

# NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 13 (PART 2)

LAST WEEK OUR OBJECTIVE WAS TO IDENTIFY *HOW* THE BEAST WORKS, NOT WHO THE BEAST IS. THIS WEEK WE WILL WORK MORE TOWARDS WHO THE BEAST IS BY SPENDING MORE TIME LOOKING AT HOW THE BEAST WORKS. WE SAW HOW THE BEASTS OF REVELATION 13 WERE SATAN'S SYSTEMS WHICH CAUSE EVIL AND TROUBLE IN THE WORLD - SPECIFICALLY THE SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT AND THE FALSE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS. THE BEASTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF SYSTEMS BUT THERE ARE ALSO DESCRIPTIONS OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS THAT DO/WILL DO THE BEASTLY WORK. A FEW OTHER NT TEXTS SPEAK OF THIS FIGURE WHO IS COMPARABLE TO THE TWO BEASTS OF CHAPTER 13.

## MATTHEW 24:9-21 - ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

*AN ABOMINATION THAT BRINGS DESOLATION...*

- 1 - ANTIOCHUS IV - 167 BC (PAST)
- 2 - TEMPLE DESTRUCTION 70 AD (FUTURE FOR THEM/PAST FOR US)
- 3 - REVELATION 13 - ...FUTURE...

THIS IS A SPECIFIC ACTION THAT WILL SET UP THE TIME OF TROUBLE. WE DON'T GET MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON.

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-10 - MAN OF LAWLESSNESS, SON OF DESTRUCTION

THERE IS GOING TO BE A SPECIFIC "MAN OF LAWLESSNESS" WHO WILL BE FILLED WITH PRIDE AND ARROGANCE. HE WILL OPPOSE GOD AND BE BLASPHEMOUSLY BOASTFUL (CP REVELATION 13:5). THIS PERSON WILL EVEN PROCLAIM THEMSELVES TO BE GOD!

BUT PAUL WRITES THESE THINGS SO THAT THE CHURCH CAN BE INFORMED AND AWARE OF:

- 1 - THE COMING OF THIS PERSON
- 2 - THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS KIND OF PERSON (TO BE WATCHFUL FOR GENERALLY)
- 3 - TO NOT BE TROUBLED WITH THESE THINGS, OR THIS PERSON

## 1 JOHN 2:18-22 - ANTICHRIST QUALITIES

1 JOHN 2:18-22 - CHILDREN, IT IS THE LAST HOUR; AND JUST AS YOU HEARD THAT ANTICHRIST IS COMING, EVEN NOW MANY ANTICHRISTS HAVE APPEARED; FROM THIS WE KNOW THAT IT IS THE LAST HOUR. 19 THEY WENT OUT FROM US, BUT THEY WERE NOT REALLY OF US; FOR IF THEY HAD BEEN OF US, THEY WOULD HAVE REMAINED WITH US; BUT THEY WENT OUT, SO THAT IT WOULD BE SHOWN THAT THEY ALL ARE NOT OF US. 20 BUT YOU HAVE AN ANOINTING FROM THE HOLY ONE, AND YOU ALL KNOW. 21 I HAVE NOT WRITTEN TO YOU BECAUSE YOU DO NOT KNOW THE TRUTH, BUT BECAUSE YOU DO KNOW IT, AND BECAUSE NO LIE

IS OF THE TRUTH. 22 WHO IS THE LIAR BUT THE ONE WHO DENIES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST? THIS IS THE ANTICHRIST, THE ONE WHO DENIES THE FATHER AND THE SON.

## 1 JOHN 4:1-4 - SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, GNOSTIC TEACHING

1 JOHN 4:1-4 - BELOVED, DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT, BUT TEST THE SPIRITS TO SEE WHETHER THEY ARE FROM GOD, BECAUSE MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD. 2 BY THIS YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD: EVERY SPIRIT THAT CONFESSES THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS FROM GOD; 3 AND EVERY SPIRIT THAT DOES NOT CONFESS JESUS IS NOT FROM GOD; THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST, OF WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT IS COMING, AND NOW IT IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD. 4 YOU ARE FROM GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN, AND HAVE OVERCOME THEM; BECAUSE GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD.

2 JOHN 1:7-9 (NLT) - I SAY THIS BECAUSE MANY DECEIVERS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD. THEY DENY THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME IN A REAL BODY. SUCH A PERSON IS A DECEIVER AND AN ANTICHRIST. 8 WATCH YOURSELVES, THAT YOU DO NOT LOSE WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED, BUT THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE A FULL REWARD. 9 ANYONE WHO GOES TOO FAR AND DOES NOT ABIDE IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST, DOES NOT HAVE GOD; THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN THE TEACHING, HE HAS BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

WE STARTED THIS LOOKING AT MATTHEW 24 WHERE JESUS REPEATS MULTIPLE TIMES THE NEED TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS AND FALSE CHRISTS. THIS IS WHAT JOHN IS ADDRESSING HERE. HE IS TELLING US THAT NOT ONLY WILL THERE BE *AN* ANTICHRIST, THERE *ARE MANY* ANTICHRISTS. THERE ARE AND WILL BE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS WHICH WILL PRESENT FALSE CHRIST IN THEIR TEACHING AND THROUGH THEIR LEADERSHIP. WE ARE TOLD BY JESUS AHEAD OF TIME TO WATCH FOR THIS AND TO REMEMBER THAT GOD WILL HELP US (*BECAUSE GREATER IS HE...*)

FROM THESE TEXTS WE SEE THE TWO MAIN POINTS WE SAW IN REVELATION 13. THESE BEASTS ARE GOING TO BE PEOPLE WITH POWER AND AUTHORITY AND ALSO WITH RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE.

## REVELATION 13:1-3 - REINTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST BEAST

V. 3 - ONE HEAD APPEARED AS IF IT HAD BEEN SLAIN, BUT THE FATAL WOUND WAS HEALED...

THE BEAST IS REPRESENTATIVE OF A POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM - LED BY HUMANS. ONE OF THE "HEADS" OF THIS BEAST APPEARS TO BE FATALLY WOUNDED, BUT THE BEAST DOESN'T DIE. AND AS THE BEAST GAINS STRENGTH AGAIN, THE WORLD IS IN AWE.

THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM IS GOING TO RECEIVE BLOWS BUT COME BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN. WHEN ONE EVIL KING DIES, ONE MIGHT THINK THE RULE OF THE BEAST IS OVER. BUT SURE ENOUGH ANOTHER SYSTEM COMES TO TAKE ITS PLACE. BABYLON WAS OVER ALL, BUT DIED. THEN GREECE WAS MIGHTY, BUT AS IT FELL, ROME ROSE. EVEN IN OUR DAY, NAZISM IS DEFEATED AND COMMUNISM RISES IN ITS PLACE, COMMUNISM SEEMS TO DIE OUT AND SOCIALISM AND NATIONALISM ASCEND.

IN THE TIME OF THE EARLY CHURCH, THERE WAS A SPECIFIC SCENARIO WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN RELEVANT. IT RELATES TO NERO, ONE OF THE MOST VIOLENT AND EVIL OF THE ROMAN EMPERORS, ESPECIALLY TOWARDS CHRISTIANS IN ROME:

"AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-TWO, NERO COMMITTED SUICIDE, HOWEVER A RUMOR BEGAN THAT NERO HAD NOT REALLY DIED BUT HAD BEEN TAKEN TO A REMOTE ISLAND TO RECOVER FROM THE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AND WOULD RETURN TO REGAIN THE THRONE. HE, OF COURSE, DID DIE AND DID NOT RETURN, BUT THE RUMOR TOOK ON SUCH MYTHIC PROPORTIONS THAT MANY WOULD-BE POWER BROKERS CAPITALIZED ON IT. NERO-IMPOSTERS EMERGED ALL OVER THE EMPIRE, SOME OF THEM WINNING SIZABLE FOLLOWINGS..." (DARRELL W. JOHNSON, "DISCIPLESHIP ON THE EDGE", PAGE 236)

THERE MAY BE A SPECIFIC PERSON THAT WILL BE WOUNDED AND REVIVED (LIKE NERO WAS RUMORED TO BE), BUT FOR SURE THE SYSTEM OF THE BEAST FITS THIS DESCRIPTION AS WELL.

### REVELATION 13:13-15 - SIGNS, WONDERS AND THE IMAGE SPEAKS!

THIS IS TROUBLING. THE SECOND BEAST, WHO REPRESENTS FALSE RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY, HAS POWER AND AUTHORITY WHICH IT USES TO GET PEOPLE TO WORSHIP THE FIRST BEAST, WHICH IS ULTIMATELY DEVOTION TO THE DEVIL/DAGON. THIS SYSTEM, AND THE FINAL VERSION OF THIS SYSTEM AT THE END OF THE AGE IS NOT GOING TO BE WEAK. THE TEXT TELLS US OF POWER AND MIRACULOUSNESS - CLIMAXING IN MAKING THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SPEAK. THAT IS NO JOKE! THE FALSE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE HAVE MEASURABLE IMPACT ON PEOPLE. THEY WILL BE IN AWE, THEIR LIVES WILL BE AFFECTED, THEY WILL SEE THINGS THAT WILL BE COMPELLING. WE KNOW THIS IS TRUE - FALSE RELIGIONS SEEM TO HELP PEOPLE IMPROVE THEIR LIVES. PEOPLE WHO JOIN A MOSQUE, AN ATHEIST SUPPORT GROUP, THE KKK OR A BEER SOAKED BOWLING LEAGUE FIND COMMUNITY, ACCEPTANCE, PURPOSE AND LOVE. WHAT ABOUT OBVIOUSLY CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO LEAD HEALING OR MIRACLE MINISTRIES. ARE THESE THINGS EVIDENCE THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS ARE FROM GOD? THAT'S A REALLY TOUGH QUESTION...

BUT GOD'S WORD HELPS US. CONSIDER WHAT THE LORD SAID TO HIS PEOPLE THROUGH MOSES:

**DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5** - "IF A PROPHET OR A DREAMER OF DREAMS ARISES AMONG YOU AND GIVES YOU A SIGN OR A WONDER, 2 AND THE SIGN OR THE WONDER COMES TRUE, CONCERNING WHICH HE SPOKE TO YOU, SAYING, 'LET US GO AFTER OTHER GODS (WHOM YOU HAVE NOT KNOWN) AND LET US SERVE THEM,' 3 YOU SHALL NOT LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF THAT PROPHET OR THAT DREAMER OF DREAMS; FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS TESTING YOU TO FIND OUT IF YOU LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL. 4 "YOU SHALL FOLLOW THE LORD YOUR GOD AND FEAR HIM; AND YOU SHALL KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, LISTEN TO HIS VOICE, SERVE HIM, AND CLING TO HIM. 5 "BUT THAT PROPHET OR THAT DREAMER OF DREAMS SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH, BECAUSE HE HAS COUNSELED REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD YOUR GOD WHO BROUGHT YOU FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT AND REDEEMED YOU FROM THE HOUSE OF SLAVERY, TO SEDUCE YOU FROM THE WAY IN WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD COMMANDED YOU TO WALK. SO YOU SHALL PURGE THE EVIL FROM AMONG YOU.

THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MIRACLES ACCOMPANYING THE MESSAGE. THE MOSAIC LAW WARNED, THAT EVEN IF A PROPHET DID A MIRACLE, IF THE MESSAGE THE PROPHET IS SPEAKING IS TO TURN AND WORSHIP OTHER GODS, THE MIRACLE WORKING PROPHET IS A **FALSE PROPHET**. (THE BIBLE ALSO STRESSES THAT YOU WILL KNOW TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS BY THEIR "FRUIT"

(AKA LIFE), BUT IN THIS CASE WE'RE SEEKING WISDOM ABOUT WHAT TO DO WHEN IT APPEARS THE PROPHET HAS "POWER"). IF THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET DEVIATES FROM THE WORD OF GOD OR THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET IS CALLING YOU TO DEVIATE FROM THE WORSHIP OF GOD - THEY ARE NOT OF GOD.

THIS CAN BE TRICKY, EVEN SCARY. BUT IN LIGHT OF THE WONDERS OF THE BEAST, WE CAN BE COMFORTED THAT IF WE STAY COMMITTED TO LOVING THE LORD OUR GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEARTS, WE WILL NOT BE TRICKED OR WOWED AWAY FROM THE ONE WE LOVE.

## **REVELATION 13:16-18 - "THE MARK OF THE BEAST"**

A WORD ABOUT SEALS & MARKS: WE'VE ALREADY READ ABOUT A "SEAL" THAT WILL BE PLACED ON THE FOREHEADS OF THOSE WHO BELONG TO GOD BEFORE THE GREAT TIME OF TRIAL COMES. THIS ACTION "EVOKES A PICTURE OF A ROYAL SIGNET RING BY WHICH KINGS AUTHENTICATED DOCUMENTS OR MARKED OWNERSHIP OF AN ITEM" (ESV STUDY BIBLE, REVELATION 7:1-13). THIS IS A SEAL THAT IS GIVEN BY GOD TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO HIM.

IN CONTRAST, THE "MARK OF THE BEAST" IS A MARKING (ON THE FOREHEAD OR HAND) UPON THOSE WHO PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FIRST BEAST AND ITS SYSTEM.

THE FUNCTION OF THIS MARK RELATES TO ECONOMIC ACCESS, BUT IT IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT WORSHIP. THE GOAL OF THE SECOND BEAST IS TO GET PEOPLE TO WORSHIP THE FIRST BEAST - AND THE MARKING OF THE BEAST AND THE ABILITY TO BUY AND SELL IN THE BEAST'S SYSTEM AS A RESULT IS ABOUT WORSHIP OF THE BEAST. LATER IN REVELATION 14 WE WILL READ:

**REVELATION 14:9-10A** - THEN ANOTHER ANGEL, A THIRD ONE, FOLLOWED THEM, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, "IF ANYONE WORSHIPS THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE, AND RECEIVES A MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD OR ON HIS HAND, TO HE ALSO WILL DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD,...

**REVELATION 14:11 (NLT)** - THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT WILL RISE FOREVER AND EVER, AND THEY WILL HAVE NO RELIEF DAY OR NIGHT, FOR THEY HAVE WORSHIPED THE BEAST AND HIS STATUE AND HAVE ACCEPTED THE MARK OF HIS NAME."

SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WORSHIP AND THE MARK?

OUR NATION HAS RESTRICTIONS ON CERTAIN ACTIVITIES AND "MARKS" THAT ARE REQUIRED TO LIFT THOSE RESTRICTIONS. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE IN ORDER TO LEGALLY DRIVE A CAR. YOU MUST HAVE CAR INSURANCE AS WELL - AND HAVE PROOF OF INSURANCE WITH YOU WHEN YOU DRIVE. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE WORSHIP TO RECEIVE THEM. IF WE LIVED IN A SYSTEM THAT REQUIRED PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE PRESIDENT (ETC) TO RECEIVE THEM, IT WOULD BE A DIFFERENT STORY. THESE LAWS ARE IN PLACE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD AND SAFETY - WITHIN A BROKEN, LIMITED AND HUMAN INSTITUTION.

WHAT WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR SPIRITUAL EYES OPEN FOR ARE THOSE THINGS WHICH WILL RELATE TO DEVOTION, WORSHIP AND LORDSHIP. I'M NOT GOING TO GET A DRIVERS LICENSE IF THE LAW REQUIRES A PINCH OF INCENSE TO BE MADE FIRST, OR A PRAYER TO BE SAID IN

"THE PRESIDENT'S NAME..." OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. (THERE ARE VARIOUS EXAMPLES OF SUCH SITUATIONS IN HISTORY). THOSE ACTIONS ARE ACTIONS OF WORSHIP WHICH ARE ACTIONS OF THE HEART AND MIND TOWARDS SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE TRUE GOD.

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-8** - "HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! 5 "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. 6 "THESE WORDS, WHICH I AM COMMANDING YOU TODAY, SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. 7 YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR SONS AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP. 8 "YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTALS ON YOUR FOREHEAD.

THE WORDS AND WAYS OF GOD WERE TO BE SO CLOSE TO GOD'S PEOPLE THAT THEY WERE TO BE "ON THEIR HEART" (RELATING TO FEELINGS), SPOKEN OF WHEN THEY SIT OR WALK (WHERE THEY GO), A "SIGN ON THEIR HAND" (RELATING TO WHAT THEY WOULD DO), AND "FRONTALS ON THEIR FOREHEAD" (RELATING TO THEIR THOUGHTS). (SIDE NOTE: THE HEBREW FOR DEUT 6:8 "SIGNS" AND "FRONTALS" ARE RELATED TO MARKINGS) THE SYSTEM OF THE BEAST IS LOOKING TO WIN THOSE SACRED SPACES IN THE LIVES OF MEN AND WOMEN SO THAT THEY CANNOT BE FILLED WITH GOD.

THERE WILL BE MANY WHO WILL WILLINGLY SURRENDER THEIR HEART TO THIS WORLD (AND THE RULER OF THIS WORLD), AND ESPECIALLY IF THE SIMPLICITY OF THEIR LIVELIHOOD IS AT STAKE. GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW THAT HE IS THEIR PROVIDER AND EVEN IN THE TIMES OF TREMENDOUS PRESSURE, HE IS FAITHFUL TO PROVIDE FOR US, AND ALSO PROVIDE A WAY TO ESCAPE:

**PSALM 37:25** — I HAVE BEEN YOUNG AND NOW I AM OLD, YET I HAVE NOT SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN OR HIS DESCENDANTS BEGGING BREAD.

**1 CORINTHIANS 10:13** - NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN; AND GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE ALSO, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT.

THIS IS A PROMISE FROM GOD FOR TODAY AND IN THE DAYS TO COME, EVEN IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THIS AGE. IF WE CAN TRUST HIM NOW, WE CAN TRUST HIM THEN.

## **REVELATION 13:18 - THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST**

WHAT WE ARE TOLD TO CALCULATE THE NUMBER, THAT THE NUMBER IS THE NUMBER OF A MAN, AND THAT THE NUMBER IS SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY SIX. MOST COMMENTATORS BELIEVE JOHN MAY BE USING A DEVICE FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD KNOWN AS "GEMATRIA" WHICH CORRESPONDS A NUMBER WITH A LETTER. GEORGE LADD EXPLAINS:

"NEITHER GREEK NOR HEBREWS LANGUAGES USED A SYSTEM OF NUMBERS. INSTEAD OF NUMBERS THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET STOOD FOR NUMBERS (EX: A=1, B=2, C=3, ETC.). THUS A NAME COULD BE CONVERTED INTO ITS CORRESPONDING LETTER. (ONE HISTORIAN) RECORDS A WALL-SCRIBBLING FROM POMPEII WHICH READS "I LOVE HER WHOSE NUMBER IS 545 (PHI MU EPSILON) ("A COMMENTARY ON THE REVELATION OF JOHN", PAGE 186)."

## WHAT DOES THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST MEAN?

"ANY AMOUNT OF INK HAS BEEN SPILLED OVER THIS FASCINATING, AND MISLEADING, QUESTION. THE NUMBER IS SAID TO STAND FOR NERO, OR CALIGULA, OR DOMITIAN, OR THE CAESARS IN GENERAL, OR THE ROMAN EMPIRE, OR ANY ONE OF SEVERAL SOLUTIONS...MORE RECENT CANDIDATES HAVE INCLUDED MOHAMMED, OLIVER CROMWELL, AND NAPOLEON, NOT TO MENTION MARTIN LUTHER AND AN ASSORTMENT OF POPES..." (WILCOCK, PAGE 128)

HERE'S THE PROBLEM THOUGH.

"IF WE ADAPT THE RULES TO MAKE NAMES CONFORM (SAY, MULTIPLY BY 7, ADD 4, THEN DIVIDE BY 3) WE CAN EVENTUALLY MAKE ANY NAME FIT 666. INDEED EVERYTHING FROM BIBLICAL SCHOLARS, SCIENTIST, AND LABOR UNIONS TO TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES HAS SURFACED AS CANDIDATES FOR THE ANTICHRIST...IF ONE ADDS UP THE POTENTIAL ROMAN NUMERALS IN "CUTE PURPLE DINOSAUR" (COUNTING THE U AS A V, HENCE A 5), ONE ENDS UP WITH  $100+5+5+50+500+1+5$ , FOR A TOTAL OF 666, THUS IMPLICATING BARNEY HIMSELF! (CRAIG KEENER, "THE NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY" PAGE 359)

THE POINT IS - WE DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS. MANY WELL MEANING FOLKS HAVE SUGGESTED DIFFERENT OPTIONS AND WE MUST PRAYERFULLY TRUST THAT GOD WILL GIVE US THE CLARITY WHEN IT IS NEEDED. IN THE MEANTIME, WHILE WE TRY AND DECIPHER THE NAME - WE NEED MAKE NO MISTAKE AS TO THE QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEAST WE ARE TO BE WATCHING FOR.

REVELATION 13 IS AN INTERLUDE TO THE WINDOWS WE HAVE LOOKED THROUGH IN THE BOOK. THE IMAGES OF THE BEASTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL POWERS OF THIS EVIL AGE. SO THERE IS A SENSE THAT EACH GENERATION LOOKS AT THESE SYMBOLS AND FINDS WITHIN THEIR OWN TIME FULFILLMENT OF THE BEASTLY SYSTEMS OF POWER AND WORSHIP. BUT EACH GENERATION ALSO LOOKS AHEAD TO A FINAL SYSTEM THAT ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE VERY FIERCE, WILL ALSO BE THE FINAL EXPRESSION OF THE DRAGON'S POWER - THE FINAL BEAST WHOSE HEAD WILL BE FATALLY CRUSHED BY CHRIST.

FOR THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY, THIS POLITICAL BEAST IS ROME. FOR THE JEWS OF JEREMIAH'S DAY, IT WAS BABYLON. IN GENESIS 10-11 IT WAS BABEL. THERE IS A CYCLICAL PATTERN IN HISTORY WHERE A POWERFUL EMPIRE EMERGES AND WITH IT AN ARROGANCE AND GODLESSNESS THAT ATTEMPTS TO RULE AND REIGN WITHOUT GOD. THESE EMPIRES NOT ONLY WIELD POLITICAL POWER BUT THEY CRAVE (AND COMMAND) FIDELITY AND DEVOTION OF THE HEART. AS WE HAVE SEEN AS WE WORKED THROUGH REVELATION, THE ROMAN EMPERORS WERE NOT JUST POLITICIANS, THEY WERE WORSHIPED AS GODS (OR OFTEN "SONS OF THE GODS"). SOME OF THE CITIES REVELATION IS WRITTEN TO WERE CENTERS OF THE IMPERIAL CULT.

AND AS A RESULT, PRESSURE WAS MOUNTING ON THE EARLY CHRISTIANS FROM THE CULTURE DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY WERE NOT WORSHIPING CAESAR AS A GOD. THIS WAS NOTICEABLE - AND THE CHRISTIANS HAD TO DISCERN AT WHAT LEVEL THEY WOULD REMAIN IN THE WORLD, WHILE ABSTAINING FROM BEING FROM THE WORLD. COULD YOU BE A CARPENTER IN THYATIRA IF AT THE UNION MEETING THEY SAID A PRAYER TO THE EMPEROR BEFORE THEY STARTED DISCUSSING THEIR BUSINESS? WHAT IF THE MEAL YOU WERE BEING SERVED AT A NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE WAS FROM THE MARKETPLACE THAT WAS FUNDING THE PRIESTS OF THE EMPEROR? DO YOU USE THE MONEY THAT WAS MARKED "CAESAR IS LORD" TO BUY HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES?

THESE WERE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS THEN AND THEY HAVE SOME MODERN EQUIVALENCY TO US NOW. SO WHAT IS THE FOLLOWER OF JESUS TO DO WHEN THEY SEE THE LATEST (OR PERHAPS THE LAST) INCARNATION OF THE BEASTS? A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION HELPS US SEE THINGS IN LIGHT OF UNSEEN THINGS. WE DON'T *SEE* THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE RAGING ALL AROUND US, BUT WITH THE EYES OF FAITH, WE DO. WE DON'T *SEE* THAT JESUS IS EXALTED AND WORKING AS GLORIFIED KING OVER GOD'S CREATION, BUT THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH, WE DO. IT HELPS US SEE THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING NOW THROUGH SPIRITUAL EYES AND IT HELPS US LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE TO SEE THINGS NOT YET SEEN AND UNDERSTAND IT IN LIGHT OF WHAT WE READ AND BELIEVE.

WE LOOK AT OUR CURRENT GOVERNMENTS AND SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS AND SEE THAT THE EVIL ONE IS LURKING BEHIND THE SCENES TO CAUSE CHAOS AND KEEP PEOPLE FROM GOD. BUT WE ALSO SEE GOD WORKING ABOVE AND BEYOND THAT TO ENSURE HIS WILL IS DONE. AND WE LOOK AT THE FUTURE WITH A MIX OF CURIOSITY AND CONFIDENCE TO KNOW THAT THERE WILL BE DARK REPLICAS OF THE BEAST THAT ALTHOUGH FEROCIOUS, WILL BE EXPOSED AND EXTERMINATED. WE LOOK AT BABEL AND EGYPT AND BABYLON AND GREECE AND ROME AND GERMANY AND RUSSIA AND CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES AND SEE THE TRAITS OF BOTH BEASTS IN EACH. AND WE LOOK AT THE FUTURE FOR THE FINAL BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET WHO WILL INFLUENCE THE WHOLE WORLD IN THE DRAGON'S FINAL HURRAH.

BUT, AS WE CONCLUDE FOR NOW, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE KEY TO OVERCOMING THESE DECEPTIVE BEASTS IS NOT BY STUDYING OR DISSECTING THEM. THE KEY TO IDENTIFYING WHO AND WHAT THE COUNTERFEIT IS LIES IN INTIMATELY KNOWING THE GENUINE.

IF YOU KNOW THE REAL DEAL YOU WON'T BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO KNOWING THE IMPOSTER. SO WHAT MUST WE KNOW - WE MUST KNOW YAHWEH OUR GOD. WE MUST STUDY WHO HE IS, WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHAT HE IS LIKE, WHAT HE HAS SAID, WHAT HE IS DOING AND WHAT HE WILL DO. WE MUST KNOW THE TRUE MESSIAH, JESUS OF NAZARETH. WE MUST STUDY WHO HE IS, WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHAT HE HAS SAID, WHAT HE IS DOING AND WILL DO.

WE MUST KNOW THE TRUE HOPE OF THINGS TO COME - THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WE WILL NOT BE TRICKED INTO INVESTING OUR HOPE OR HEART IN ANY NATION OF THIS WORLD IF WE KNOW FOR SURE THAT NO SYSTEM OR LEADER, NO MATTER HOW WELL IT DOES, IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD. SPECIFICALLY IN OUR CONTEXT - AMERICA MIGHT BE THE CLOSEST VERSION TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD (A REALITY THAT WE OUGHT TO BE GRATEFUL FOR), BUT CLOSE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS *NOT* THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

WE MUST KNOW THE TRUE GOSPEL MESSAGE - WHAT IT ANNOUNCES, WHAT IT DENOUNCES, WHAT IT PROMISES, AND WHAT IT PROMOTES. THEN NO IMPOSTER OR IMITATION WILL BE ABLE TO SWAY US - EVEN IF FIRE COMES FROM HEAVEN OR AN IMAGE SPEAKS TO US. "...WE MUST PAY MUCH CLOSER ATTENTION TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD, LEST WE DRIFT AWAY FROM IT. (HEBREWS 2:1)."

IT IS AN IMPORTANT DISCIPLINE TO KNOW AND STUDY PROPHECY, ESPECIALLY AS IT RELATES TO THE END OF THIS AGE. BUT IN ALL OF THIS WE CAN NEVER, EVER TAKE OUR EYE OFF OF THE GENUINE. WE'RE GOING TO WONDER WHERE TO GO, WHAT'S TRUE AND HOW WE SHOULD LIVE. AND SO WE MUST KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS. HE IS *THE* WAY, *THE* TRUTH AND *THE* LIFE.