

The Twitter Commentary on Revelation
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Revelation Chapter 13

Rev 13 (Introduction)–

Revelation 12:17 is not just the climax of the chapter, it is a summary in advance of chapters 13 and 14.

Chapter 13 as a whole is an elaboration of the dragon's strategy and activities at the end of history.

This chapter develops a counterfeit Trinity; the dragon (God the Father), the sea beast (God the Son) and the land beast (Holy Spirit).

The counterfeit trinity is one of a series of deceptive contrasts by which Satan seeks to deceive the world.

The two beasts of Revelation 13 exhibit many parallels to the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

In addition to force Satan uses deception in the final battle of earth's history.

The unholy trinity appears again in chapter 16 as the dragon, the beast and the false prophet.

The end-time deception exposes the inner commitments of the uncommitted.

New characters in Rev are first introduced (11:3-6; 12:1-2, 3-4), then act in the context of the vision itself (11:7-13; 12:5ff.).

Two new characters appear in this chapter, a beast from the sea (13:1-10) and a beast from the earth (13:11-18).

Rev 13 (spiritual lessons)–

1)– The final battle is a war of words more than a political-military action.

2)– In the context of end-time deception we need prayer, study and a teachable spirit as never before.

3)– God’s purpose in the final deception is to clearly expose on who’s side every person on earth stands.

Rev 13:1–

Two possible readings: “He” (the dragon) stands on the beach or “I” (John) stands on the beach. The former is most likely.

The ten horns and seven heads of the sea beast remind the reader of the dragon (see John 14:9).

Crowns on the horns contrasts with the dragon (Rev 12:3). Sea beast is later in time. Modeled on fourth beast of Dan 7.

Blasphemy means to claim what belongs only to God. Reminds reader of Dan 7:25.

Rev 13:1-2 (Introduction)–

The beast from the sea is described visually in the order that its body parts come out of the water.

The sea from which the beast comes is a parallel concept to the “abyss” (Rev 11:7; 17:8, see also 9:1; 20:1-3).

The beast from the sea is a composite of the four beasts of Daniel 7:3-8.

Rev 13:2–

The sea beast of Revelation 13 has a pedigree grounded in the sequence of empires outlined in Daniel 7.

Sea beast receives authority from the dragon as Jesus did from His Father (Matt 28:18).

Rev 13:3–

The seven heads of the beast are consecutive rather than contemporary (Rev 17:8-11). When the head dies, the beast dies.

The use of “slaughtered” and the parallel in 13:8 indicates a parody of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Healing that comes after death represents resurrection. A parody of Jesus’ death and resurrection here.

The adulation of the beast occurs after the Fall of Rome and before the events of the end introduced by 12:17.

Rev 13:4–

The resurrection of the sea beast causes humans to worship both the dragon and the sea beast.

“Who is like the beast?” is a reference to the Hebrew name “Michael,” used for Jesus Christ in 12:7.

Rev 13:4– (Excursus on Antichrist)

The term “Antichrist” in the Bible is found only in the letters of John (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

In Rev 13 the “Antichrist” has worldwide impact and influence, especially at the very end.

Antichrist is both one and many in the Bible.

In the letters of John there are present antichrists foreshadowing the greater one to come.

In Rev 13 the one beast has seven consecutive heads (Rev 17:10) showing that Antichrist is both one and many.

In the letters of John the Antichrist is a member or a former member of the Christian community.

For John “antichrist” is a whole way of thinking and operating that has been present in the church throughout its history.

There are multiple parallels between the sea beast of Rev 13 and the lawless one of 2 Thess 2.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the “Lawless One” has the characteristics of Antichrist.

Characteristics of Antichrist are also found in the beasts and little horn of Daniel 7, 8 and 11.

In the Jewish and Christian traditions outside the Bible are many speculations about Antichrist.

Early Jewish traditions associated Antichrist with Satan and Babylon.

In early Christian tradition, the Antichrist would arise after the fall of the Roman Empire.

The two beasts of Rev 13 may owe their origin to Leviathan and Behemoth in the OT (Job 40-41, etc.).

Rev 13:4– (Spiritual Lessons on Antichrist)

- 1) Eternal life comes from knowing Jesus, not alone from knowing the Antichrist.
- 2) No one will be excluded from the final test of true versus false worship.
- 3) A candle may give light in its proper place, but when lit on a sunny day it only creates a shadow.
- 4) The Antichrist does not put something bad in place of the good, he replaces the best with something “good.”

Rev 13:5–

Allusion to Dan 7:8, 25. Sea beast’s rise is parallel to the little horn, which arose out of the fourth beast (Rome).

The sea beast exercises authority for three and a half years, which parallels the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Rev 13:1-5 Summary--

These verses offer a description of the appearance and actions of the sea beast before the end time of 12:17.

Rev 13:6–

This verse elaborates the blasphemy theme introduced in verses one and five.

God’s tent or dwelling place is a reference to the heavenly sanctuary (see 11:1-2 and 15:5-8).

Jesus applied sanctuary language to His role among His followers in Matthew 18:20.

“Those who live in heaven” is a metaphor of the people of God in Revelation even though they do not actually live there.

Rev 13:7–

The passive verb refers back to verse two, where the beast's power was delegated by the dragon.

The sea beast has authority over the very areas invaded by the gospel in 14:6.

The authority exercised by the beast here is prior to that of verse 12, which is exercised through the land beast.

Rev 13:1-7 (Summary)–

This passage introduces the sea beast and its actions before the final battle (which is summarized in Rev 12:17).

The sea beast is both religious and political, commanding both worship and obedience.

The end-time role of the sea beast is seen in verses 8 and 12-18.

Rev 13:7 (spiritual lesson)–

This verse illustrates the NT tension between the now and the not yet in the purposes of God.

Rev 13:1-7 (Identity of the Sea Beast)–

What power in history fits the descriptions and timeline of the sea beast?

- 1) The sea beast's heritage is rooted in the empires of Daniel 7.
- 2) The sea beast arises after the collapse of the pagan Roman Empire.
- 3) The sea beast's early history is parallel to the little horn of Daniel 7.
- 4) The sea beast has a "42 month" ascendancy, followed by a period of obscurity.
- 5) The resurrection of the sea beast makes possible its role in the final conflict.
- 6) The sea beast combines a religious and political agenda.
- 7) The sea beast presents a rival "gospel" to the everlasting gospel of 14:6.
- 8) While the sea beast serves and acts like the dragon, it wears a Christian face.

The first readers of Revelation may well have applied the sea beast to the worship of Imperial Rome.

The worship of Imperial Rome, however, is not the primary focus of the chapter.

The text of this chapter points us to a later time and more Christian fulfillment than the Empire of John's day.

The early church Fathers believed Antichrist would arise after the fall of the Roman Empire.

The sea beast closely parallels the little horn of Daniel 7 (Dan 7:8,20,24-25).

The best historical equivalent for the sea beast's history in this passage is the medieval papacy.

In the Middle Ages the papacy lost its spiritual focus and pursued political and economic goals as well.

The decline of the papacy in the Middle Ages was noted by many leading "saints" like Francis of Assisi.

Rev 13:1-7 Summary--

The two phases of the sea beast (13:1-7, 13:8-10,12-18) correspond to the seventh and eighth heads of Rev 17:8-11.

Viewed prophetically, this text points to a rebirth of oppressive Christianity at the end of time.

Rev 13:1-7 (spiritual lesson)--

Over time religious institutions become more focused on self-preservation than on the original mission.

Rev 13:8--

The tenses here shift from the past to the future. The counterfeit of Christ has end-time implications.

The "book of life" is the record of the saved, found also in the Old Testament (Exod 32:31-33; Psa 69:28).

The pain of the cross affected "the Lamb" from eternity, even before creation.

Rev 13:9--

The symbols and historical referents of this chapter have timeless and universal implications.

Recalls the repeated refrain from the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Rev 13:10--

In this verse the text moves from prose to poetry (the first four lines) with a prose conclusion.

This verse contains a major manuscript dilemma, one option focuses on the beast's intent, the other on its fate.

Most likely the song is recited by the author to express the importance of faithfulness in the face of what one cannot control.

Rev 13:9-10– (spiritual lesson)

The war described in these verses is more personal than corporate, more Auschwitz than Stalingrad.

The present continuous tenses point to the universal nature of the admonitions in the verse.

Rev 13:1-10 Summary–

Verses 1-7 focus on the time before the time of the end (from the perspective of Revelation 12:17).

In verse 8 the focus shifts from the sea beast's past to its actions in the final conflict.

Verses 9-10 function as an interlude, with liberal use of present continuous tenses.

Rev 13:1-10– (spiritual lessons)

Christians are caught between two ages, both the Lamb and the dragon rule today.

As a result of this dual rule, suffering is inevitable in this world and must be endured til the end.

Rev 13:11-18 (intro)–

The land beast is unusual in the Bible since it did not come out of the sea or the abyss.

Rev 13:11–

“Earth” is ambiguous in Rev. It can support God and His people (11:4; 12:16) or fight against them (13:3-4, 12; 17:5).

Earth in contrast with heaven is negative (Rev 13:6, 8), earth in contrast with sea is positive (13:1, 11).

Together (Rev 13:1, 11) earth and sea fulfill the dragon's purpose in 12:12 and also highlight the contrast in Daniel 7:3, 17.

The Greek word for earth (*gê*) represents the land of Canaan/Palestine, where God placed Israel in the Old Testament (positive).

The beast from the earth looks different from all others in Bible prophecy, and has a very short history in contrast to the sea beast.

The two beasts in Rev 13 recall Behemoth and Leviathan from the OT and Jewish tradition (Job 40:15-24; 41:1-34, etc.).

The beast from the earth is neither a lamb nor a dragon. It looks “like” a lamb and speaks “like” a dragon.

The land beast is lamblike first and then becomes the mouthpiece of the dragon in the final crisis.

There is a strong parallel with Rev 12:15-16, the Exodus scene where the earth helps the woman toward the close of the 1260.

If sea represents populous parts of the earth, land may represent relatively unpopulated parts of the earth.

“Lamb” appears 29 times in Rev, 28 apply to Jesus, the 29th is used with reference to the beast from the earth.

Persecuting powers come in two types, religious and anti-religious. The land beast’s persecutions are more motivated by religion.

The relatively positive land beast in the end serves the dragon and the sea beast in the final conflict (Rev 12:17).

Rev 13:11– (Historical Application)

At its rise, the USA was a relatively new power on the world stage.

The USA is the first world power outside of the Eurasian land mass (including North Africa).

Tyrannies apply brute force in order to reduce violence and crime in a society.

Americans have always prized freedom above security, that may soon change.

Rev 13:12–

The main verbs here are present tense, a shift from the past tenses of verse 11.

A transition from the history and identity of the land beast to its activity in the final battle of Rev 12:17.

Elaborates the worldwide worship of the sea beast that was first mentioned in verse 8.

The sea beast has two periods of dominance, in verse 4 (past tense) and in verses 8 and 12-18 (present and future tenses).

The land beast does not promote itself but the sea beast, an allusion to John 16:13, a Holy Spirit counterfeit.

Rev 13:13-15– (Introduction)

In these verses we learn how the land beast forces the earth to worship the sea beast (13:12).

Rev 13:13–

The miraculous signs of the land beast are in present tense (part of the end-time battle of Rev 12:17).

“Signs” in the Gospel of John were intended to build faith in Jesus but often distracted instead.

In Jesus’ Olivet Discourse the end-time heavenly signs are from God but satanic miracles deceive the world.

The end-time signs by the land beast promote the counterfeit trinity and gospel.

The fire from heaven recalls the OT Mount Carmel experience and also Pentecost.

The role of the US in the final crisis will be more spiritual than political.

Rev 13:14–

This verse continues the outline of the final battle that was introduced in Rev 12:17.

The land and sea beasts receive their authority from the dragon, in parallel to the roles of the true Trinity.

The land beast serves as the public face of the unholy trinity, the sea beast’s role is more in the background.

The Greek word for “image” (*eikon*) recalls the creation, idolatry and Nebuchadnezzar’s

image.

In this verse it is clear that the wounding of the beast's head resulted in the death of the whole beast.

The word for "came to life" at the end of this verse is consistently used for physical resurrection in the NT.

The deceptions by the land beast recall Pharaoh's magicians during the Exodus (cf. Rev 16:13-14).

The "image to the beast" is a new player in the drama, perhaps played out somewhere in chapter 17.

In the Greek it is an image "to" the beast, not the image "of" the beast.

The image of the beast may be the beast of Rev 17, its ten horns, or the union of woman and beast in that chapter.

Rev 13:14 (historical reflection)–

The image to the beast is a new entity raised up by the religious side of the USA in the final battle.

Rev 13:11-14 (Summary)–

Rev 13 introduces 3 hostile powers: 1) the sea beast; 2) the land beast; and 3) an image to the sea beast.

For Ellen White, the image is not Protestantism itself, but is formed by it in the final crisis (GC 442-449).

GC 561-562 associates spiritualism with the three frogs of Rev 16:13-14, a possible connection to the image.

Rev 13:15 Introduction–

In this verse the hostile powers move from deception to persecution as a method of opposition.

Rev 13:15–

The "was given" at the beginning of the verse mimics the "divine passive."

The giving of breath (*pneuma*) highlights both the counterfeit Holy Spirit motif and an allusion to the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:7).

In this verse it is an image “of” the beast, the image looks and acts like the beast.

Unlike idols in the OT, this image could both breathe and speak!

The death decree in this verse was foreshadowed in the OT (Dan 3:4-6; Esth 3:8-9; Dan 6:5).

There is a strong allusion to the image worship story of Daniel 3, that story will find an end-time fulfillment.

The final battle of earth’s history will be over worship.

It is the image of the beast, not the land beast, that issues the death decree and enforces it.

Rev 13:16–

While the subject of the sentence is unspecified, it is likely the image of the beast acting in this passage.

A trio of word pairs expresses the full extent of those subject to the mark of the beast.

The Greek word for “mark” (*charagma*) signifies allegiance to the unholy trinity and worship of the image (13:15).

The mark of the beast comes in two ways, represented by the forehead and the hand.

The mark on the forehead represents those who truly believe in the beast, those marked on the hand follow for other reasons.

The mark of the beast needs to be seen in contrast with the seal of God (Rev 7:1-8; 14:1-3)

The seal of God has to do with character (Rev 14:1), so the mark involves taking on the character of the sea beast.

A second major parallel to the mark of the beast is the visionary scene of Ezekiel 9.

A third major parallel is the covenant; the seal of the ten commandments is the Sabbath command.

Rev 13:16-17–

According to Deut 6, the ten commandments were to be worn on the forehead and the hand.

Rev 13:17–

The mark of the beast protects the wicked against the death decree and an economic boycott.

It is not clear whether the “mark of the beast” is physical in some sense or only a spiritual distinction.

“The beast” in this verse and the next is clearly the sea beast (see 16:13, and also 13:14; 14: 9, 11; 19:19-20; 20:4, 10).

Rev 13:16-17– (Excursus on the Concept of an End-Time Sunday Law)

Adventists have understood the mark of the beast to be enforced Sunday worship in place of the true Sabbath.

Ellen White saw Sunday law agitation in her day as leading to the end-time enforcement of Sunday worship. GC 573.

Ellen White understood that Sunday legislation would occur also in Europe.

Ellen White’s statements in GC 573, 579 and 592 are clear in a general sense.

Ellen White’s statements in GC 573, 579 and 592 also leave us wishing we knew more.

This passage indicates a counterfeit of the Sabbath, but is not explicit on its exact nature.

Ellen White is explicit on the counterfeit Sabbath: It will be a national Sunday law in the USA.

It is important to remember that all Bible prophecies are grounded in the prophet’s time and place.

Bible prophecies of the End are natural extensions of the situation in the prophet’s day.

The way God has described the End shifted from age to age (Genesis through Revelation).

The end-time scenario of *The Great Controversy* resembles 19th Century America. The Bible’s descriptions of the End always make the most sense when viewed from the

prophet's time and place.

More change has occurred in the world over the last hundred fifty years than in the previous 6000.

We would expect prophetic scenarios to change a lot from 1860 to today.

Ellen White herself was quite capable of describing the End without a Sunday law.

The concept of a Sunday law was introduced in the 1884 version of *The Great Controversy*.

There is more than one way to get unfulfilled prophecies wrong.

To ignore prophecy is to be surprised when the End-time events occur.

To over-specify the details of an unfulfilled prophecy is to miss the reality when it occurs.

The Pharisees rejected Jesus because He didn't fit into their prophetic scenario.

Sunday laws are a plausible application of this passage but not a specific requirement of the text.

Ellen White's Sunday law scenario made sense when written, but may not be fulfilled in exact detail.

To over-specify prophetic fulfillment in advance is to leave people unprepared for the real thing.

When it comes to unfulfilled prophecy "circumstances alter cases" is an important principle to remember.

Many Christians tend to be too certain they understand exactly what God intends to do before He does it.

Fulfillments of prophecy are best recognized when they occur and not before.

The purpose of prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to teach us how to live today.

We tend to read Revelation as though it was written to our own time, place and

circumstances.

The language of Revelation is the language of John's past not ours.

Rev 13:16-17– (Excursis on the Sunday Law– Summary and Conclusion)

Some kind of counterfeit of the Sabbath will be at the heart of the world's final crisis.

Rev 13:18–

The parallel “wisdom” phrase in Rev 17:9 connects the 666 with the seven heads of 17:8-11.

The concept of wisdom here alludes to the image story of Dan 2.

In Dan 2 there is a strong contrast between the wisdom that comes from human effort and that which comes from revelation.

The number 666 is probably “the number of a man.”

Rev 13:18– (Excursis on 666)

There is a “threeness” to the number, it is expressed in three words or three letters in Greek MSS.

In the Greek of Rev, large numbers are expressed in words, not numerals, so the number as a whole is key to the calculation.

All readers of the book, including the original readers, were expected to draw some meaning from the 666.

Numbering with sixes was characteristic of ancient Babylon (see also Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).

The numbers three, four, six, seven, ten and twelve all have symbolic value in Rev.

Six is half of twelve, double three and short of seven. So six represents imperfect equivalents of God, church and completeness.

The three-fold nature of six hundred, sixty, and six connects with the three-fold reality of the end-time deception in this chapter.

The use of sixes here strengthens the allusion to Dan 3 in Rev 13:15-18.

The number 666 is closely associated with the character of the sea beast, in contrast with

the character of God (14:1).

The whole number 666 appears in Ezra 2:13, numbering the descendants of Adonikam, probably a random expression.

In 1 Kings 10, 666 talents was the weight of gold that came to Solomon in a single year.

The reference to 666 in 1 Kings 10 comes between the Queen of Sheba story and Solomon's apostasy with foreign wives.

If 666 is the number of apostasy, the beast is the counterfeit son of David (Solomon, Christ).

Three possible ancient parallels to the 666 were priestly amulets, Roman numerals and the name "Nero Caesar."

666 has been associated with the papal title "Vicar of the Son of God." In Latin this phrase reads *Vicarius Filii Dei*.

The Latin title *Vicarius Filii Dei* in Roman numerals (a D, a C, an L, 2 Vs, and 6 Is) adds up to 666.

Vicarius Filii Dei was a preferred papal title from about 750 AD through 1800 AD or so.

The sea beast is seen in two phases of its lifespan in this chapter, actions before (13:1-7) and during (13:8, 12-18) the final battle.

While 666 is mentioned in the context of the final battle, it is to identify the sea beast, not describe its actions at the end.

The sea beast is best identified by its role in the Middle Ages. At that time *Vicarius Filii Dei* was a major papal title.

Rev 13:12-18 (Conclusion)– While the overall picture is clear, many details of this prophecy will not be clear until the events themselves.

The exact role of America and the papacy at the End will only be fully clear when the events occur (John 13:19).

Rev 13 (Conclusion)–

Chapter 13 elaborates on the dragon's side of his great final battle with the remnant (see Rev 12:17).

Chapter 13 also sets the stage for the spiritual nature of the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 16-18).

Rev 13 (Spiritual lessons)–

The powers of this world use deception and coercion to control people contrary to God's will.

God's government respects the freedom of all and seeks our approval on the basis of evidence, reason and love.

Religious institutions tend to become increasingly focused on self-preservation rather than the original mission.

The more attached we are to the things of this world, the greater the end-time test (Rev 13:16-17).

Reliance on the evidence of the five senses will lead us astray in the End.

The best safeguards against end-time deception are attention to the Scriptures and a living relationship with God.

Rev 13 (Excursus on the Papacy)

Rev 13 covers two main eras of history, before (13:1-7, 11) and during/after (13:12-18) the final battle (12:17).

Adventists understand the sea beast as the end-time reincarnation of the Papacy of the Middle Ages.

Adventists understand the land beast as the USA, arising outside the Eurasian landmass.

The surprising point of Rev 13's end-time scenario is that the two greatest enemies of the gospel will have a Christian face.

If Christendom has largely lost its way, how do you share such information in today's world?

Before one criticizes Catholic teaching, it would be wise to know what official Catholic

teaching actually is.

Negative messages about the papacy are not found in the 28 fundamental beliefs of SDAs.

Ellen White herself advises caution in how Christians should address other denominations (Letter 39, 1887, CWE 45-46).

In denouncing other points of view we are often exercising pride, which does more harm than good.

The best way to expose error is to humbly share the evidences for truth.

In denouncing other faiths we often give in to the same evil spirit we believe is possessed by our “enemies.”

Adventist focus on the Papacy was driven by demographic realities in the USA toward the end of the 19th Century.

There was general resentment among Protestant Americans in the late 19th Century toward Catholic immigration.

Around 1900 an Adventist evangelist named Simpson developed a new appeal to the Protestant majority in the US.

1900 AD: If American Protestants were so concerned about the dangers of Catholicism, they might as well become Adventists.

Adventist evangelists held the key, not just to a more biblical faith, but to restoring America’s greatness as a country.

As an evangelistic strategy, criticizing other faiths often backfires in today’s world.

Christians criticizing other faiths are playing into the negative stereotypes of Christianity as a whole.

People today tend to judge Catholicism, not by history, but by the Catholics they know in everyday life.

In studying prophecy, it is possible to forget that the core of the mission is making

disciples of Jesus.

The problem with papal indulgences, change of the Sabbath and persecution is the picture of God it presents to the world.

While time and place are important, NOT to share truth at all is dangerous.

If you knew that Hitler was coming back would you NOT share that truth because your Nazi neighbor was nice?

What distorted picture of God requires sinners to evaluate their salvation by the depth of the callouses on their knees?

The public face of Catholicism has softened recently but its fundamental teachings have not changed.

It can be such a relief to Catholics to learn for the first time that they can go directly to Jesus without a human intermediary.

It can be such a relief to Catholics to learn for the first time that they don't have to earn the love of the Father.

Being prepared for the end of time is better than not being prepared.

Many people won't see Jesus clearly unless the truth about counterfeit forms of salvation are presented to them.

God loves all the creatures He has made and His warnings are designed to redeem not to condemn.

It is safe to share the mark of the beast when we truly know how easy it is to lose our way.

While we must remain true to Scripture, we can learn much about kindness, grace and mercy from other Christians.

While it is best to clean a house from the inside, only outsiders truly know how the house smells!

SDAs are the one significant Christian body willing to admit publicly that something is

wrong with modern Christianity.

The world is longing for Christians to honestly admit that Christianity as it has been practiced is rife with problems.

People use the sins of historic Christianity as an excuse to ignore the Bible.

One thing we've learned from the war on terror is how ready people are to trade liberty for a little security.

Rev 13 provides a penetrating analysis of the ills of the western world and the source of much conflict in today's world.

To preach that I am better or wiser than those I am preaching to feeds my inner drive toward pride and self-importance.

Unless the message of Rev 13 is shared in balance, it can have an unhealthy impact on those who hear it.