

Revelation 12-13 • Satan cast down • The mark of the beast

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Revelation chapter 12 is where we're going to be starting off here. We are in the mid and challenging part of the great tribulation period as we read these passages. I think we'd better start with another word of prayer.

Father, as we get into the scripture tonight, as always, we come before you knowing that it is through your Spirit that the illumination of the word takes hold in our lives and is made possible. And so it is our request tonight in prayer that you would speak to us through these scriptures and that you administer understanding. You've given us, Lord, this revelation of the end times for a reason, and we pray that you would help us to understand it and to be open to what it says. So we look to you tonight as the teacher. And we ask you to be with us in Jesus' name, Amen.

We're going to read the first 6 verses of chapter 12, and then we'll kind of back up here and talk about what it is all about. John says:

"¹And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days." (ESV)

Well, right there in those first 6 verses, we have plenty to talk about. John begins by saying he saw in this continuing vision of revelation, this great sign, which he says was a woman. And because he refers to this woman as a sign. This is very important. We know that she represents something. We know that we're not looking for a specific woman to come about since he refers to her as a sign.

We know that she represents something that we need to determine. And you'll notice that he gives us some helps by describing her. Look at those verses here as he talks about this woman. He says she was *"clothed with the sun,"* she had *"the moon under her feet"* and she had *"a crown of twelve stars"* on her head.

Now you might be surprised to learn that most Bible scholars identify this woman as representing the nation of Israel. And you may say, well, why? Why is the Nation of Israel represented by this woman? And why do these particular descriptions give us that conclusion? Well, it all comes down to an interesting dream that God gave to a young man, a teenager, named Joseph, who is of course one of the sons of Jacob. And when he relayed this dream to his brothers, you'll remember they didn't care to hear it. And in fact, his father even rebuked him for talking about it, even necessarily, I want to show it to you on the screen. It's from Genesis chapter 37. And it goes like this:

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Genesis 37:9-11 (ESV)

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

Now, what's interesting about this passage in Genesis is that Jacob interprets these pictures from Joseph's dream to speak of himself and his wife, and ultimately, his other 11 sons, of course, Joseph being the 12th, making up the 12 tribes of Israel. So he interprets this as himself being the sun, his wife being the moon, and these stars being the sons of Israel. So it's really interesting, and this is one of the reasons why most Bible students see this woman as representing Israel. Now, this isn't all. As we continue reading through the chapter, I think you're going to see that interpreting this sign as Israel is the best way to go.

So let's keep looking. Now, you'll remember in verse 2 he talked about the fact that this woman that he saw, this sign, was in fact pregnant and she was crying out as in the pains of childbirth and he goes on. If you skip down, then to verse 5, it says she gave birth to a male child. Now notice how he describes the male child, *"one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,"* Who's that talking about? That's talking about Jesus. So Jesus comes forth from the nation of Israel and it says, *"but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,"* we'll talk

about that in just a little bit. But the next sign that John sees right away in verse 3 is you'll remember he sees this sign of this great red dragon. So again, since it's a sign, we're not talking about a literal dragon. We're talking about a representation of something. He describes this dragon as having 7 heads and 10 horns. And on his heads, 7 crowns, which are mentioned here literally as diadems. As we go on, we're going to see that the second sign that John sees is none other than Satan himself, or at least something that is Satanic and empowered by Satan. But I believe we're talking about Satan and the description that he gives here closely resembles a description that is given in the very next verse of the following chapter, which I'm really hopeful we're going to get to tonight so we can tie it all together. And I'll show you when we get there a little bit later on why those descriptions are so close.

But in chapter 13, which we'll hopefully get to, he's going to be using his description to speak of a great world power that rises up during the great tribulation that is referred to as the revived Roman Empire. We'll get into that. So just hang on, stay tuned. But we're going to talk more when we come to chapter 13 about those 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns. All right, so just hang on. But we are further convinced of the Satanic character of this dragon by the by verse 4. Look with me again, in your Bible, it says, "*His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.*" And this would seem to be a reference to the rebellion of Satan, whereby he took with him a third of the angelic host. Which became of course, what we know as demons, or the Bible calls unclean spirits. They are simply angels who fell with Satan. But I also want you to notice that we read in verse 4 that the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that he might devour the child.

So, Satan is pictured in this vision that John is having where Israel is about to birth the Messiah, and Satan is standing by waiting to devour the child. And as we read through the scriptures, we find many times when there was a Satanic move through human beings and even himself to try to devour the Messiah. You'll remember that Herod tried to kill the Messiah by murdering all of the baby boys in the vicinity of Bethlehem who were of a certain age and younger (Matthew 2:16). You'll remember that Satan brought temptations to Jesus in the wilderness in an attempt to rid the threat that He posed to him (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-12; Luke 4:1-13). You'll remember that there were many attacks on Jesus by religious leaders and others who picked up stones to stone Him (John 10:31). And then, of course, we deal with the crucifixion itself (Matthew 27:32-44; Mark 15:21-32; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:17-27), which I think was a Satanicly inspired effort. Which, of course, God used according to the purpose of His will to bring about His redemptive plan.

But then we read about the woman giving birth in verse 5. And again, we're told this male child *"is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,"* Well, this is clearly a Messianic reference that we read about in other passages of the Bible. Let me show you one of the most wonderful Messianic psalms is Psalm chapter 2. Let me put a portion of it up on the screen for you. It says:

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Psalm 2:7-9 (ESV)

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now, this was known among the Jews for, many many years, as a Messianic passage. We believe it to be the same today, speaking prophetically. And yet it connects us to this statement in Revelation of the vision John sees of this man-child who is birthed by Israel, who is the Messiah.

Finally then in John verse 6, look with me again there. We're told *"⁶and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days."* Now, this final statement helps to cement our belief that this woman is in fact the nation of Israel, even though the Roman Catholics believe that this is referring to the Virgin Mary and that is just one of their beliefs. It doesn't go with verse 6 at all.

We do know that there are other passages, and we're going to see another one in a moment, that Israel is going to be protected for a good portion of the final half of the great tribulation until finally war comes upon them when God is going to allow some pretty terrible things to happen. But John is shown that during the final three and a half years of the great tribulation, the enemy is going to seek to destroy Israel. But the nation of Israel will be supernaturally protected. Notice that it will be for 1,260 days. That's three and a half years, you guys. It's what that comes to. So this is the latter half of the great tribulation.

Now, let me stop here for just a moment and just explain something that's very fascinating about this prophetic picture that John is giving to us here. Because if you noticed there's a time gap. There's a time gap between the male child being caught up to God and His throne, which by the way is a picture of the ascension of Jesus, okay? When He ascended into heaven with the disciples watching. That's what John is seeing in that and the statement about Israel, in this case, the picture of the woman being protected in the wilderness for three and a half

years. Did you notice that? So he mentions this statement as if it's all one. The male child is caught up to the throne of heaven and Israel is protected for three and a half years. Well, so far there's been 2000 years between those 2 statements, and yet they're given to you all in 1 sentence. And this gap that we're seeing here is not uncommon in scripture and particularly prophetic scripture.

But it really points us back to something that I don't have time to get into in great detail, but it points us back to some things that the prophet Daniel gave us in his visions of the last days. And if you want to study this out, I would encourage you to go to our website and go to the book of Daniel. It's very simple, ccontario.com/Daniel, and particularly listen to that study from chapter nine because it talks about the fact that God told Daniel that 70 7's were decreed for the nation of Israel, and those 7's are 7 periods of years, and the first 69 7's, or 69 periods of 7 years, came to their fulfillment when Jesus ascended into heaven. So that left the last 7, or the last 7th period of 7 years, or the 70th period or week of Daniel and that is still to come. It won't start up until the great tribulation begins. Even in Daniel, there was this gap between the first 69 group of 7s and the 70th 7-year period so it's a fascinating prophetic insight. Again, I would encourage you to go back and perhaps study through that particular study in Daniel chapter nine and that sort of a time break is not uncommon in biblical history.

Now the next thing that John is shown is a picture of a spiritual battle taking place. Look with me in verses 7 and 8. It says, *"⁷Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven."*

Now stop there for a minute. It is our belief that this battle, this spiritual battle, will take place right around the midpoint of the great tribulation. A great battle that will end with Satan and his armies no longer being allowed access to heaven.

Now, in other words, that means Satan still has access to heaven today. And I get questions about this all the time, and it really messes with people's minds. Because people have this idea that Satan was booted out of heaven during the rebellion, and that he's never been able to be there again or come before the throne of God. Even though we have passages in the Bible that dispute that, the Bible tells us that the sons of God, the angels came before the Lord in the book of Job, which may very well be the very first book ever written in the Bible. We're not exactly sure as far as the time frame of when it happened, I guess I

should say. But Satan comes before the throne of God and he begins to accuse Job to God. And this is a common sort of a thing. In fact we're going to see here a little bit later in just a few verses, as a matter of fact, that Satan is referred to as the accuser of the brethren who accuses them night and day. That's happening right now. Satan is accusing you every time you mess up. Every time you stumble. Satan accuses you to God. Sometimes he even goes around accusing God to you.

We'll talk about what happens when Satan accuses you to God, but I want you to listen what happens in the following verses here, verse 9. It says, *"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan,"* Well, there we see it. It's clear that the dragon is a picture of Satan, but he refers to him as *"the deceiver of the whole world."*

Do you know that he is still deceiving today? All the things that you and I see going on in the world today that we have a hard time even reading about in the news. Things that are going on in our government. Rules, laws that are being made, all this stuff that's happening that we know is unbiblical. We know it's immoral. We know that it's contrary to the word of God and all these things. And we shake our fist and we get angry. This is the deceiver who is simply at work. He is *"the deceiver of the whole world."* It's been happening for a long time.

But this passage says that at this time, at the midpoint in the great tribulation, Satan is cast out of heaven and it says that it's just, started a party, verse 10, *"¹⁰And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."* Isn't that fascinating? The very fact that heaven no longer has to put up with the constant drone of accusations coming against you. Because you'll notice he's the accuser of the brothers, and that is a term that refers to believers.

The very fact that accusation is no longer happening literally causes heaven to begin to rejoice. It's pretty incredible. But I want to just remind you one more time, these things are yet future, so that means Satan is still accusing right now. And he will accuse you to yourself as well. And we've talked about this, we talked about this on Sunday, and as we talked about the resurrection, we talked about condemnation. We talked about people feeling unworthy. We talked about people who feel like God is very distant, or God doesn't like them. God is mad at them. God isn't hearing their prayers anymore. These are the incessant accusations of the enemy that have gotten through to the hearts of the people,

and they've begun to believe them. Contrary to the word of God. Contrary to their true position in Christ, which is forgiven and righteous in the sight of God.

But rather than believe that we believe the lie. And we begin to embrace that deception, that God doesn't love me. God doesn't care about me. God has rejected me. God condemns me. Let me show you what the Bible says. Up on the screen, John says:

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1 John 2:1-2 (ESV)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Do you know what's interesting? While the enemy is constantly accusing you to God, Jesus is right there before the Father, and He is your advocate. And He's saying no no no, I forgave that one. I died for that one. I suffered for that one that you're accusing right now. That, brothers and sisters in Jesus, is what's really going on in heaven, and you need to hang on to that. That you have an advocate before the Father and He is constantly advocating for you. Constantly interceding for you. Constantly before the Father cheering you on because He knows that you've put your faith in His work on the cross and that work is finished (John 19:30).

But I want you to notice here as it goes on in verse 11 and how it talks about how Satan was overcome. Look at verse 11, he says, *"¹¹And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."* They are the saints. The saints are the ones who are being talked about. The brothers. They're the ones who have been accused to God by Satan. But they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. People, we know that Jesus is interceding for you in heaven, but what are you doing? You on this side of the veil, you stand in the blood of the Lamb and in the testimony of what Jesus Christ has done in your life.

I heard a quick interview with Keith Green, who's with the Lord now, and he was asked in an interview, "How do you know that Jesus exists?" He says, "Because He changed my life." That's his testimony. That's the testimony that we give, and that's a testimony that no one can take from you. What has Jesus done in your life? We have overcome the enemy. We have overcome the incessant accusations of the enemy by the blood of the Lamb. Which has

redeemed us from our sin. And our testimony, the statement of truth, the truth proclamation that we make related to the transformation of our lives that He has accomplished in and through us.

So John hears these words in verse 12. *"¹²Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"* And this is that period of time in the great tribulation when things really heat up. Because Satan has now been cast to the earth, he's now limited literally to the earth and he knows that his time is running out. The meter is almost ready to tick, expired. And he is going to take as many people with him as possible. And his wrath, his great wrath, is now upon those on the earth.

John goes on verse 13. It says, *"¹³And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman"* So what's he going to do in the midpoint of the great tribulation, he's going to pursue Israel *"who had given birth to the male child."* So Satan, through the powers of whatever earthly governments, or the rule of the antichrist or whatever, is going to pursue Israel to destroy her. Now we know from other passages that the antichrist will establish his image in the temple and demand to be worshiped, and he will then pursue Israel, because of course Israel won't put up with that. So this is when that pursuit happens and when that persecution begins. But remember, for most of the second half of the tribulation, Israel is going to be supernaturally protected. And we're going to see that here in just a second.

But before I get to it, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever wondered why so much of human history is focused on this little tiny sliver of a country called Israel? I mean, it really is truly amazing. There has been so much persecution, so much violence, so much effort put forth to eliminate this little sliver of a country. I mean, it barely registers next to countries like the United States of America or China or Russia. This is this little thing. I truly believe that this has been the plan of Satan all along. And the reason we hear so much about Israel and the reason we've seen so much persecution and violence come against the nation of Israel is because the Bible makes it perfectly clear that Israel holds a central role in God's redemptive plan. It's obvious. People ask me all the time, where do you see the United States in prophecy? I tell them, I don't. The United States doesn't appear in biblical prophecy. This huge country that is dominating the world right now doesn't even appear. Israel? It's all over the place. It's literally all over the place.

And as we saw earlier in these visions that John was given, Israel birthed the Messiah, the Savior, who is born for what purpose? To overturn the work of the

enemy. So how do you think the enemy's going to feel about that? You think he's going to just kind of sit back and say, well, I guess it's just going to happen. No, he's going to do everything in his power to try to stop it. To try to thwart it in some particular way because if he was able to succeed in destroying the nation of Israel, then he would be successful in overturning God's plan to restore the earth and those who live upon it. That's why Israel remains to this day such an immense focal point in human history.

But I want you to notice here again that God is not going to let that happen, verse 14, *"¹⁴But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness,"* (so this is a repeat of what we read earlier in verse 6) *"to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time."*

Do you remember in verse 6 we read that the woman fled into the wilderness and again, where she was to be nourished for how long? 1,260 days. Here he talks about a time, and times, and half a time. This is just another way of talking about three and a half years. 1,260 days, three and a half years. A time, one year. Times, two years. A half a time, six months. Three and a half years.

Now John sees the outpouring of violence against Israel during this last half of the great tribulation. Look at verse 15, he says, *"¹⁵The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. ¹⁶But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth."*

Now, as we read these verses, I have to tell you, in all honesty, it's very difficult to interpret these as a literal or a figurative sort of a thing. There are some Bible scholars and interpreters who think that it's literal. Who think that Satan is going to cause this flood to try to sweep away the people of Israel and that somehow, God's going to create an opening in the earth surface to swallow up the water. I'd rather think it's probably a flood of violence that the enemy's going to bring against Israel. But again, we're speculating. But that's not the point. The point isn't how it comes. The point is what God wants you to know here is that Israel's going to be protected, however she's going to be protected, that's the point of what they're trying to say.

And John says in verse 17, *"¹⁷Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring,"* (we'll talk about what that means) *"on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea."*

Now, what is this all about? Well, this is the persecution that then is turned, because Satan can't get at Israel because for a short period of time, she's going to be protected at least up until the time of the war of Armageddon. So Satan can't get to Israel, and so he's going to turn and begin to persecute the tribulation saints. In other words, these are people who have come to know Jesus as their Savior during the great tribulation. Will people get saved during the great tribulation? Yes, they will. Many many many people. But as you can see here at the very end of this chapter, that they will be persecuted by the enemy, by Satan through the antichrist.

Now, some of you might be put off a little bit by the fact that these believers in Jesus are referred to as the rest of her offspring, and you remember that her, she, is Israel. So why are believers referred to as the rest of her offspring? Well, it's very simple. The Bible makes it very clear that when we come to know Jesus Christ, we are sons of Abraham by faith. We are literally grafted in, Paul tells us, to the original root that is Israel (Romans 11:17-21). And we are of Israel in that very spiritual sense of the term. We don't share that DNA perhaps, but we share something that is even stronger, and that is that connection through Jesus Christ. And that is why believers in Jesus are referred to here as the rest of her offspring.

All right, chapter 13, here we go. Now I want you to notice the similar description that is given to this next image. John says, "*And I saw a beast rising out of sea,*" (take note of that) "*with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems*" (those are crowns) "*on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.*" Now you'll see here as you compare this to the description of the dragon that we saw in the previous chapter, it is strikingly similar to the dragon, but notice that this beast rises out of the sea. Now, the sea or the waters is a biblical reference to the nations. We see this consistently through the Bible. You have to have Israel, and you have the nations referred to as the waters. So this phrase tells us that this enemy comes from the gentile nations of the earth. But make no mistake about it, John refers to him as a beast. And the Greek word that is translated beast here carries the idea of a fierce and vicious animal extremely wild. And since this beast is described as having 10 horns and 7 heads with 10 crowns on the horns, we know this beast is not only similar to the dragon or Satan, but in fact operates with his power.

I've mentioned many times in our studies of the Old Testament that a picture of a horn in the Bible is always a picture of power. So when it talks about the horn of my salvation (2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2), it's talking about the strength of my salvation, the Lord. Horn means strength.

And you'll notice that this beast that rises up out of the sea has 10 horns, 7 heads, 7 crowns. Now, I need to tell you right now that there are many Bible scholars and students of the word who interpret this beast that comes out of the sea as a kingdom rather than a specific person. Or sometimes they'll even speak of it as a group of kingdoms that exist during the great tribulation. You maybe have heard that, a 10-nation confederacy or federation. Other people interpret this beast as a person, namely the antichrist. And the reason for those different interpretations is that sometimes what is revealed about this appears to be speaking of a kingdom, and other times it appears to be speaking of a person. So what are you going to do with that? Well, my personal belief is that both of those interpretations are correct.

I believe it is a person and a kingdom. In other words, a person, the antichrist who rules a kingdom, who has a kingdom or confederation of nations that are under him, although not perfectly under him as we'll see later. But I do believe that this is the antichrist. Here's a sidebar to this reference to the antichrist, and we've talked about this before. While the antichrist is very prominent in the book of Revelation, the term antichrist does not appear in the book of Revelation. It only appears in 1 John and 2 John (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3; 2 John 1:7). John makes reference to the antichrist. Here he's referred to as the beast, but we know that this is the same person that John is referring to.

John goes on, look what he says in verse two. *"²And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon" (which we know to be Satan) "gave his power and his throne and great authority."* So we know that the first beast, or if you will, the antichrist, will be literally empowered by Satan during this time of the great tribulation.

Verse three. *"³One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast."* Now, this is, again, somewhat challenging to interpret. One of the heads of this beast suffers apparently as we read here, a mortal wound. Now that could refer to one of the nations or one of the kingdoms that the antichrist was ruling. Perhaps something was defeated and then was miraculously rescued. Or many believe that this is a reference to the antichrist himself who is killed and then resurrected in kind of a counterfeit resurrection. And that is possible too.

But it goes on to say in verse 4, *"⁴And they worshiped the dragon," (that's Satan) "for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?""* So you can see that Satan worship is going to be going on very thoroughly among the

people during the great tribulation, except of course among the tribulation saints, as well as worship of the antichrist.

Verse 5, *"⁵And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months."* Guess what? Just another way of saying, three and a half years. Now you've seen it mentioned three different ways.

Verse 6, *"⁶It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them."* That means the tribulation saints, those who come to Christ after the rapture, so the church is gone. Those who come to Christ who had not come to Christ previously, but in a sense missed the rapture got left behind. But who came to Christ at this midpoint in the great tribulation, they will be martyred. It says that the beast will be given authority over the saints to conquer them. Now does that mean that those people are destroyed? No. He just simply kind of hurried them up into heaven. But martyrdom is not something to snicker at.

It says, I'm in the middle of verse 7, *"And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,"* (so the beast is given literally authority over the rest of the earth) *"⁸and all who dwell on earth will worship it,"*

Does that include the tribulation saints? Nope. Because it says at the end of verse 8, *"everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain."* How can the names of all the saints of God be written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world? Because God doesn't have to wait around to find out how things turn out. He knows everybody who's going to turn to Christ and accept the gospel of Jesus. He knows everyone who's going to put their faith in what Jesus did on the cross, and He's known it since the foundations of the world.

And so your name has been in the Lamb's book of life since the foundation of the world. It doesn't mean that you were predetermined to come to Christ. It does mean you were predestined. According to the foreknowledge of God, the difference being He didn't force you to come. You still made a choice of your own free will, but He knew you were going to make that choice, and so your name has been there in the Lamb's book of life.

Verse 9 goes on. John adds a warning here. *"⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear:"* Sounds similar to what He wrote at the end of the letters, right, that He dictated to John. Those 7 letters to the 7 churches.

It says in verse 10, *"¹⁰If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints."*

What is he saying here? What do these 2 verses mean? Well, this is first of all, not something that is entirely uncommon. When Israel was conquered by the Babylonians, it was destined that many of the Jews would suffer from that invasion. And Jeremiah uses language in his prophetic writings that is very similar to what John is saying here in this warning. Let me show you this passage from Jeremiah up on the screen:

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Jeremiah 15:2 (ESV)

And when they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.'

I have to tell you something, this is going to be one of the most challenging passages between Jeremiah here in Revelation that you might read in all of the Bible, because this is what the Bible talks about when it mentions suffering in patient endurance. We don't like to think about suffering. We don't ever like to think about suffering. And we don't like to think that some of us are called to suffer. But may I say to you that some of us are called to suffer. Paul knew it. Paul knew that his calling was to suffer. The apostles were told by Jesus that they were called to suffer. And even though that's a difficult thing for us in our American, sort of a mindset of how we understand God's love and grace and goodness, it is a reality.

And what this passage is saying in Revelation is the same thing that God was saying through Jeremiah. He's saying, you who are, who have put your faith in Me and who are living during this time in the great tribulation, your calling is to suffer. Your calling is to patiently endure. And I know it's not great and I know it's not fun, but it is your calling and that's challenging. That's challenging. You think that somebody's path might include that sort of a thing, but that is what the passage says.

John goes on in verse 11 to say, *"¹¹Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon."* Now this is the beast that John is going to refer to as the second beast, and later on as the false prophet. And you'll notice this description is interesting. He comes out of the

earth. In other words, he comes out of the land. Some believe that the land is referring to Israel and that this second beast or false prophet is going to be Jewish. But that's speculation. Notice he has two horns, some two powers. We don't know what they are. Two areas of power and influence. And thirdly, he appears as a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon. Talk about a wolf in sheep's clothing. It almost suggests that he impersonates the Lamb of God in some way. But this as I said before, the second beast is also going to be called the false prophet.

He is obviously subordinate to the first beast or the antichrist, but notice what he can do. Verse 12, *"¹²It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived."* (ESV)

Now, I want you to notice that the second beast or the false prophet, causes the people of the earth to fashion or to form an image of the first beast that they must worship. But it gets even crazier. Verse 15, *"¹⁵And it was allowed"* (and this is the second beast) *"to give breath to the image of the beast,"* (the first beast) *"so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."* So there's going to be this image, and I don't know if it's going to be a statue or a picture. I don't know what it's going to be. Who knows? But this second beast is going to have the power to cause this image of the first beast to not only speak, but to kill the saints. This image will be able to kill and slay the saints. I mean, is that creepy or what? It's just really something. But you know what, this is what the Apostle Paul prophesied. This is what the Apostle Paul told us would happen when he wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians. Let me put it on the screen:

(slide)

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (ESV)

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

When you put Paul's words together with what we've just read here in Revelation chapter 13, you can see how God had given Paul insight into the deceptions and the power and the counterfeit miracles that would take place on the earth during this latter half of the great tribulation period.

And we finally come now to the mark of the beast, verse 16. *"¹⁶And it causes" (and this again is the second beast) "all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name."* So we see here that the second beast imposes this mark by which people are enabled, if they take it, to buy and sell. Obviously there's going to be saints on the earth during that time who refuse to take the mark of the beast, and they're not going to be able to buy and sell. It's going to be a very very difficult time for them. But you say, well, what's this mark all about? Well, it shows ownership. This is a simple sign of ownership and it is a counterfeit of the seal that we receive as believers when we come to know Jesus Christ as our savior. Did you know that you've received a seal? Let me show you this passage. On the screen it says:

(slide)

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (ESV)

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

So you have a spiritual seal on you as a believer in Jesus Christ. Satan knows exactly who he's dealing with. When he sees you, he knows exactly to whom you belong. And during this latter half of the great tribulation, he's going to mark those who belong to him in his own effort to counterfeit the work of the Lord.

Now, John ends this chapter in verse 18 by saying, *"¹⁸This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."* Well, this is one of those numbers that people have dreaded, for many many years, but it's basically man's number. Man's number is 6. That's what he tells us here. It's the number of man. God's number is 7. And 7 means perfection or completeness. 6 means close, but no cigar. And in other words, just short of perfection. And boy, don't we know that about ourselves. Short of perfection, short of completion. But as far as this final reference that John gives here about calculating the numbers 666. For many years now, I have personally believed that this calculation of this number will

not be revealed until the time of the great tribulation. That is my personal feeling, perhaps not even until the time that the mark of the beast is mandated by the second beast. A lot of people have speculated and tried to determine, the meaning of 666 over the years. They've placed it on anyone from Adolf Hitler to Mickey Mouse.

But the fact that we have speculated and that there's been no definitive sort of, identification leads me to believe that this is not something that we can calculate at this time. But this is something that they will calculate through whatever is going on during the time of the great tribulation. And they will be to calculate its meaning and it will have some kind of a purpose for those saints who are living on the earth in the difficulty of those days, during that time of the great tribulation. So that's where we're going to end. Wow. We got through two chapters. I'm impressed.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you. We thank you for these chapters. There's so much good information, so much insight that we gained from them as it relates to the last days. And you've been so gracious Lord to reveal these things to your servants through the years. And we are privileged to be among those who get to study these things prior to the coming of the great tribulation. And Lord, I know that many people during the pandemic, it started in 2020, wondered if that was in fact the beginning of the great tribulation. It was not. For many of these signs that you've laid out for us in the word have not come to pass. We have not seen the rise of the lawless one. We have not seen the pact that he makes with Israel. We have not seen the temple standing. But Lord, we know that at any time you could come for your church. At any time, you could return in the clouds to receive your bride. And I pray my, Father God, that we would be ready, that we would keep our eyes on you, that we would keep our hearts pure, and that we would serve the Lord with a whole heart. As we await for that day, continuing to be salt and light. Be with us, we pray. Strengthen us along the way. We ask it in the name of Jesus, our Savior, and soon coming King. And all God's people said together: Amen.