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Introduction: The second half of Chapter 13 introduces us to another "beast." We saw that the first beast, described in verses 1-10, is the Antichrist, a political leader who will arise from the seat of power of a revived form of the Roman Empire (the "prince" of Daniel 9). We know that Antichrist will create the "abomination which causes desolation" (Daniel 9, Matthew 24), setting himself up as the object of worship for the whole world during the Great Tribulation. How will he do this? That is where this second beast comes in. He seems to be a religious leader, and he promotes the worship of the first beast, the Antichrist. *The Antichrist will be the great power of the world, and this second beast is the great religious power at his disposal. The religion will seem good and holy, but it is false and blasphemous.*

If you follow the entire picture of power and religion in the Great Tribulation that we have seen thus far in Revelation, especially in Chapters 12-13, you see the three main forces of evil as being Satan (the dragon), the Antichrist (the first beast), and this second beast, the false prophet of the first beast. Some theologians have seen this as a satanic, counterfeit, blasphemous trinity: Satan in the place of the Father, the Antichrist in the place of Christ, and the false prophet in the place of the Holy Spirit (just as the Holy Spirit prompts believers to worship Christ, causes miracles, and marks us as sealed unto the day of redemption - Ephesians 4:30 - so this false prophet will promote the worship of Antichrist, cause false miracles, and mark the lost with the mark of the beast). When Lucifer rose up in pride, he wanted to be like God, he wanted to be worshiped. This is his last desperate attempt at that.

1. Verses 11-17 - Another beast: the prophet of the first beast.

- v.11 - **coming up out of the earth** - contrasts with first beast who came up out of the *sea*. The sea represented the masses of peoples of the earth. The earth itself - specifically *coming up from* it - may refer to the abyss (i.e., this beast will be demonically controlled). **two horns like a lamb** - Jesus is the Lamb of God; this beast is likely then a pseudo-religious figure. **spoke like a dragon** - the dragon is Satan, and this beast speaks like him (i.e., he is a satanic prophet).

- vv.12-14 - Here is this beast's work: deceive the world into worshiping the Antichrist by great, demonstrative deceptions. The world will be especially interested in religion at this time, and this beast will fill that need.

- v.15 - Whether this is actual or pseudo is the cause of some debate. This false prophet commanded the world to make an image of the first beast (v.14), and now he makes (or seems to) it come to life.

- vv.16-17 - **the mark of the name of the beast** - much speculation has surrounded this. The mark is somehow connected with **the number of his name**, 666 (v.18). The mark on the hand or forehead is popularly likened to barcodes, computer chips, etc., embedded under

the skin. This could also, perhaps, be a spiritual mark, much like the true believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the case, at stake is life or death in the Great Tribulation. Those with the mark will be able to function in the world, but they are eternally condemned. Those without the mark are those who have come to faith in the Tribulation, but they will be persecuted to death.

2. Verse 18 - The number of the beast: 666.

- v.18 - ***the number of the beast... the number of a man... 666...*** This is one of the most speculated upon points of Revelation. John Walvoord, a highly esteemed authority among evangelicals concerning *eschatology* (study of the last times), notes that "there probably have been hundreds of explanations continuing down to the present day, and it is obvious that if the number refers to an individual it is not clear to whom it refers." It seems the most intriguing and most plausible explanation - *if the number refers to an individual* - points to the First Century Roman Emperor Nero, whose name and title, by many accounts, when translated and converted into Hebrew (Nero Caesar NRWN QSR, RSQ NWRN) and given numeric values for each letter, add up to 666 precisely. Because Antichrist will sit on the seat of ancient Rome as his seat of rule, Nero can be seen as a *type* of the end times Antichrist. Will the Antichrist be a man with a name that fits this formula as well? Possibly. However, *it is also possible that the number does not refer to an individual* (this is the view Walvoord himself leans towards), but rather to man's falling short of God in general (i.e., 6, 6, 6 is always short of perfection, or, 7, 7, 7). Keep in mind that the number is associated with *the beast* in some way, and is the number of *a man*. The Antichrist is the beast, and he is a man; he is empowered by Satan, who wants to be God, but always falls short (i.e., 6, 6, 6...). This is one of those mysteries that will likely not be totally revealed until it is apparent in the earth.