iii) The other explanation is that the church still exists during the time of the antichrist despite the fact this "beast" has the authority to kill Christians. Satan has won victories, but he will never win the war.

- e) Let's discuss the fact that this beast has authority over "everyone else":
 - i) It is God-ordained authority that allows this guy to reign over the world.
 - ii) Paul wrote, "The coming of the lawless one (antichrist)...with all power, signs, and lying wonders...because they (unbelievers) did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2nd Thess. 2:9-12 NIV)
 - iii) I emphasized the text of "strong delusion". The idea is God "amplifies" those who are condemned to hell for their desire to follow the antichrist.
 - iv) Let me put it this way: Imagine God saying, "Don't do that. Still doing that? Again, I'm warning you, don't do that. If you keep that up, I'll make it even harder for you to obey Me. OK, too late." There is a bible principal of people who keep going down the wrong path, where God then "amplifies" their desire for sin. It is God saying in effect, "If that is what you want, I'll increase your desire for that sin and eventually make it harder and harder for you to turn back".
 - v) When people tell me they "can't give up" their particular sin based on willpower, I believe it. It is biblical. God "gives them over" to their sinful desires. This is taught in Romans 1:24-28. With all of that, I have seen people from the lowest of sinful states become born-again and turn their lives around. Never underestimate what God can do with someone who has committed their lives to Him.
 - vi) Which leads back to Revelation 13: People are "given over" to the Antichrist. Yes, this guy is charming and all of that. Still, God amplifies that desire people have for a world leader to bring peace to the world without those same people having to change their lifestyle.
 - f) Finally, let's get back to "Consider the alternative". If we choose to walk away from God, He in turn can make our lives miserable in order to draw us back to Him. God can "amplify" the effects of sin in our lives in order for us to realize how we need God!
14. Verse 8: All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.
- a) This is the second mention of the "book of life". The first mention was back in Chapter 3 when we were discussing the "Seven Letters to the Seven Churches". The idea is that God has a big book with the names of everyone who is saved.
 - b) I think the idea of a "book of life" is something we can relate to. If John wrote Revelation today, he might describe this "book" as some sort of computer program that keeps track of all people. God knows all things. Therefore, God knows who is and is not saved.
 - c) The point of this verse is that everyone who is not saved will "worship the beast".
 - i) There are people who are not committed Christians who say, "Well, the day I see the antichrist and all that "666 stuff", then I'll believe it and turn to God. The classic response is, "If you can't live for Christ now, what makes you think you can die for Him then?" The bible says the antichrist will have the power to kill Christians and the power to sway people to follow the antichrist. What makes you think you can change "then" if you can't change now?
 - d) This verse also implies that the only way to overcome the power of the antichrist is by one's belief in Jesus. It is as if the whole world is "brainwashed" by this guy and the only cure is to believe in Jesus, despite the suffering that entails. If ever there was a motivation to not "consider the alternative", this is it!
15. Verse 9: He who has an ear, let him hear.
- a) Hopefully, this verse should be a flashback to the reader! Back in chapters two and three, Jesus dictated seven letters to seven Christian churches. In each of those seven letters, Jesus used this expression: "He who has an ear, let him hear".

- b) Remember who Revelation is for: believers. It is to tell believers about the events surrounding Jesus Second Coming. It is to tell believers of a coming antichrist and the power he has to sway nonbelievers against God.
 - c) Those seven letters to seven churches were full of promised blessings to those who did what Jesus commanded and promised punishments for disobedience. To paraphrase Verse 9: "Listen up everybody!"
 - d) This gets back to my theme of "consider the alternative": Jesus is warning against the danger of turning from God. This is the "ultimate end" of those who don't believe.
 - i) James said, "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15 NIV)
16. Verse 10: If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.
- a) First notice Verse 9 again: "He who has an ear, let him hear." This was Jesus "tag-line" to Christians given in Chapters 2 and 3. Now notice the last sentence of Verse 10: "This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."
 - i) Whatever "this" is, it is for the "saints". Verse 10 is for the saints.
 - ii) My point here is the first two sentences of Verse 10 are sandwiched between two sentences that are directed at Christians. Verse 10 is not a description of the antichrist or some future event. It is a command to Christian believers.
 - b) With that said, there are two schools of thought on Verse 10. Both may be right.
 - i) The first interpretation has to do with nonbelievers who are harming Christians during this time period. One gets the impression there will be lots of martyrs during the Great Tribulation. This verse is God saying effect, "Don't worry about those (non-believing) people. Those who kill Christians will be killed in a likewise manner. I (God) will take care of them for harming you."
 - ii) The second interpretation is that during this Great Tribulation, Christians have to accept the fact they will "lose" for a time being. Remember that Verse 7 says the antichrist was given the power to conquer the saints. Therefore, during this time period, Christians have to accept martyrdom. This verse is God telling people that Satan may win the battle here, but not the war itself. It is a call for Christians to have an internal peace about this situation.
17. Verse 11: Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.
- a) Remember that the first 8 verses of this chapter are about the antichrist. That was the beast that "came out of the sea". Verses 9-10 are written to Christians.
 - i) Verses 11-18 are about a second beast that comes out of the earth.
 - b) Remember that this chapter is mainly about the "unholy trinity" for a lack of a better term. It is Satan's attempt to imitate God. These verses are about the "worship leader". He plays the part of Satan's "holy spirit".
 - c) My title for this second guy is the "False Worship Leader". That will become more obvious in the next few verses as he leads the world to follow the antichrist.
 - d) The verse says this beast comes out of the "earth". Remember the first beast came from the sea. What does the "earth" mean?
 - i) Commentators are divided on this one. Some argue it comes "out of the world". Others argue this guy is Jewish as the "earth" can represent Israel.
 - ii) My personal view is the "sea" represents the "turbulence" of the world and the "earth" represents just that, "the earth". If John wanted to say Israel or Jerusalem, he would have said so. Both of these guys are humans that Satan chose.
 - iii) I believe John's main point is to show that Satan has this "duet" working. Although each comes from a different location, they end up working together.

- e) This false worship leader "has two horns like a lamb". The term "horn" in the bible is associated with power, just as animals use their horns for power.
 - i) Why two horns? This false worship leader has power and he works with the antichrist, who also has demonic power. These two guys working as a team.
 - f) Lambs are gentle creatures. I believe this false worship leader will come off as very humble.
 - g) This false worship leader "spoke like a dragon". The dragon refers to Satan himself. (Ref. Rev 12:9). I have to admit I wondered "How does John know what a dragon speaks like?" There was no mention of Satan or a dragon speaking so far in Revelation! The most likely answer is that this false worship leader speaks against God and John either assumes or was told this false worship leader is Satan inspired.
18. Verse 12: He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.
- a) The next 5 verses have the word "he" a lot. "He" refers to this false worship leader.
 - b) Whenever I think of this false worship leader, I always think of "A pitch man".
 - i) If you have ever listened to a bible radio show, there is usually a guy that comes on the beginning to introduce the main speaker. That same guy comes back at the end to give a commercial to buy the speaker's latest book or something like that. I call him "the pitch man" because he is making a sales pitch for the speaker.
 - ii) In a strange sort of comparison, I consider the false worship leader the "pitch man" for the antichrist. He's the one who introduces the antichrist at rallies and then tells people, "For more information, call this toll-free number..." ☺
 - c) Now think about the function of the Holy Spirit: His job is to work in the background and draw us closer to God. Satan is always willing to offer a substitute for those who do not want to turn to God. Satan has his own "holy spirit" character in these verses.
 - d) Don't underestimate this guy's power. The idea of this verse is that this false worship leader has been given tremendous satanic power to sway any and all nonbelievers to worship the antichrist.
 - e) There are scholars that argue the antichrist represents a final world government as opposed to a single person. I disagree in the sense that there is a definitely a world leader of this government system. That leader is who we call the antichrist. Remember this guy is not equal to Christ, but a "cheap substitute".
 - f) In this verse, there is another reference to the fact that antichrist has a "fatal wound that has been healed". John does not want us to miss that fact.
19. Verse 13: And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.
- a) If you recall in chapter 11, God has "two witnesses" for Him during the Great Tribulation. I tied them with Moses and Elijah. One of the powers given to those two good guys was the fact that "fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies" (Revelation 11:5).
 - i) Here in Rev. 13:13, this false worship leader causes fire to come down from heaven. It may be a fancy trick with satellites, or it may be something demonic.
 - ii) The point is Satan again is imitating God. Remember that the world may have been fascinated by God's two witnesses in Revelation 11. Satan is trying to convince the world to ignore God's two guys by duplicating that miracle.
 - b) If you have studied Exodus, the first few miracles performed by Moses to the Pharaoh were duplicated by Pharaoh's magicians. One of the implied reasons Pharaoh was not initially impressed with Moses is Pharaoh's magicians could duplicate those miracles. (Ref.: Exodus 7:11, 22). My point is Satan is granted some special, miraculous powers.
 - i) This is a reminder to not be impressed by miracles alone. I am convinced God allows Satan fantastic miraculous powers. The key is to listen to the message that is preached with those miracles.

20. Verse 14: Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.¹⁵ He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.
- a) This false worship leader gets the world to follow the antichrist. He then sets up some sort of statue of the antichrist. This false worship leader somehow "gives life" to this statue so it can speak. It becomes a death penalty to those who won't worship the image.
 - b) With the technology of our time, we can comprehend this a little better than John. Most of us can picture some statue with robot-like qualities that can walk and speak. Personally, I think this is something more significant because people won't accept a robot as something special. I believe there is some sort of demonic power behind this "living statue".
 - c) Let's talk about this "statue thing" as a word-picture from a historical perspective.
 - i) Show me any great world empire, and I'll show you pictures and statues of the leader everywhere in that empire. Communist Russia and China had pictures of Stalin or Mao Tse Tung everywhere. Nazi Germany had Hitler photos all over the place. The leader is associated with the Empire. Failure to acknowledge that leader could be a death penalty.
 - ii) In John's time, the concept of "Caesar Worship" was common. In order to show one's loyalty to the Roman Empire, people were required to offer a pinch of incense and say, "Caesar is Lord". Massive numbers of Christians were killed as they refused to call Caesar Lord. To non-Christians, this was just a ritual one would do to prove they were good Roman citizens and stay alive.
 - iii) While I still hold the view that the Great Tribulation is some sort of single, future event, one can find times and places in history that are similar to this portion of Revelation. The basic idea is "The Government is everything". It is man's attempt to make government and a human leader as the central hope of man as opposed to God himself. It is idolatry where people worship a human leader over God.
 - d) Getting back to the verse, it will be a death penalty not to worship this "living" statue.
 - i) The idea is not that people will think this "robotic" living statue is god.
 - ii) The idea is that in order to show one's loyalty to the government, the symbolic action is to show worship to this statue. In many countries, treason is a capital crime. So it will be in these days. For the antichrist, "treason" is not showing loyalty to him by the symbolic action of paying homage to this statue.
 - e) A present day application to all of this is to beware of putting one's entire hope in the government for solutions. A government is essential and its main function is to protect its citizens from harm. One has to remember that peace and hope stem from God and not from human leaders.
21. Verse 16: He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead,¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.
- a) This false worship leader causes everyone to put some sort of mark on their right hand or forehead. No one can buy or sell unless they have this mark.
 - b) Notice this mark has more than one "variety". The mark can be either the beast's (i.e., the antichrist's) name or his number. Most people miss that and think that the mark is only the antichrist's number. We'll discuss the "number" in the next verse.
 - c) In our world of modern technology, this is much easier to comprehend than it was in John's day. It is now technically possible to implant some sort of microchip in our foreheads or right hands that can be scanned for buying and selling.
 - i) This actually has appeal. A cashless society would mean no more cheating on taxes, no stealing of one's cash, etc. It would have appeal to society.

- ii) My personal view is that mark will be invisible to the human eye. I think people are too vain to have this mark as visible, but who knows. Maybe it is a tattoo-like bar code. Maybe it is some implanted microchip.
 - iii) Remember this antichrist brings world peace. One way he does that is cut down on crime by implementing this cashless society.
 - iv) This is another reason why I see the Great Tribulation as being a single future event as opposed to a history-long, past-and-present tense event. There is nothing in history that has ever matched this event. Our technology is now in place for this event to literally happen.
 - d) Remember that Satan is a "cheap imitator" of God. Throughout the bible, there is a concept that God has "sealed" who are His followers. This is not a visible mark, but the idea that God knows all things and He knows who will be saved. In that sense, all saved people are "marked" by God. Here in these verses, Satan "marks" his followers.
22. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.
- a) OK, here we go. ☺ People who know nothing about the bible have heard of 666.
 - b) Let me tell you my ultra-secret, absolutely positive meaning of this number: I haven't a clue. ☺ There are books full of speculation as to what 666 means. This is why I hold the view the Great Tribulation is a future event. When it happens, it will become obvious to followers of Jesus in that time era just who this guy is and what this number means.
 - c) There is an expression in mathematics that goes: "If you torture the data long enough it will confess to anything". What that means is if you alter mathematical data long enough, you can get whatever results you desire. Mark Twain said, "There are three types of lies: Lies, damn lies and statistics".
 - i) In other words, you can pick any person, add up the letter value of his name (e.g., A=1, B=2, etc.) multiply his name by waste size and divide it by the numerical value of his license plate, lo and behold, his number is 666! ☺ As silly as that sounds, you would be surprised how people have tortured the numerical value of historical figures in order to get that number.
 - ii) This doesn't apply to any past or present tense historical figure as no one has ever had a mortal head wound recovered and lead a world empire and had a talking statue that everyone worshipped! I do believe it is a future historical figure.
 - iii) Remember that the correct answer will be based on either Greek letters or Hebrew letters, as this was written in Greek. It won't work in English.
 - d) Let's talk about what we do know about "666":
 - i) The only bible reference to this number has to do with King Solomon.: "The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold," (1st Kings 10:14 NIV). This does not mean King Solomon was the antichrist. He was a good king that got corrupted by idolatry. Some suspect this antichrist guy starts off "good" then Satan enters him and things will go downhill from there.
 - ii) The number "six" is associated with being "less than perfect". Just as God rested on the 7th day from creation, the number seven in the bible is associated with perfection from God's perfection. Therefore, the number six is less than perfection. Here is Satan's "unholy trinity" expressed as "666".
 - e) The point of this verse is that when this guy does rise to power, Christians can identify him by this number. My view is that whenever it happens, it will be apparent to believers at that time. I don't lose sleep over what this number "really" means.
23. Let's get back to my theme: "Consider the alternative":
- a) The bible is primarily written to believers in Jesus. The question becomes what are we to draw from this chapter as a present-day application? Yes, we are to be on the watch for this event, but I also see an application I call "consider the alternative".

- b) There are moments when we do turn away from God. In those moments, Satan is more than willing to offer his "cheap substitute" for God. The ultimate desire of Satan is to get us to be ineffective witnesses for God. Satan desires to engulf our life with anything and everything other than what God desires for us, which is obedience to Him.
 - c) The ultimate fulfillment of Satan's desire is for man to organize a world-wide rebellion against God. In many ways, the Great Tribulation is the ultimate fulfillment of the tower of Babel. That event in Genesis 11 an attempt for the world to unite without God. God eventually "broke up" that event. God too, will break up this attempt in future chapters.
 - d) The point is when a Christian like you or me is contemplating, "Maybe I'm getting too carried away with this God-stuff", consider the alternative. Look what happens in the end to those who turn from God. As difficult as the Christian life can be at times, it helps every now and then to consider the alternative and what is the final end of those who turn from God.
24. Let's pray: Father, We read of man's desire to be religious without changing their lifestyle. Show us areas of our life where we are still rebellious to You and help us to change from those actions. May the true Holy Spirit work within us to recognize and run from the counterfeits that Satan offers. Guide us to live in obedience to You. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.