

Revelation 13 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Now we're in to what some would consider the "good stuff" of Revelation.

Others would call it the "weird, woolly, and wild" stuff.

Ch. 13 is the premier and primary passage in the Bible which tells us about this strange actor on the last day's stage popularly known as "The Antichrist."

But he's not called that here. Here he's referred to as the "beast from the sea."

But he gets lots of other titles as well.

- Belial – Judges 19:22 20:13 (A personal opponent of Yahweh)
- The King of the North – Daniel 11:40
 - who comes with a mighty army to crush the nations 11:40
 - to persecute the righteous – 7:25
 - to bring death – 8:10
 - to set up his throne in the temple – 8:13 (Referred to as "the abomination of desolation")
- The prince who is to come – Daniel 9:26
- The little horn – Daniel 7:8
- The boastful mouth – Daniel 7:11
- The prince of this world – John 14:30
- The man of sin – 2 Thess 2:3
- The son of perdition – 2 Thess 2:3
- The lawless one – 2 Thess 2:8
- Antichrist - 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7

Rev. 13, combined with Daniel 7 and 2 Thess 2 give us a pretty complete picture of his career and what to expect when he rises to power.

Chs. 12 & 13 together introduce the main players during the Tribulation period:

- Israel – 12:1
- Satan – 12:3,9

- Christ – 12:5
- The antichrist – 13:1
- The false prophet – 13:11

CHAPTER 13

¹Then I stood on the sand of the sea.

John's perspective now in his vision is back on earth.

In Ch. 12, he saw things *in heaven* – a woman clothed in the radiance of the sun, standing on the orb of the moon and her hair braided with a garland of stars.

But now, he's back on earth; in fact, he's on a beach.

This would bring an immediate sense of *seriousness and uncertainty* to the average reader.

You see, for the common man, and especially for the Jews, the sea was an unsafe and frightening thing to contend with.

Throughout their history, the Jews have generally *shunned* the sea.

They were never a sea-faring people, except for a brief period under Solomon; and even then, most of his navy was comprised of mercenaries from other nations. (1 Kings 9:26-27)

For the Jews, the sea was a *mystery* and carried strong overtones of evil.

Their classic enemies the Philistines had arrived from the sea and colonized the coastlands.

The people to their north, the *Phoenicians* who settled Tyre and Sidon were also known as the *Sea-Peoples*.

In the Jewish mind, the sea was the final *dumping ground*.

All the streams and rivers flowed into it and not out again; so all that was carried by the rivers ended up in the sea.

It was an unclean thing.

The sea had come to be a *ready idiom* for *all* the nations of the world, all the various tribes of Gentiles were symbolically represented by the sea.

So now, as John stands on the beach, he stands on the edge of the entire Gentile world; a world united in its hostility to God.

And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and

on his heads a blasphemous name.

The word “beast” refers to a wild, dangerous, and sometimes even venomous beast.

This isn't a word one would use to describe “Fluffy” the French poodle.

This refers to some dangerous creature that inspires immediate fear.

It rises up out of the sea – out of the Gentile world that is hostile to God.

It has 7 heads, which heads are topped by a total of 10 horns.

Each horn is then capped by a crown – in this case, the crown is the *diadem*, the *royal* crown; not the *stephanos* or *victory wreath* given to the winner in the athletic contest.

These crowns symbolize rule, not reward.

This combination of images are meant to impress us with one overwhelming idea – EARTHLY POWER!

Heads speak of authority.

Horns speak of power.

Crowns speak of position and rule – the office of national sovereignty!

This beast, whoever or whatever it is the *summation* (7 & 10) of *earthly* (it rises out of the sea) *civil power* (heads, horns, crowns).

But this image sounds an awful lot like what we read about last week in ch. 12 and the description John gives of the dragon – v. 3

3And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

The only difference between these two descriptions is the number of crowns.

In ch. 13 there are 10, one for each horn, and in 12 there are 7, one for each head.

The point here is that there is a *close affinity* between the *beast of ch. 13* and the *dragon of ch. 12*, but they are *not* identical.

Let's read on in John's description of this beast . . .

2Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the

mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

One of the most well known books of the OT at this time was the Book of Daniel and as a devoted Jew, John would have been well versed with it.

Therefore, what he sees in this vision would not have been lost on him as a *direct correlation* to Daniel 7 where the prophet was given a vision of the great world empires that would come to dominate the Earth, and find their culmination in the last, the 4th.

Notice the similarities to what John sees in Rev. 13 -

2 Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. [The Mediterranean] **3** And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. [As we study we realize this was the Babylonians Empire under Nebuchadnezzar]

5 “And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’ [This was the Persian Empire]

6 “After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. [This was the Greek Empire under Alexander]

7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. [This corresponds to John’s use of the word ‘beast’ in Rev. 13] It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it

had ten horns. ⁸I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

When John saw this beast with 10 horns, he would immediately think of this vision of Daniel's in Daniel 7 and he would realize he's seeing the same beast, but now, with greater detail than Daniel had seen.

Also, the animals listed are in reverse order because while Daniel was looking forward to the coming world empires, John was looking back!

Babylon had fallen to Persia, which had in turn fallen to Greece, which had been taken over by Rome.

John lived in the day of the 4th beast, Rome. But in this vision he is gazing in to the future and sees that it rises once more to dominate the earth.

The beast he sees has the 10 horns of Daniel's 4th beast, but he adds the description of *7 heads*.

It's probably best to understand it this way –

The beast begins as a union of 10 governments; but in order to *make* them a *union*, 3 of their leaders have to be uprooted or their fundamental governing forms overthrown.

We see this in Daniel 7:8 where it says that the *little horn* that comes up in the midst of the 10, uproots & discards 3 of the 10 previous horns.

Bible students and scholars have longer understood both Daniel's and John's visions to be referring to the Antichrist, the world dictator, who will come to lead the last days world dominating government.

The 4th beast of Daniel's visions, which represents Rome, goes into a kind of *hibernation* that lasts many generations, but then emerges again in the last days to become the military, economic, and political base upon which the Antichrist erects his authority.

It's fascinating to watch the union of the *European Community* because it is, in many ways, a revival and re-emergence of the old Roman Empire.

There are some of its member nations which today are *hindering* a more aggressive alliance, so it's not hard to imagine that when the Antichrist does finally come on the scene, he engineers a governmental coup in these nations that removes those who resist his power-grab and installs *HIMSELF* as the de-facto ruler of these nations.

In v. 1, John said that the beast's 7 heads had a blasphemous name written on them.

What that name *is* we're not told – but whatever it is, it's an expression of defiance against God.

This may correspond to the *mark* on the head we'll read about later. John says that the dragon, which 12:9 tells us is the devil, gives the beast his power, this throne, and *mega* authority.

Remember in Luke 4 how satan tempted Jesus and offered to Him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would only bow down and worship him?

Jesus did not argue with him and say the kingdoms were not his to give.

The force of the temptation was based in the fact that Jesus had come to reclaim the world and the devil was offering him a shortcut; and easier way than the cross.

Paul calls satan the “god of this world” and the “prince of the power of the air.” (2 Cor. 4:4 Eph 2:2)

Jesus refused the devil's offer of earthly domination.

But here in Revelation 13, we see the devil handing it over to another man – not Christ, but *Antichrist*; the one who will come *in his own name*.

In John 5:43 Jesus said –

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

It may be *that name* which is the *blasphemous name* written on the heads of the beast in v. 1.

The Antichrist will be the *culmination* of the devil's strategy to oppose God that began all the way back in the Garden of Eden. There he enlisted mankind in his rebellion against God. His appeal to Eve was that if she embarked on a path of

disobedience, then she could become *like* God.
Dominion of earth had been given to man, and then forfeited to
satan in the Fall.

The antichrist will appear to be the *fulfillment* of the devil's offer
to Eve.

As 2 Thess. 2 tells us, the antichrist will possess *seemingly
godlike powers*.

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

⁹The coming of the *lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

What is "the lie" the Apostle Paul is referring to here in 2 Thess. 2?
Well, what was the first lie?

It was the lie satan told himself – "I shall be like the Most High"
Isa 14:14

It was the lie satan repeated to Eve – "You can be like God" Gen
3:5

"The" lie the earth-dwellers will buy in the last days is the idea
that they can be gods.

What will give that deception its convincing force is that the
antichrist will seem to be able to prove that he's achieved this
goal by the miracles and signs he performs.

I have little need to go in to depth in showing how the world is
already being groomed to accept this idea.

I'm sure most of us are well aware of how the most current theory of evolution, called *punctuated equilibrium*, proposes that evolution moves forward, not according to Darwin's idea of slow mutation over long periods of time, but in quantum leaps from one kind to another kind.

And how the whole new age movement is aggressively teaching that the human race is about ready to make it's next quantum leap for mortal to immortal.

The last leap was from *homo erectus* to *homo sapiens*, but the next leap will be to *homo divinitas* in which we will possess godlike powers to manipulate the very fabric of creation.

Channelers regularly say that this evolutionary leap is upon us and that we must look for those who will show us the way.

Oh my friends, the stage is well set for the emergence of the antichrist – a man given the earthly dominion of the devil himself – possessed by satan – and wielding god-like power.

³And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

The 7 heads of the beast represent the civil rulers who will lead alongside the antichrist in the last days.

But here we read one of the heads is *mortally wounded* – that leader is killed.

V. 14 makes it clear the wound is inflicted by a *weapon* – so this is a literal, specific act of violence.

Miraculously, that wound is healed; a resurrection takes place!

It's probably *this miracle* that catapults the antichrist to world attention!

It's this event that forms the basis of the little horn's rising to power in the midst of the 10 in Daniel 7, and causes the uprooting of the other 3, leaving 7.

This is purely conjecture on my part, but possibly the leaders of 3 of the nations of the *European Community* see the rise of the antichrist, who is a leader of one of the other nations of the EC,

during the first half of the Tribulation and realize he is gaining way too much power and influence.

All along he is advocating a closer union of the European nations, which they resist.

They see his increasing power as a threat to their position and the sovereignty of their nations and so conspire to assassinate him.

They pull it off – but what they aren't planning on is the supernatural intervention of satan, who stages a resurrection by possessing the corpse of the fallen leader.

It's at that point that he becomes, in the truest sense, the *antichrist*. His resurrection causes the world to marvel and fall all over itself in lauding him.

He exposes the conspiracy; the perpetrators are executed and the leadership of their nations is taken over by the antichrist.

The earth-dwellers begin to think no one can oppose or defeat the antichrist – after all, how do you defeat a guy who rises from the dead?

5And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. **6**Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

This is clearly another allusion to Daniel 7 where we read about the little horn and the pompous words it spews forth . . .

8I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, [this speaks of *intelligence*, and points to the fact that the horn is a man] and a mouth speaking pompous words.

19“Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; **20**and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before

which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.

21“I was watching; and **the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,** ²²until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

23“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. ²⁴The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, and shall subdue three kings. ²⁵He shall speak *pompous words* against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

John’s vision in Rev. 13 is clearly the same as Daniel’s – look on here in ch. 13; it becomes even more clear -

7It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

In v. 5, John says the antichrist is given his authority for 42 months; 3½ years.

Daniel refers to this same period in 7:25 as “a time, times and a half time.”

V. 7 links us to the last verse of ch. 12 -

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Don't be thrown off by the word "saints" here.

Some read this and immediately jump to the conclusion that this means the Rapture doesn't take place till *after* the Tribulation because we find the saints here during the last half of the Trib.

But the word "saints" isn't used exclusively for the Church. The word means, "set-apart one," and refers to whatever group of people at any given time are the focus of God's redemptive attention – they are the ones He has set apart. In the OT, the saints were the faithful of Israel. Right now in the Church Age, the saints are Christians. But during the Tribulation, the saints will be the Tribulation believers who come to faith *after* the Rapture.

8 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.

All the earth-dwellers will worship him, which helps give clarification to the pompous blasphemies he speaks.

The world worships him for the very reason that in his authority and power to command all the nations, he DEMANDS their worship.

He claims to be god!

As Paul tells us in 2 Thess 2, he enters the holy place in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and declares himself god.

V. 8 reminds us that the human race is divided into one of two groups; the lost and the saved.

While the differences between these two groups may not be so obvious to observe now, during the last half of the Tribulation – called *The Great Tribulation*; the differences between the two groups will be clearly manifest & evident.

There will be the "earth-dwellers" as they are called repeatedly in Revelation, and those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

The earth-dwellers will be identified by the *mark of the beast* we'll read about in a moment, while the saved will be marked in God's Book of heavenly reward and eternal life.

The earth-dwellers will worship satan and the antichrist.

The saved worship Jesus.

9If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Interpreting this verse has proven to be a monumental challenge for Bible students because it seems so out of place in the visions of this section of Revelation.

John has simply been describing what he sees but now he stops and issues a solemn word of exhortation to his readers!

The phrase, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear” introduces a statement of the gravest concern and attention.

But what follows doesn’t at first blush seem to fit the context.

How does v. 10 relate to what we’ve just encountered in vs. 1-8?

The answer is found in what we find in v. 8; the two different groups of people presented there – the earth-dwellers and the saints.

John is urging his readers to realize that while the difference between the lost and the saved will become crystal clear to all in the Last Days, that *difference* exists today, even though it might not be as obvious.

And in John’s day, believers were being faced with a choice, not unlike the one that will face people in the last days, the days he’s speaking of here in ch. 13.

You see, in John’s time, the Roman Empire had embarked on a practice that *foreshadows* that he sees happening in the last days. It was called *Caesar worship*.

As the boundaries of the Roman Empire spread, it became increasingly more important to the Romans to enforce their hold over the outlying provinces.

So someone came up with the brilliant idea of using Caesar as the focal point of loyalty.

Every so often, the people of the empire had to come before the magistrates of their city or region, and make a public vow of allegiance to the Empire by offering a pinch of incense on an altar to the Emperor.

Their vow was given in the words, “Caesar is Lord.”

They would then be given a little rolled scroll identifying them as

a loyal member of the Empire. That scroll was their “mark” of loyalty.

The problem with this for the Christians and the Jews is that Caesar wasn't just considered to be a man who was king; Caesar was the focal point of the imperial cult and was considered the embodiment of the spirit of Rome – a god to be worshipped.

For all save the Jews & Christians, there was no problem worshipping Caesar as a god, pagans already believed in a multitude of deities, what was one more.

But the Jews and Christians could not and would not recognize Caesar as Lord.

The Jews were given an automatic exemption because Rome recognized Judaism as a legitimate religion.

But the Christians enjoyed no such exempt status and so they were hounded, persecuted and executed as dangerous revolutionaries.

It's interesting reading the writings of the early church fathers at this time; a large part of their work was addressed to the Emperor & governors, trying to convince them to let up on their harassment of Christians over this issue, saying that while believers couldn't say, “Caesar is Lord” there were no better and more loyal and productive members of the Empire than Christians.

When John wrote this at the end of the 1st Century, Caesar worship was just becoming standard policy.

He could see in his own time how the seed of Caesar worship would bloom in to a full flower in the Revived Roman Empire when the antichrist demanded worship and the world was divided between the earth-dwellers and the saints.

So he exhorted his readers to realize they were being challenged with a decision on which camp, which group they would identify with; those who draw their identity from the earth, or those who identify with heaven.

They have to choose between captivity and freedom.

They have to choose between violence or peace; between earthly power or spiritual power.

Between the here-and-now or the here-after.

That challenge is *our* challenge – let him or her who has an ear, hear

what the Spirit is saying.

We must choose between the World & God.

Will we define ourselves by the world's values and priorities or by the values and priorities of the Kingdom of God.

Those values "mark" us; they identify us!

They reveal the basis and purpose of our living.

Over the last few weeks I have talked with several people who have begun by telling me they believe in God and consider themselves to be a Christian, but their lives are defined by the things of the world, not God's Word.

In everything from the use of alcohol and drugs to sex and theft, they think they can live by the world's morality and still hang on to the promise of heaven.

But the Bible is quite clear – those who are born again *live a new life*, one that seeks after the righteousness of God, not the base things of the flesh.

Jesus said to all those who were self-deceived, "Why do you call Me Lord, and do not do the things I say?" (Luke 6:46)

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And 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.

John now sees *another* beast.

The same word is used here; this is a dangerous, wild creature!

But this one rises from the *earth*. As this stands in *contrast to the sea*, which represents the Gentile world, the "*earth*" may represent the stock of Israel – *this* beast, *this man* may be *Jewish* in origin.

His appearance in the vision is also very different from the first beast.

While dangerous and wild by nature, he has the exterior of something passive and calm.

He too has horns, but they are the little nubs of a sheep and he carries the exterior of a lamb.

The first beast was described in terms out of Daniel that are clearly representative of *political* power and authority.

But when you hear the word, *lamb*, what do you think of in terms of symbolism?

Sheep were the preferred animal of *sacrifice*.

A lamb speaks of the *religious realm*.

And the horns on this lamb speak of religious *hierarchy and authority*.

In the ancient world, the real danger of the dragon was not so much in its fiery breath, but in its slick, clever, and mesmerizing voice.

In fact, the flames that issue from the dragon's mouth may be more symbolic of the terribly destructive lies it speaks!

The image John is painting here of the second beast is one of a religious authority with the ability to delude and deceive with tremendous effectiveness.

This man, for just as with the first beast, that's what's being pictured here – a man – is given as much power and authority *in the religious sector* as the first beast is given in the political sector.

The difference is that this man does not compel people to worship him; his aim is to focus attention and worship on the first beast.

Because of this, he's popularly referred to as *the false prophet*.

In 16:13, he's actually given that title.

13He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. **14**And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

This makes it even more clear that the false prophet rises at this time to help gather world attention and power to the antichrist.

If the antichrist does indeed present himself to the world as one who has made the quantum leap from mere mortal to immortal, and that allegiance to him will usher in a grand new day for mankind, then the false prophet will be a convincing *first convert*.

For he too will perform miraculous signs and agitate for the rest of the world to join in so they too can reap the benefits of the

antichrist's new system.

What we are seeing here is a merging of the State with Religion, where institutional religion becomes the tool of the State, to promote the political agenda of the ruler.

There have been many, many historical examples of this.

Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and even the Third Reich are just a handful of examples of how the power of religion was bent to the ends of the State.

I find it fascinating that while there is a massive debate today about the separation of Church & State in our nation, few people seem to have taken notice of the fact that while there may be a separation between the Christian Church and the State, there is no such separation between *religion* and the State in our land.

The US Supreme Court has officially declared that *secular humanism* is a religion, yet secular humanism is THE GUIDING PHILOSOPHY for almost every level of civil government, including the public schools.

And secular humanism is a broad umbrella that embraces a wide array of many other religious concepts and philosophies.

Secular humanism used to go by the label, *The Human Potential Movement*.

Think about that original label! *HPM!!!*

It's the *old lie*, the *original lie* updated for modern man!

And it will be formalized, institutionalized, and realized as the program of the antichrist and false prophet.

One of the signs the false prophet performs is to call down fire from heaven.

This will prove to be an interesting sign for him to do because it will seemingly *equal* the sign of the two witnesses in ch. 11; they also called down fire from heaven.

Just as the magicians of Pharaoh's court were able to duplicate the first signs Moses performed, so the false prophet will be able to duplicate this legitimate miracle of God's servants.

The point is – signs and wonders *are not enough* – the real issue is – what's the message the signs point to and verify?

In Deut 13, Moses warned the people about false prophets and miracle workers who would come and perform tremendous signs and then say, "Come now, let us go after other gods;" they were

not to listen to them but rather, to put them to death.

The false prophet will call down fire from heaven.

So what! His message is blasphemy!

Some years ago when I worked at UPS, I had a regular discussion with the guy across the sort belt from me.

His mother was a church-goer and was all into the flashy prosperity teachers.

I said what they taught was rank heresy and he objected by saying their success was proof of their truthfulness.

More than once he asked, "If they're wrong, then why does God bless them so much?"

He was never satisfied with my answer that monetary success was never sufficient verification of spiritual truth and that it wasn't *God's blessing* they were enjoying.

The devil is more than pleased to promote his lies by giving temporary wealth & power to his ministers.

And so it will be with the false prophet and antichrist.

The definitive moment in their corporate agenda to focus world attention and worship on the antichrist will be when the false prophet leads in the creation of an image in honor of the antichrist. Sitting as he does at the top of religious institutional power, it seems pretty clear this image is *religious* in nature, specially as we see how it is then used.

15 **He [the false prophet] was 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.**

Okay, this is just freaky! How are we to understand this?

Just what is this image?

Is it like a statue made of stone, metal, wood, plastic, or some other substance?

Or is this some new technology, like a clone of the antichrist?

Is John seeing something here which was so far out of his league as far as descriptive terms went that the best he could come up with was "an image."

The Greek word is *eikon*, from which we get our word "*icon*".

It meant a *likeness*, and referred to a statue, profile, or

representation & resemblance.

It's probably best for us to avoid wild speculation on just what form this image takes.

The point is, it's an inanimate object that the false prophet animates.

It becomes alive somehow and begins to affirm and enforce the world's allegiance to and worship of the antichrist.

Resisters and refusniks are executed.

The idea of worshipping President Bush seems ludicrous to us, and yet the nightly news often carries pictures of other nations where the supreme ruler is idolized and worshipped.

We've all seen those crowd shots of people carrying massive pictures of Mao, or Stalin, or Lenin, or Saddam Hussein, or Arafat.

These were merely military and political leaders of great power.

What will be the reaction of the world to the antichrist who wields power over virtually the entire world in every sphere – military, political, economic, and religious?

One of the biggest prohibitions God handed to His people was idolatry.

We find this in the 10 Commandments – two of them deal with this.

Worship no God but God & make no image to worship Him by. Idolatry was the chief stumbling block of Israel prior to the Babylonian captivity.

One of the major ways the false prophet will blaspheme God during the Tribulation will be the making of this image and then using it to focus worship on the antichrist in the place of God.

In 1 Cor. 10, Paul says that idols in themselves are nothing more than the material they are made of, but that demons use them to deceive mankind and enjoy religious devotion and worship.

It may be that a demon is what animates this image, whatever it's nature is.

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, **17** and 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.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

Now, this is the one passage of the book of Revelation that has generated the most discussion and speculation.

This is exciting stuff, and that's why I'm going to save it for this Sunday!