

# Lesson 31

Last week we started looking at Chapter 13, and we looked at the beast from the sea that John sees in verse 1. We saw that this first beast represents Rome from the perspective of the evil Roman emperors. We saw how the beast being killed but then coming back to life represented the death of Nero and the rise of Domitian, who picked up persecuting the church where Nero had left off. The broken seven in verse 5 gave us hope that this resurrected beast of Rome under Domitian would not continue forever. Verse 7 continues the description of Rome under the Emperor Domitian.

## **Revelation 13:7-8**

**7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

In verse 7, the resurrected beast (Domitian) makes war on the church, and he is pictured here as actually overcoming the church. This is the same situation we saw back in Revelation 7:7 where the beast (Rome) came out of the bottomless pit and killed the two witnesses (the church).

Here, as in Chapter 7, we are simply being shown the situation from the beast's perspective. Rome *thought* it had overcome the church — but things are not what they seem! We already know from verse 5 that verse 7 is not the end of the story! We are in a period of 42 months, which means that what we are seeing here is temporary, just a broken seven. Verse 7 may look like a defeat of the church, but we know it is not. How do we know that for sure? Because God has already shown us how this all ends! We saw the happy ending for the church back in Chapter 11.

The end of verse 7 confirms that we are looking at a Roman emperor — who else at this time could be said to have power “over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” And who gave that power to Rome? Ultimately, all authority comes from God, but we know that Rome was not using its power according to God’s will. Instead, Rome was following the will of the dragon, who verse 2 told us was the one who gave power to Rome.

Those who dwell upon the earth in verse 8 are those outside of the church, who are on Rome’s side. What does it mean in verse 8 when those outside the church are described as those “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”? Here is how the ESV translates that verse: “everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”

Our first question is this — which translation is correct? Were the names written in the book from the foundation of the world, or was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?

If we go by the order of the Greek words, then the KJV is correct — the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. That would mean that the sacrificial death of Christ was part of God’s plan all along, which is something we know already from Genesis 3:15.

What is the support for the ESV translation? The best support comes from the parallel passage in Revelation 17.

***Revelation 17:8** — The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, **whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,** when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

In fact, that parallel verse is enough for me to conclude that the ESV of Revelation 13:8 is the correct translation: “everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”

But does that then mean that those in the book of life were predestined for salvation before they were even born, and that those not in the book of life were predestined for damnation before their birth? **Of course not! How could it?** The entire Bible screams out against such a heinous concept.

As we often do, let's turn to an easy to understand statement in the Bible that can help us with this more difficult statement in verse 8.

**2 Peter 3:9** — *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

“Not willing that any should perish.” How can anyone misunderstand that? Is God willing that some should perish? No. God's will is that no one should perish. So then why do so many perish? Because of their own will.

**2 Thessalonians 2:10** — *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that **perish**; because **they** received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

It is not God's will that anyone should perish! It is impossible to reconcile that fact with the idea that God predestined the vast bulk of mankind to damnation before they were even created! Any Christian should be repulsed by such an idea! I am concerned about anyone who could read the entire Bible and then here, in the final book of the Bible, believe that God created some people just to fuel the fires of hell. But is that really what Calvinists believe? Let's let John Calvin answer that question.

**Calvin:** “We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of **each man**. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as **any man** has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of **him** as predestined to life or to death.”

**Why proclaim the gospel at all if the Book of Life had already been filled up before the world was even created? And why is there is a struggle to remain faithful unto death if the Book of Life is written with indelible ink?** And what about Revelation 3:5, which talks about God blotting names out of that book? Although not everyone's name will be in the book of life, that book has enough space in it to hold everyone's name — there is no other way to understand 2 Peter 3:9.

So what then is meant by verse 8? Paul tells us exactly what it means. Notice the **plural** pronouns as I read these verses, and notice how they differ from the **singular** pronouns used by John Calvin.

**Ephesian 1:4-6** — *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Yes, predestination is true. **But, individuals are not predestined. Instead, what is predestined is the church.**

God's plan was that there would be a book of life and that those in his eternal kingdom would have their names written in that book — and that was God's plan from before the foundation of the world. **But that is a plan for the church.** That is what Ephesians 1 tells us. And verse 8 here in Revelation 13 gives us the other side of that coin — just as those in the church are predestined to life, those outside the church are predestined to death. **The two groups are predestined; not the individuals in the two groups.** Those outside the church can join the group predestined to life if they obey the gospel, and those inside the church can fall back into the group predestined to death if they are not faithful unto death.

We earlier discussed what it meant for God to mark his people as his own special possession. That symbolic mark is tied to having one's name marked or recorded in the Book of Life. The Old Testament closes with a beautiful description of this idea.

**Malachi 3:16-17** — *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

“They shall be mine!” One of the greatest Bible scholars I ever knew was Marion Williams, and here is what she wrote next to Malachi 3 in the margin of her Bible (which I now own):

No matter how lonely this life, how far from loved ones and friends, think on this splendid, magnificent truth: Almighty God says of us, ‘This one is mine’ — the ultimate recognition, the ultimate friendship.

Yes, God has a Book of Life. Yes, God has a Book of Remembrance. And, yes, that book is the book you want to be in! That is the book where God writes the names of those to whom he says, “this one is mine!” And the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God’s book of life has enough space in it for everyone’s name to fit! That’s not what John Calvin says, but it is most certainly what Jesus says.

*Matthew 11:28 — Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Is the invitation of Christ to **all** people or just to **some** people? “Come unto me, **all** ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

### **Revelation 13:9-10**

**9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**

The message of verse 10 is the same message we find in Romans 12:19 — “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” And God’s repayment to Rome would be a repayment in kind. Those who had led Christians captive would themselves be led captive, and those who had killed Christians with the sword would themselves be killed with the sword. We are reminded of the word of Jesus in Matthew 26:52 — “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

When would this happen, and how would this happen? The book itself answers the question of when — it would happen **soon**. We are told that from the very first verse of the book all the way through to the closing verses of the book.

But how would it happen? Would Rome literally be taken captive? Would Roman literally face the sword? Yes, Rome later had some very rough times, leading eventually to its fall in AD 476. But I don't think that is what we are seeing here.

This book is not about a physical deliverance and a physical judgment — everything we have seen so far has been pointing to a spiritual deliverance and a spiritual judgment. In fact, the suffering Christians have been told that their suffering on this earth will continue, and that they must remain faithful unto death. Likewise, while Nero and Domitian met gruesome ends, most Romans did not. Their judgment was not physical, but was spiritual.

I think that verse 10 of Chapter 13 is telling us the same thing we saw in verse 11 of the previous chapter: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” Both verses confirm that what we are seeing in this book is a **spiritual** deliverance of God's people rather than a **physical** deliverance. Why? **Because verse 10 confirms that the Christians would be led captive and would be put to death by the sword.** Verse 10 confirms that their deliverance would not be a physical deliverance.

There are consequences in this life from following Christ, and Christians must accept those consequences. We know from 2 Timothy 3:12 that those consequences will involve persecution, and part of daily taking up our cross is accepting those consequences. In the first century, those consequences included death and captivity, and verse 10 does not promise a physical deliverance from those consequences. In fact, it promises the opposite; it promises that those consequences will occur.

But verse 10 ends by listing the weapons and the armor that are available to a Christian and that will allow a Christian to be spiritually delivered. “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

The Greek word translated *patience* does not mean passive endurance, but rather it means courageously accepting the worst in this life so that we can turn it into glory for God. The Greek word translated *faith* means a fidelity that never wavers. Those were the weapons that Christians used in the first century to conquer the mighty Roman empire, and those same weapons will still conquer the strongholds of Satan today.

*Ephesians 6:16 — Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

Was the church at war with Rome? Yes. Most definitely. Are we likewise at war today with the godlessness that threatens to engulf us? Yes. Most definitely. Are our weapons carnal? No. Most definitely not. Our weapons are steadfast endurance and loyalty to Christ. Nothing on earth can defeat us while we wield those weapons! Faith is the victory!

*1 John 5:4 — For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

That verse is not describing a physical victory, and neither is this book of Revelation. Jesus conquered Satan through death, and so will we if we remain faithful unto death. When we cross over that finish line, we will be forever out of Satan's grasp.

We know that those who remain faithful unto death will one day hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." But the sad truth is that everyone will one day hear those same words, but for many those words will be spoken, not by Christ, but by Satan. Everyone on earth is the faithful servant of someone, but the victory of faith belongs only to those who are the faithful servant of Christ.

One final comment about verse 10 — notice the word "here" in the final sentence. "**Here** is the patience and the faith of the saints." How can we remain patient in the face of persecution? How can we remain faithful in the face of discouragement? By remembering that God is in control, that God knows what is happening, and that God loves us. Isn't that the message of the first half of verse 10? God knew what Rome was doing to the saints, and God was going to take care of Rome and take care of the saints — but in very different ways! Rome was to be judged and face punishment. The saints were to enjoy a spiritual deliverance putting them forever out of the clutches of the great red dragon. **Here** is the patience and the faith of the saints!

## **Revelation 13:11-12**

**11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and**

**he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.**

The first beast arose from the sea. In verse 11, we meet a second beast that arises, not from the sea, but from the earth.

First, why are there **two** beasts in this chapter? Throughout our study we have seen the number two being used to represent Rome. The appearance of two beasts in this chapter points us all the way back to the mythology of how Rome was founded. According to legend, Rome was founded by the twin brothers Romulus and Remus, who were raised by a wolf. Because Romulus was raised by a wolf, one early source even called him “the son of the beast.”

Since ancient times, the image of the twins brothers Romulus and Remus being suckled by a she-wolf has been a symbol of the city of Rome and the Roman people. According to Roman mythology, Romulus killed Remus and then went on to found the city of Rome and the Roman Kingdom. Coins minted at the time of this book show the twins living as two beasts, being nursed by a wolf (with Domitian on the front of the coin).

The beast twins Romulus and Remus had by the first century been replaced by another set of beast twins — Nero and Domitian (who, although not physical twins, acted as twins when it came to persecuting the church). Back in Chapter 11, we saw the church represented by two witnesses, where we saw that the number two represented royalty and priesthood. Here we see the same combination — the first beast showed us the royal side of Rome, while we will soon see that this second beast is showing us the religious or priestly side of Rome.

Earlier we saw two witnesses, and here we see two beasts. Which pair will prevail? Will Nero and Domitian conquer the two witnesses, or will the two witnesses conquer Nero and Domitian? Caesar or Christ? Which royal priesthood is eternal and which is not? Those are the questions in this chapter.

So what can we say about this second beast? What aspect of Rome does this second beast depict? As we always do, let’s consider the clues.

The first thing we see about this second beast is that it rises from the **earth**. This part of the beast's description stresses its **human origin**. In verse 18 we will see that it is given "the number of a man" This second beast is man-made. This second beast is a beast made with human hands.

Now where have we seen that distinction before? All the way back in Daniel, written six centuries earlier, where Daniel was also talking about the Roman empire.

***Daniel 2:44-45** — And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that **the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands**, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

The logic of that verse is inescapable: **you show me a man-made religion, and I'll show you something that is NOT the eternal kingdom of God!** The eternal kingdom of God was not made with human hands. Instead, it was created by the hands of God in Acts 2. There is a sharp line drawn all throughout the Bible between those things made with human hands and those things that are not.

***Acts 17:24-25** — God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, **dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands**, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.*

This second beast rises up from the earth. Its origin is with man. Later in Revelation 16:13 and Revelation 19:20, we will see this second beast referred to as a **false prophet**. That identification, combined with the description here in Chapter 13, shows us that this second beast is depicting Rome as a false, man-made religion. And what was the religion of Rome? **Caesar worship**.

Verse 12 confirms this view — there we see that this second beast causes the earth to worship the first beast. The first beast showed us the royal side of

Rome with its seven heads and its ten horns, all representing kings. Verse 12 tells us that the false, man-made religion of Rome shown by the second beast caused men to worship the Roman emperors shown by the first beast.

Finally, verse 11 tells us that this second beast looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. This second beast is a dragon in sheep's clothing. We are reminded of something else that dresses like a sheep.

**Matthew 7:15** — *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

So already here in verse 11, we see this second beast shown to us as a false prophet, which is what it will be explicitly called later in Chapters 16 and 19.

Verse 11 also reminds of something we saw earlier about the first beast. Like that first beast which died and came back to life, this second beast is also being shown as a terrible parody of the true lamb of God. But this lamb in verse 11 is a false lamb. This lamb in verse 11 is really a dragon. We are reminded of something Paul wrote.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-14** — *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

Here in verse 11 Satan has transformed himself into a lamb!

The two horns in verse 11 give us yet another appearance of the number two. The "two horns like a lamb" may be saying that, like the true lamb, this second beast is a combination of royalty and priesthood. The beast looks like a king, and it looks like a priest — but it speaks like Satan. The two horns may instead or may also be pointing to the two Roman kings, Nero and Domitian.

You mean Satan would attack the church by creating a false man-made religion that looks like a lamb on the surface but is anything but a lamb underneath? Yes, and in fact that seems to be Satan's most common way of attacking the church! If Satan can't conquer the church with a frontal assault, then perhaps Satan can bury the church in a sea of religious confusion and religious error. How can we stop him from doing that?

**Matthew 5:14-16** — *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a can-*

*dlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

The cure for religious darkness is a flashlight! And we are God's flashlight! It is up to us to shine the light of Christ into this dark world of sin and death.

*2 Peter 1:19 — We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*

If we don't shine that light, who will? If we don't proclaim the truth in a world full of darkness, who will? Who else will stand up against Satan's plans?

So where are we? The first beast from the sea portrayed the royal side of Rome. This second beast from the earth portrays the perverted religious side of Rome. This second beast is pointing to Caesar worship, the Roman cult that worshipped the Roman emperors and considered them to be gods. This Roman cult was especially strong in the provinces to which the seven letters of Chapters 2-3 were directed. It was this Roman cult that led to the great persecution of the church. Verse 12 shows us how closely they were tied together — the second beast "exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him." Caesar worship got its power from Caesar.

Together, these two beasts portray Rome as a **royal priesthood**, with the first beast showing the royalty of Rome and the second beast showing the priesthood of Rome. Just as we have seen Rome masquerading as a parody of Christ, we see Rome here masquerading as a parody of the kingdom of Christ, the church.

It looks like we have two royal priesthoods! We have the royal priesthood of 1 Peter 2:9 and Zechariah 6, which is the church, and we have the royal priesthood of Rome. Which royal priesthood will prevail? Caesar or Christ?

The next few verses tell us some more about the priesthood of Rome.

### **Revelation 13:13-15**

**13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth**

**in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.**

Throughout this book, that which is genuine and from God has been accompanied by that which is false and from the earth, and the signs and wonders from God are no exception. Here we see that the beast also had signs and wonders, but of course they are just **false** signs and **false** wonders.

Paul described such signs and wonders (and confirmed that they were false) when he described the lawless one (Domitian) in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 — “Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and **lying** wonders.” Verse 14 also confirms that these were false signs — it tells us that they **deceived** those who dwell on the earth. True signs confirm (Mark 16:20); false signs deceive.

What were these false signs and lying wonders? Much of it involved magic and the occult. Stephen Benko in his book *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (page 128) writes that “certain elements in the official Roman religion were based on magical principles” and that “magic was an accepted form of religious piety.”

History tells us that the Roman priests were both ventriloquists and magicians. Originally ventriloquism was a religious practice. The word ventriloquism comes from the Latin phrase meaning to speak from the stomach. The noises produced by the stomach were thought to be the voices of the dead, who took up residence in the stomach of the ventriloquist. The ventriloquist would then interpret the sounds as if he were speaking to the dead, and he would also foretell the future. Roman priests used ventriloquism to make it appear as if statues of Roman emperors were speaking. That is likely what is

being referred to in verses 14 and 15 — making an image and giving life to the image so that it speaks.

An example of such a person in the Bible may have been Elymas the sorcerer in Acts 13:8 who had influence over a Roman proconsul. And you remember what Paul said to him in verse 10 — “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Paul certainly knew how to get right to the point!)

Verse 14 tells us that these false miracles deceived those that dwell on the earth. The Christians were not deceived; they knew the miracles were false. But many outside the church were deceived. Remember how Revelation 12:9 described Satan — he “deceiveth the whole world.” Satan was deceiving the world with lying wonders in the first century, and Satan is still doing that same thing today. Just turn on the TV and watch the so-called faith healers. People wait in line and pay money to be deceived by such people.

One of the great lessons in this book for us is the lesson of how Satan operates in this world. Satan is still doing today what Satan was doing then — he is trying to destroy the church from within and from without, and he is trying to deceive the world. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, we are cautioned to not be ignorant of Satan’s devices, but for us to heed that caution we must know Satan’s devices. Those devices are on full display in the book of Revelation. We need to study those devices in this book so that we can recognize them when we see them at work in our own world.

Verse 15 says that this second beast would kill those who refused to worship the image of the beast. The magistrate and Roman religious hierarchy had the power to impose death on anyone who refused to confess Caesar as Lord.

**Hailey:** “This put the Christian in the position where he must confess either Christ or Caesar as Lord, thus choosing between immediate death and a few added years of life before eternal death.”

As an aside, the idolatry pictured again and again in this book points directly at Rome and at the false religious practices of Roman Caesar worship. Those who think the villain in this book is Jerusalem have a lot of trouble explaining all of these references to idolatry. Idolatry was not a problem in Jerusalem in the first century.

We all know the steps to salvation: hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, and remain faithful unto death. Is one of those steps more important than the others? We might be tempted, perhaps, to say that baptism is more important because baptism is the point where the transition occurs from the kingdom of darkness to the eternal kingdom — but that baptism is just a bath if it is not preceded by the previous steps. If I let down a ladder so that you can escape a burning building, will you think that one rung of that ladder was somehow more important than the other rungs? Aren't they all equally important from the first rung to the last rung if you are using the rungs of that ladder to climb out of the burning building?

Why do I ask that question? Because sometimes I fear that we treat the step of confession as secondary to the step of baptism; that somehow confession is less important. Would we see that step of confession differently if we had a loaded gun at our head while we proclaimed our belief that Jesus is the son of the living God? Those who made the good confession in the first century often did so under threat of death. Let's think about those Christians the next time we hear someone make that good confession. And let's make sure we have a microphone for that confession so that everyone in this building can hear it! "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). And let's make sure that our first confession is not our last confession. We need to daily confess our faith in Jesus Christ as the son of living God to all who will listen!

We haven't said much in our study of the book of Revelation about the anti-christ. And that is because the antichrist is nowhere mentioned in this book. But John does tell us in another book what it means to be an antichrist — and it involves confession.

*2 John 1:7 — For many deceivers are entered into the world, who **confess not** that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

The world is full of such deceivers and such antichrists. How do we fight them? By doing what they will not do — by confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh!