

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUMENTS OF SATAN EMPLOYED IN HIS WAR AGAINST CHRISTIANS

PART 1. Revelation 13:1-10. THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA.

(1) The identity of the beast out of the sea (13:1-2).

13:1 And I saw (Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka)(aorist). John saw something that is already past tense in heaven, yet still future on this present earth. Our human sense of time is limited. What for us is still future is for God already past. The beast will think that he is doing something original when he rises out of the sea, but he will have no idea that many centuries before God through his prophet had already predicted and described what would happen. John had seen these events before they actually happen. The beast does not realise that he fits into God's eternal plan with respect to the last things. The beast will arise from the unruly sea of nations and world events, but it is God who allows him to arise at the exact moment written in the scroll (5:1).

a beast (Greek: therion) continuously coming out (Greek: anabaino)(present) of the sea. The picture is of a monster coming out of the sea. John describes the beast as he rises out of the water, first its horns with ten crowns are seen, then its seven heads each with a blasphemous name and finally its body looking like a monster composed of three animals. The beast arises out of the surging and chaos of the restless and unruly nations of the world. The picture of the vision is very literal, but nevertheless has symbolic meaning. The verb 'coming up' is in the present continuous time suggesting that the beast rises continuously or again and again in history.

The beast out of the sea is described in terms that indicate the form that the rulers of the world, the Roman Empire, assumed during the close of the first century A.D. when John received the vision from Christ. Because the beast is a composite of Daniel's beasts (Dan 7:3-8; 8:3-8) it cannot symbolise any specific demonstrable or identifiable antichrist with its empire. It is rather a symbol of all the nations as political units (empires) and all human governments (rulers) (all antichristian world empires throughout all time) that are involved in antichristian persecution throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The beast represents every antichristian government and every antichrist in history. However civilized and human they may seem to be, their real nature is hard, cruel, indifferent and bloodthirsty.

The beast out of the sea represents Satan's antichristian political oppression and persecution throughout the New Testament period from the first coming of Christ to his second coming. It represents his persecuting power in and through the nations of this world (Isaiah 17:12) and their governments. It represents all nations as political units (empires, kingdoms) (Daniel 7:17), all human governments and all their rulers (emperors, kings) (Daniel 7:24), who execute Satan's plans, blaspheme God, oppress all the inhabitants of the world and persecute Christians throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, symbolised by forty-two months (13:5,7).

The sea is a symbol that represents all the nations of the world that are in turmoil and that rage and roar (Psalm 65:7; 69:1-21; 124:2-5; 144:7; Isaiah 8:7; 17:12-13; 27:1; Jeremiah 46:7-8; 47:2; Daniel 7:2-3,17,23; Zechariah 10:11; Revelation 13:1; 17:15; 21:1).

He had (present) ten (Greek: deka) horns (Greek: kerata) and seven heads (Greek: kephale). Its horns. Horns are a symbol of aggressive attack, violent pushing and destruction. The ten horns with diadems represent mighty men or rulers of the world with their arrogant claims to authority (Psalm 2:1-3; Isaiah 14:3-20; Ezekiel 28:1-19; Daniel 7:24; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 17:12). The number 7 is the number of divine perfection, but also the number of the arrogant claims to divinity! The number 10 is the number of completeness on earth. While the seven horns of Christ symbolise his absolute sovereign power in the universe (5:6; Matthew 28:18), the ten horns of the dragon (12:3), of the beast out of the sea (13:1) and of the beast out of the Abyss (17:3) symbolise their complete destructive power on earth. Satan exercises his destructive power (thus not: absolute sovereign power) through the antichristian governments of the world and finally through the government of the final antichrist in history (17:12).

Its heads. The beast out of the sea assumes different forms. It has seven heads. Although the forms differ, the essence remains the same. The seven heads represent seven previous successive world empires, which in one way or another have acted as if they were God: they ruled over God's people, oppressed them, exiled them, sought to destroy them and actually destroyed them. They symbolise world empires that throughout the history of the world opposed God and his people, for example:

- the Old Babylonian empire (Genesis 11:1-9)
- the Egyptian empire (Exodus 1:8-11)
- the Assyrian empire (2 Kings 15:19-20,29)
- the Babylonian empire (2 Kings 24:1-2,10-17; 25:1-21)
- the Medo-Persian empire (Esther 1:1-2; 3:6,8,9,13)
- the Greek-Syrian empire (1 and 2 Maccabees)

- and the Roman empire (Matthew 2:1-17; 27:11-26).

The city of Rome was built on seven hills and the great prostitute is pictured as sitting on these seven hills (17:9). Thus John pictures the seven heads of the scarlet beast (17:3) in terms of the Roman Empire during the first century A.D. (i.e. the appearance of the beast during the life of John). He also describes the seven heads of the scarlet beast as seven kings and says that the final king had not yet come (17:10). The final head or king would be the final embodiment of the beast out of the sea. Thus the beast out of the sea is in its entirety much more than the Roman Empire and his seven heads comprise many more than all the emperors of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire of the first century A.D. is only one of the beast's embodiments and heads.

Likewise John describes the beast that comes up from the Abyss (11:7) as having seven heads and ten horns. This beast is related to but not identical with the beast coming out of the sea. This beast is the final embodiment of the beast out of the sea (cf. 11:7; 17:3,8,11).

with ten crowns (Greek: diadema) on his horns. Its crowns. Crowns are found on kings. The many crowns (19:12) on the head of Christ symbolise his absolute authority. He is the King of all kings (1:5; 17:14; 19:16; Matthew 28:18).

The seven crowns on the head of the dragon (Satan) (12:3) are not laurels or wreaths of victory (Greek: stafanoi) but crowns (Greek: diademata) of people who arrogantly claim to have authority. The dragon falsely claims authority over the whole earth (Luke 4:5-6) and is called "the prince of the world", that is, the one who rules the world consisting of all kingdoms and lesser powers that are inspired and controlled by him (John 12:31; cf. 1 John 5:19). Note that Satan does not control Christians (1 John 5:18)!

The ten crowns on the horns, not heads, of the beast symbolise the arrogant claims to authority of these kings on earth. While the dragon's heads were crowned, only the beast's horns were crowned. This symbolizes that Satan has delegated this arrogant claim to power and authority to the godless nations and their governments in order to persecute the Christian Church. Satan executes his evil plans through the world governments. The earthly rulers are subject to Satan and receive their inspiration from Satan. Of course, not all governments or rulers in the world are necessarily evil. Insofar they act with justice they represent God's authority (Romans 13:1-7). They represent Satan's authority (Revelation 13:1-10) insofar they act with injustice and persecute Christians.

and on his heads blasphemous (Greek: blasphemia) name(s). Its names. "The blasphemous names on each head represent the arrogant and God-dishonouring claims these empires and their kings make in world history. These governments and their leaders demand for themselves divine titles as "lord" and "saviour", as the Roman emperors did during the days of the apostle John. The Roman emperors were addressed as "worthy of reverence and worship" (Acts 25:21,25)(Greek: sebastos). These empires and kings in the world reject the God of the Bible, but demand to be obeyed and honoured as gods themselves (cf. Exodus 5:2; 2 Kings 18:33-35; Daniel 3:14-15; 6:7).

13:2 The beast I saw (aorist) was (imperfect) like (Greek: omoios) a leopard (Greek: pardalis), but his feet like those of a bear (Greek: arkos) and his mouth like the mouth of a lion (Greek: leon). Its body. The beast is a composite monster of three of the four beasts described in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:2-8; 8:3-8).

- The leopard empires. Its body resembled a leopard and symbolizes empires or governments that are swift to jump on their prey (Jeremiah 5:6; Daniel 7:6; Habakkuk 1:8). The leopard empires are motivated by imperialism. They were feared for the stealth and speed with which they acted. The Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and the Napoleon Empire were such empires.
- The bear empires. Its feet resembled that of a bear and symbolises empires or governments that are ready to rend and tear like a bear robbed of her cubs (Proverbs 17:12). The bear empires are motivated by economic gluttony. They control the raw materials (oil, gas, uranium, gold, platinum, grain, rubber, etc.) and try to control the means of production. The Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus and a number of modern empires are such empires.
- The lion empires. Its mouth resembled that of a lion and symbolises governments that are powerful, growling, roaring, terrifying for everyone and anxious to destroy (Psalm 17:12; Isaiah 5:29; 31:4; Hosea 5:14; 1 Peter 5:8). The lion empires are born from uncontrolled political pride. Some nations and races set themselves over the other nations and races and tear them apart. The Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the German national-socialism and the Japanese nationalism were such empires.

All three animals belong to the tearing animals (Hosea 13:7-8). This presentation emphasises their terrifying, dominating, destructive nature and especially their anger against God's people.

And the dragon gave (Greek: didomi)(aorist) him (the beast) his power (Greek: dunamis) and his throne and great authority. Its relationship to the dragon (13:2b).

The description of the beast out of the sea (13:1) is similar to the description of the dragon (12:3), showing that these two belong together and work together. The dragon gave this beast his throne, that is, his high position and glory as an evil power, and his great authority (power), that is, his extensive authority to rule and to destroy (13:2; Ephesians 6:12). These symbolize that Satan instigates, inspires, motivates or even controls the governments of the world that persecute God's people. The beast is as it were the visible manifestation of the invisible dragon, the instrument through which the dragon operates. Satan allies himself in particular with the evil rulers and evil kingdoms of the world, motivates them,

helps them and works together with them. He has done this with the Roman Empire and its emperors. He will do it again and again throughout history and finally with the final antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10).

But Satan can only do this evil to the extent that God permits. All governments receive their authority to rule from the God of the Bible (Romans 13:1-7). However, when a government and its rulers abuse their God-given responsibility and turn away from the God of the Bible to Satan, God's providence withdraws the influence of his graces and allows them to become evil and do evil (Exodus 9:16; Jeremiah 18:9-12; Ezekiel 33:13-16). God hardens those who harden themselves (Exodus 9:7,12). God does not infuse evil into men (James 1:13). But God withdraws his grace and permits them to suffer the consequences of their own evil (Galatians 6:7-8a). God has a hand in the action where sin is (Proverbs 16:4), but not in the sin of the action.¹

(2) Different views about the beast out of the sea (13:1)

A futurist view. The beast out of the sea (the 6th personage) is Satan that incarnates himself into the antichrist in the middle of the future tribulation period and reigns during the second half of the future tribulation period (Larkin)².

A second futurist view. The beast out of the sea will be a political and military leader and his kingdom will be a frightening military and totalitarian government whose sole objective is the destruction of the people of God during the second half of the future tribulation period (Tenney)³.

The historicist view. The beast out of the sea is the personalised embodiment of the Roman government (Groenewald)⁴.

A true view with respect to the final antichrist. The beast out of the sea represents the final antichristian empire with the final antichrist just before Christ's second coming (Bavinck)⁵. John saw three beasts (the leopard, bear and lion) united into one monster. All the other political and religious empires of the world will culminate in the final antichristian empire. The crowned horns either represent consecutive dynasties of rulers or simultaneous governors of provinces. The purpose of the final antichrist will be to unite the whole world into one antichristian empire. He will utter proud words and blaspheme God, heaven and those who tabernacle in heaven, that is, the Christians who live on earth, but are registered as citizens in heaven (cf. Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22-23). God will allow him to have authority over every nation and to make war against Christians and to conquer them. Everyone in the world except the true Christians will worship the beast. Only Christians will be able to resist this worldly show of might, because their names have been written in the book of life of the Lamb. By persecuting Christians the antichrist intends to persecute Christ. In their bodies Christians fill up what is still lacking in regards to Christ's afflictions (Colossians 1:24).

The correct explanation. The beast out of the sea represents Satan's antichristian political persecution and oppression throughout the New Testament period.⁶ It represents his persecuting power in and through the nations of this world (cf. Isaiah 17:12) and their governments. It represents all nations as political units (empires, kingdoms) (cf. Daniel 7:17), all human governments and all rulers (emperors, kings) (cf. Daniel 7:24), who execute Satan's plans, blaspheme God, oppress all the inhabitants of the world and persecute Christians throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, symbolised by forty-two months (13:5,7).

(3) Different views about the ten horns (13:2)

A futurist view. The ten horns of the beast represent the ten nations within the geographical limits of the Old Roman Empire (i.e. mostly Europe) that will form the Revived Roman Empire, an alliance for mutual protection (Larkin).⁷

A Second view. The ten crowned horns represent *successive* kings or represent *simultaneous* royal dynasties or kingdoms within each world empire (Bavinck)⁸.

The correct explanation. The ten horns are a symbol of aggressive attack, violent pushing and destruction (Bavinck)⁹. The ten horns with diadems represent mighty men or rulers of the world with their arrogant claims to authority (Psalm 2:1-3; Isaiah 14:3-20; Ezekiel 28:1-19; Daniel 7:24; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 17:12). The ten horns of the dragon (12:3), of the beast out of the sea (13:1) and of the beast out of the Abyss (17:3) symbolise their complete destructive power on earth. Satan exercises his destructive power (thus not: absolute sovereign power) through the antichristian governments of the world and finally through the government of the final antichrist in history (17:12).

¹ Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity, 1692, p. 75

² Larkin, Revelation pp. 120-124

³ Tenney p.176

⁴ Groenewald p. 137

⁵ Bavinck

⁶ Greijdanus p. 201, Hendriksen 175-177

⁷ Larkin, Revelation pp. 120-124

⁸ Bavinck pp. 240-241

⁹ Bavinck p. 20

(4) The fatal wound of the beast out of the sea (13:3-4)

13:3 One of his heads seemed (Greek: *hos*) to have been slaughtered (Greek: *sphazo*)(perfect) to death, but the wound (Greek: *plege*) of his death (i.e. fatal wound) had been healed (Greek: *therapeuo*)(aorist). Literally: “One of its heads *seemed* slaughtered unto death”. This is a symbol of a battle in which one of the heads of the beast seemed fatally cleft by the stroke of a sword (13:14 refers to 13:4). But later the fatal wound was healed. The meaning is that one of the seven world empires ceased for a while to be a fiercely persecuting power, but afterwards resumed its former role. It seemed as if it was ‘dead’, but after some time ‘revived’ again. The word ‘seemed’ tells us that the beast was not killed, but only seemed to have been killed.

The whole earth was astonished (Greek: *thauazo*)(aorist) and (followed) behind (Greek: *opiso*) the beast. The evil beast would try to copy the death and resurrection of Christ. He would try to make the people believe that not Jesus Christ, but he, the beast, was the real messiah and saviour of the world. Note the many people in world history that have already tried to present themselves as a god and a saviour of mankind! ‘The whole world’ does not refer to everyone in the world, but only to those people who belonged to *the evil and lost world* (John 15:18-19; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19). Genuine Christians cannot be deceived (Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 2:11). Genuine Christians are *in* the (wicked) world, but not *of* the (wicked) world (John 17:11,14).

13:4 and they worshipped (Greek: *proskuneo*)(aorist) the dragon because he had given (aorist) authority to the beast, and they also worshipped (aorist) the beast. The dragon had given very great authority to the beast, that is, it *possessed* the beast, but was *not incarnated into* the beast. The dragon gave the beast its leadership position and inspired, motivated, empowered, controlled and led the beast. The beast is as it were the executor of the dragon’s intentions and plans in this world.

The miracle of the beast, namely, that he has the ability to be revived from the dead and return into power on earth, caused the whole evil world to subject itself to the beast, honour and worship the beast, collaborate with the beast and regard the beast as ‘god’. The evil world worships Satan by worshipping the beast, that is, by worshipping the political governments of the evil world with its evil rulers. Giving the world empires and their leaders such worship is in fact a worship of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20).

saying (present) : ‘Who (is) like the beast? Who can (Greek: *dunamai*)(present) make war (Greek: *polemeo*)(aorist) against him?’ The beast with its political persecution and oppression and much through his religious and ideological propaganda makes war against Christ and Christians. The evil world, its governments and religions knows this, but do not resist this. They surrender to this and regard this as inevitable. In stead they even participate in the warfare against Christ and Christians. The Christians see this, should recognise the reality of spiritual warfare and actively engage in spiritual warfare.

(5) Different views about the fatal wound of the beast (13:3-4)

A futurist view. The fatal wound of the beast and its healing refer to the literal death and resurrection of the antichrist *in the middle of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹⁰.

A second view. The fatal wound of the beast and its healing refer to the dying of the emperor Nero and his revival as emperor Domitian *in John’s time*. The head that had been fatally wounded and healed probably represents Emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68). He cruelly persecuted the Christians in the period A.D. 64-68. He crucified them, covered them with pitch or oil, nailed them to posts and then burned them as torches for the amusement of the mob. He also burned the city of Rome and then falsely accused the Christians of doing this. Finally in A.D. 68 he committed suicide at the age of 31 years. Many could not believe that he was dead and believed that he would return together with the Parthians to regain the throne. When that was no longer possible, others believed the legend that he would rise again from the dead (legend of Nero revidivus). As persecutor, Rome had received a death-stroke. But under Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), the Roman Empire again cruelly persecuted the Christians (Hendriksen, Groenewald)¹¹.

Remarks. However, Nero did not fall in a battle as the cleft head suggests. He also never reappeared. Those who regard the seven heads as seven Roman Caesars, have great difficulty with assigning names to the seven Caesars. Which Caesar should be identified? Eight Caesars of the Julio-Claudian dynasty: Augustus/Octavian (31 B.C. to A.D. 14), Tiberias (A.D. 14 – 37), Gaius/Caligula (A.D. 37 – 41), Claudius (A.D. 41 – 54), Nero (A.D. 54 – 68), Galba (A.D. 68 – 69), Otho (A.D. 69), Vitellius (A.D. 69) and five Caesars of the Flavian dynasty: Vespasian (A.D. 69 – 79), Titus (A.D. 70 – 81), Domitian (A.D. 81 – 96), Nerva (A.D. 96 – 98), Trajan (A.D. 98 – 117)?

A third view. The fatal wound of the beast refers to the dying of *the Roman Empire later in the New Testament period* and the revival of the beast as *the papal world dominion culminating in the future antichristian world dominion*. The seven heads represent all the world empires taken together. The head that had been fatally wounded (13:3) probably represents the dying of the Roman Empire that existed in John’s day. The Roman Empire died, first in A.D. 476, when it split in two parts (the Western Roman Empire in Rome and the Eastern Roman Empire in Constantinople). Then it finally died completely in A.D. 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks. But the Roman Empire would be ‘healed’,

¹⁰ Larkin pp. 120-124

¹¹ Hendriksen pp. 177-178, Groenewald p. 139

that is, revived in the rise of the papal world dominion culminating in the future antichristian world dominion. It points to the revived world empire with antichrist as its political ruler and the false prophet as the religious right hand of antichrist (Greijdanus)¹². Remarks: There is no biblical warrant to target one specific denomination.

The correct explanation. The fatal wound of the beast and its healing refers to the mystery that *throughout the whole New Testament period* the beast seems to rise again after it has been destroyed. This would happen up to its final embodiment in the final antichristian empire and the final antichrist (cf. 17:7-11).

(6) The authority of the beast out of the sea (13:5-6)

13:5 and he (the beast) was given (aorist) a mouth (Greek: stoma) to continually utter (Greek: laleo)(present) proud words (Greek: megala) and blasphemies (Greek: blasphemias). Not “a mouth to speak ...”, but “a mouth that actually *continually* speaks great and blasphemous things” against God. God gave the beast a mouth at his creation, but did not command the beast to utter proud words and blasphemies with it. The beast does this under the inspiration of the dragon (cf. John 8:44). His mouth is a symbol of his enmity against Christ.

and he was given (aorist) to exercise (Greek: poieo)(aorist) authority for forty-two (Greek: tessarakonta duo) months (Greek: men). The number 42 months is a symbol of a period of affliction that is suddenly and unexpectedly cut short. It has a definite beginning at Christ’s first coming (12:6) and a definite end at Christ’s second coming (11:2-3,11). Throughout the whole New Testament period Christians will not only proclaim the gospel, but will also suffer under the unjust oppressions and persecutions of the governments and religions of the world. God allows the beast to blaspheme him. In different ways, the governments and government leaders of the world say and do things that attack God’s righteousness, majesty and glory. They disobey God’s commands and teachings and promote the opposite. But the beast cannot act beyond this divinely limited period!

13:6 And he opened (Greek: anoigo)(aorist) his mouth in blasphemies towards God, and to slander (ridicule)(Greek: blasphemeo)(aorist) his name and his dwelling place (tent) (Greek: skene), (and) those who live (Greek: skenoo)(present) in heaven. The beast blasphemes God. He blasphemes God’s ‘name’, that is, *God as he has revealed himself in the Bible and in Christ*. Note that he does not blaspheme the gods of other religions. He blasphemes God’s ‘tent’, that is, those who live in it. He either blasphemes heaven with its glory (e.g. denying its existence, Psalm 14) or he blasphemes the people of God on earth (his temple) and the people of God already in heaven. The world governments and their kings misuse the authority God has entrusted to them (Romans 13:1-7)! They often misuse the false religion of their empire to persecute Christians. But, however powerful the beast may be, he can only do what God permits him to do (Proverbs 16:4)!

(7) The war of the beast out of the sea (13:7)

13:7 And he was given (ability, power) to make (Greek: poieo)(aorist) war (Greek: polemon) against the saints (Greek: hagios) (cf. 12:17). ‘The saints’ are the born-again Christians (5:8; 8:3; 11:18; 14:12). The beast makes war against Christians throughout the whole New Testament period right up to the final battle of Armageddon.

Again the words ‘he was given’ points to the fact that the beast can only do what God permits him to do. Compare the passive verbs in Daniel 7:4-6 – ‘was lifted’, ‘was given the heart of a man’, ‘was raised’ and ‘was given authority’. God predestines this war against the saints in order:

- to test the saints, to purify and sanctify them, to develop their patience and endurance (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4)
- to spread the kingdom (Acts 8:1-4)
- and to reveal the corruption of this present world (22:11a).

and to conquer (Greek: nikao)(aorist) them. The same Greek words are used in Revelation 11:7 where it refers to the final beast. Finally, after the long period of proclaiming the gospel, the final antichristian government and its king, the final antichrist, will conquer the Church as a mighty organisation proclaiming the gospel and as a missionary movement establishing congregations on earth. Just before Christ’s one and only second coming many individual Christians will be martyred and the Church as an institution (organisation) will seem as if it has been completely wiped out. This is a symbol of the short period of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

and he was given (aorist) authority over every tribe (Greek: phule) , people (Greek: laos), language (Greek: glossa) and nation (Greek: ethne) (cf. 5:9-10; 11:9). The words ‘he was given’ points to the same truth as Romans 13:1 that all authority is given by God to governments. The beast represents world dominion. What is said in Revelation chapter 13 has especially reference to the antichristian character of *world dominions* (cf. 11:7; 17:12-14). This world dominion will especially be visible in the short period of the great tribulation just before Christ’s second coming. Nevertheless, because the beast’s authority and power is *given* to him (by God), it is not Satan, but God who rules supreme. He rules from eternity to eternity over everything in creation from the creation to the restoration of everything (Psalm 9:7; 93:2; 145:13; 146:10; 2 Peter 1:11)! God is still on the throne of the universe. The evil that happens on earth is great, but it is nevertheless limited (curtailed, curbed, restrained) by God in scope and also in duration.

¹² Greijdanus p. 204

(8) The worship of the beast out of the sea (13:8)

13:8 and all inhabitants (Greek: *katoikeo*)(present) of the earth will worship (Greek: *proskuneo*)(future) him. Although worldly people throughout the history of the world will worship their evil governments and kings, here especially the final antichristian government and the final antichrist is meant. “The beast that comes up from the Abyss” in chapter 11:7 is the final form of the beast coming up out of the sea (13:7). All people, who are not Christians, will worship him.

whose name (Greek: *to onoma*) had not been written (Greek: *grapho*)(perfect, passive). The singular ‘the name of him’ that has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb suggests that during that time there will be few Christians. They will stand alone without an established congregation. Although the Church as an institution may be wiped out, there will nevertheless be individual Christians on earth at Christ’s second coming (Luke 18:8; Matthew 24:37-41; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17)!

in the book (Greek: *to biblion*) of life of the Lamb. Christ died on the cross as an atonement sacrifice for the sins of those who believe in him. This earned eternal life for them. Consequently their names are written in ‘the book of life’ (Exodus 32:32; Deuteronomy 29:20; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27). This is a symbol that God has given these people to Christ and he saved them (John 17:6,9).

that was slaughtered (Greek: *sphazo*)(perfect) from the creation (Greek: *katabole*) of the world (Greek: *kosmos*). Some connect these words to the sentence: “All whose names have not been written” and then translate: “All inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written from the creation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain, will worship the beast” (cf. 17:8). The emphasis is then on the names of Christians. The names of the Christians have thus been recorded from eternity (John 6:37; 17:2,6,9,24; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2:19). The reference is then to their eternal election, because the short period under the final antichristian government and the final antichrist will be a terrifying period for Christians. Christians are only secure in God’s eternal election! Because they are chosen, they cannot be deceived (Matthew 24:24)! From the very beginning God has chosen them to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13; cf. Ephesians 1:4). That is why these individuals cannot perish. Christians may be persecuted and their bodies may even be killed, but no one can destroy their souls (Matthew 10:28)! No one can snatch them out of Christ’s hand (John 10:28-29)! No one can separate them from God’s love (Romans 8:37-39)!

Others connect these words to the sentence: “slain” and then translate: “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” The emphasis is then on Christ. Christ suffers and was slain from the creation of the world onwards right up to his second coming. While his crucifixion was an atonement sacrifice for his people, his suffering during the Old Testament period and during the New Testament period was and is a suffering through his people and with his people! Christians go into captivity and are being killed because Jesus Christ was also rejected and crucified. His trials and crucifixion seem to be timeless, because Jesus Christ “was slain from the creation of the world” (13:8). Throughout the history of the world the kingdom of natural man (the kingdom of the inimical world) has been occupied with crucifying Jesus Christ and is in our modern time still occupied with crucifying Jesus Christ (cf. Hebrews 6:6). Those who persecute Christians are in reality persecuting Jesus Christ (Acts 26:14-15)! That is why Paul says, “The sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives” (2 Corinthians 1:5). And, “I fill up in my flesh (body) what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his Body, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24). And Peter says, “Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:13). Genuine Christians share in Christ’s sufferings so that they may also share in his glory (Romans 8:17).

(9) The admonition to patient endurance and faithfulness (13:9-10)

13:9 If one has (present) an ear (Greek: *ous*), he must hear (imperative, aorist). This is an exhortation to give careful attention to what is said.

13:10 If one (Greek: *ei tis*) (leads others) into captivity (Greek: *aichmalosia*), he (himself) goes (Greek: *hupago*)(present) into captivity. If one kills (Greek: *apokteino*)(aorist) with the sword, with the sword he will be killed (aorist) (cf. Matthew 26:52). Revelation 13:10 has two possible readings. The context of this verse is the days of the great tribulation under the government of the final antichrist. There are two possible translations of the first part:

- First possible translation. “Whoever is to (go) into captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone *is to be killed* (Greek: infinitive, aorist passive) with the sword, with the sword he will be killed”. God says that Christians should not resist what God has determined would happen to them (Jeremiah 15:2; 43:11; cf. 1 Peter 2:19,21). Christians must not oppose or resist the injustices done to them during the great tribulation, but meekly suffer these injustices (captivity or death)!
- Second possible translation. “Whoever (leads others) into captivity, he goes into captivity (himself). If anyone *kills* (Greek: indicative, future, active) with the sword, with the sword he will be killed”. Jesus Christ already taught, “All who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). God warns those who do injustice to the Christians that they themselves will suffer the suffering they cause. Whoever does injustice to Christians (by leading them into captivity or by killing them), will themselves suffer these injustices (cf. Galatians 6:7-8). God himself will avenge

the wrong done against Christians! The Christians who understand this, will exercise endurance and persevere in their faith.

This (place > this point) (Greek: hode) is (calls for)(present) patient endurance (Greek: hupomone) and faithfulness (Greek: pistis) on the part of the saints (cf. 14:12). The saints are the genuine Christians (cf. 13:7). They are called to endurance and faith, so that they do not fall away (cf. Matthew 24:9-13,22,24).

PART 2. Revelation 13:11-18. THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH.

(1) The identity of the beast out of the earth (13:11)

13:11 And (then) I saw (Greek: horao)(aorist) another beast, continuously coming up (Greek: anabaino)(present) from the earth. The picture is of a second monster coming up out of the earth, looking outwardly like a lamb, but in reality speaking like the dragon. Elsewhere, he is called 'the false prophet' (cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Jesus prophesied that there would be false Christs and false prophets (plural). Thus, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth do not represent two specific identifiable personalities (*the* antichrist and *the* false prophet), but are rather symbols of powers that re-occur throughout the period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming. The beast out of the earth is a symbol of all the organisations and persons that spread false knowledge in every area of life throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The verb 'coming up' is in the present continuous time suggesting that *the beast rises continuously or again and again in history.*

The beast out of the earth represents Satan's antichristian knowledge and its misleading, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the whole New Testament period from the first coming of Christ to his second coming. Every political and military empire in history has its false prophet, whether religious, ideological or quasi-scientific.

"The earth" symbolises what is low (Ecclesiastes 5:2), not spiritual, sinful and devilish (Philippians 3:19; James 3:14-15). Coming out of the earth symbolises that it lacks the heavenly nature and significance and that it is possessed, inspired, motivated, controlled and led by the spirit of the Abyss (9:2; 11:7). The beast out of the earth is therefore closely allied to the beast out of the sea (cf. 11:7) and serves him.

and he had (Greek: echo)(imperfect) two horns like (Greek: homoios) a lamb (Greek: arnion). Its horns. He does not have seven horns as Christ (5:6), nor ten horns as the dragon (12:3) or the beast out of the sea (13:1), but two horns like a lamb. The number "2" represents witnessing or making propaganda (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16; Luke 10:1). His horns are a symbol, not of sovereign divine power (as Christ), not even of complete power of destruction (as the dragon and the beast out of the sea), but of destructive power in the area of witnessing or making propaganda under the guise of a harmless lamb, even under the guise of being Christ (thus false Christs).

but continually spoke (Greek: laleo)(imperfect) like a dragon (Greek: drakon). Its mouth. The beast out of the earth looks harmless, but is extremely dangerous. He looks like a lamb, probably the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is meant, but speaks like the dragon (Satan)! He appears as if he represents Jesus Christ, but is in reality an instrument of Satan, the voice of Satan. He represents the lie of Satan dressed up like the truth (John 8:44). He appears before people as a prophet, but is in reality a false prophet (Matthew 7:15)! He appears as an angel, but is in reality a demon masqueraded as an angel (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is a miracle-maker that deceives those who are perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

(2) Different views about the beast out of the earth (13:11)

A futurist view. The beast out of the earth (the 7th personage) is *the* false prophet, who is a resurrection of a person in the past *during the middle of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹³.

A second futurist view. The beast out of the earth is a religious leader *during the second half of the future tribulation period.* His power is religious and economic. Supported by the political power of the first beast, he enforces a false worship on the world (Tenney)¹⁴.

A true view with respect to the final false prophet. The beast out of the earth represents the final false prophet just before the second coming of Christ (Bavinck)¹⁵.

The correct explanation. The beast out of the earth represents Satan's *antichristian knowledge and its misleading, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the New Testament period.*¹⁶

¹³ Larkin, Revelation pp. 125-129

¹⁴ Tenney p. 176

¹⁵ Bavinck

¹⁶ Greijdanus p. 207, Hendriksen pp. 179-181

(3) The authority of the beast out of the earth (13:12)

13:12 He exercised (Greek: poieo)(present) all the authority (Greek: exousia) of the first beast on his behalf (Greek: enopion), and made (Greek: poieo)(present) the earth and its inhabitants (Greek: katoikeo)(present) worship (Greek: proskuneo)(future) the first beast, whose fatal wound (lit. wound of death, death blow) had been healed (Greek: therapeuo)(aorist). Already during the first century A.D. the heathen priests of the heathen temples supported and upheld the secular power of the state in its persecution of believers. Heathen religion and heathen politics cooperated with one another in their battle against Christians. The beast out of the earth employs the very great power given by the dragon to the beast out of the sea (13:2). The words ‘on his behalf’ do not simply mean ‘in his sight’, but especially ‘in his service’. The two beasts work harmoniously together.

(4) The miracles of the beast out of the earth (13:13-14a)

13:13 And he performed (Greek: poieo)(present) great (Greek: megalos) miraculous signs (Greek: semeia), even causing (Greek: poieo)(subjunctive, present) fire to come down (Greek: katabaino)(present) from heaven to earth in full view (Greek: enopion) of men.

13:14 And he deceived (Greek: planaio)(present) the inhabitants (Greek: katoikeo)(present) on the earth, through (Greek: dia) the signs he was given (aorist) to do (aorist) on behalf of (Greek: enopion) the (first) beast. All the miraculous signs (Greek: semeia) that Jesus performed pointed to deeper truths that he taught. For example, the sign of changing water into wine (John 2:1-11) pointed to Jesus as the Life and the abundance of new life he brings (John 4:14; 10:10; 14:6). The multiplication of bread (John 6:1-13,26) pointed to Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:35). The healing of the blind man (John 9:16) pointed to Jesus as the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). The raising of the dead Lazarus (John 11:47; 12:17-18) pointed to Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25-26). All his signs functioned, not to bring people to faith (John 12:37-38), but to strengthen their faith so that they continue to believe in him and in what he taught (John 20:30-31)!

But the miraculous signs (Greek: semeia megalai) of the beast out of the sea are designed to deceive people! Jesus warned his disciples that false Christs (messiahs) and false prophets would appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible (Matthew 24:24). The apostle Paul warned Christians that the antichrist would come in accordance with the work of Satan, displaying all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)! Even religious people would demand to see miraculous signs (Matthew 12:38; 16:1). Christians must therefore carefully distinguish between miraculous signs that strengthen the true faith in Christ or those that are designed to deceive the masses of people and lead them away from Christ!

The beast out of the earth would do counterfeit miraculous signs! His deceptions would cause fire to burst forth without apparent cause (maybe to cause lightning to strike at his command) as God did through the service of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10) and as God would do in the final battle against the final evil government (20:9). He would do this ‘in full view of people’ so that people would see his signs, be persuaded by his power and admire him (cf. Matthew 16:1-5). The intention of the beast out of the earth (the false prophet) is to deceive the masses and to strengthen the power of the beast out of the sea (the evil antichristian government).

The beast out of the earth would make the statue of the beast out of the sea speak, may be by the art of ventriloquism (13:15; cf. demons that speak through the voice of another human, Luke 8:30-32). During the final battle of Armageddon the spirits of demons coming from the dragon, the beast and the false prophet would perform miraculous signs, especially to impress the governments of the nations and to gather them together against Christ and his Church for this final battle (16:13-14).

(5) The worship of the beast out of the sea (13:14b-15)

saying (ordering) the inhabitants (Greek: katoikeo)(present) on the earth to make (Greek: poieo)(aorist) an image (Greek: eikon) for (in honour of) the beast who had (Greek: echo)(present) the wound of the sword and yet lived (Greek: zao, ezezen)(aorist) (cf. ezezen in 20:4-5).

13:15 He was given (aorist) (the ability to) give (Greek: didomi)(aorist) a spirit (or breath, life) (Greek: pneuma) to the image of the (first) beast, so that the image of the beast spoke (Greek: laleo)(subjunctive, aorist) and caused (Greek: poieo)(subjunctive, aorist) the ones to be killed (Greek: apokteino)(subjunctive aorist) if they did not worship (Greek: proskuneo)(subjunctive, aorist) the image of the beast. The word ‘seemed’ in Revelation 13:3 makes it clear that the beast out of the sea did not actually die. Therefore the word ‘lived’ cannot mean physical resurrection. In spite of the serious wound it lived. The beast out of the earth would order the inhabitants of the earth to set up an image in honour of the beast out of the sea (cf. Daniel 3:1-6). The recurring words ‘he was given power’ in the book of Revelation are a reminder for Christians that God rules supreme! *Beyond the sphere of God’s permission Satan can do absolutely nothing!*

Already during the first century A.D., the priests of the pagan temples ordered the inhabitants of their districts to make statues in honour of their gods, goddesses and even of the emperor (cf. Act 19:23-27). Pergamum was the capital of the province of Asia and Satan had its throne there. First Aesculapius, the god of healing, was represented by the image of a

serpent. There were many pagan altars including the great altar of Zeus. This was the centre of emperor worship. There were temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman Emperor and Christians were required to offer incense to the image of the emperor and say, "Caesar is Lord". The Christians who refused were put to death.

The beast out of the earth would give breath (Greek: spirit) to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak. This is not 'a spirit of life', but 'the appearance of life through deceit'. Because of their superstition and ignorance, the masses of people would believe that these counterfeit miracles were real miracles. The image of the beast is a symbol of all the images that people have worshipped. Throughout the centuries people in all cultures have worshipped the visible manifestations (images) of their religious, economic, scientific, literary and artistic accomplishments (cf. Psalm 115:2-8). This worship of the image of the beast would continue until the final beast out of the earth appears.

The false prophet will cause all people who refuse to worship the image of the first beast to be killed (cf. 11:7). This represents Satan's antichristian religious and ethical persecution throughout the whole New Testament period! Throughout the centuries, the false religions, ideologies and philosophies have strengthened the power of the worldly empires and their rulers. Wherever and whenever the beast appears in history, his antichristian religious persecution also appears. Also this antichristian religious and ethical persecution would continue until the final beast out of the earth appears. Then the antichristian religious persecution will be very severe. There will still be believers on earth, but they will be persecuted because they refuse to worship the beast.

The false prophets throughout the New Testament period promote the worship of the antichrists throughout the New Testament period. Their goal is to bring every department of life: commerce, industry, agriculture, universities, mass communication, culture, etc. under the control of the antichrist in order to serve the glory of the antichrist. Everybody will have to think, say and behave in the same way and everybody will call it 'peace'. People will no longer be personally responsible and accountable for their behaviour, because they all will have drowned in the commonness of the empire. No one will have an opinion, because the empire through its rulers and propaganda knows everything. There will be no more family life, no more personal ideals and expectations and no more feelings of guilt, because holding on to all these will be dangerous. Only the ruler of the empire, the antichrist, will be regarded as wise and powerful and only he and his propaganda minister will know what is right and good. No one must think or will something, because all thinking and all willing is done by the antichrist. Everyone will be made into a 'thing' and 'a number'. From the beginning people will be stuffed full with the superficiality and smallness of modern life: TV soaps, sensational stories in newspapers and magazines, he will be overwhelmed by the noise of modern music and by voices that never quit. He will not be taught to think for himself and develop his own convictions and make his own decisions. Everything will be spoon-fed. He will never be taught to think from the centre of everything, namely, God on his throne in heaven. He will not take into account that everything on this present earth is transitory. He will no longer know what it means to be 'human'.

Everyone must become a member of the party of the antichrist. Everyone must wear the badge and uniform of the party. Everyone will be forced to receive a mark on his hand (the workers?) or on his forehead (the intellectuals?) and this signifies that all work, career and callings of life will have to be for the glory of the antichrist. People will lose their sense of individuality (the 'I' and 'me') and become 'a nothing'. There will be 'peace', but it will be the peace of a cemetery. There will be 'prosperity' everywhere, but it will only be materialistic. There will be opportunities for endless holidays, excursions, sports and games and lots of fun, because then people will forget their last vestiges of rebellion against what the antichrist and false prophet are making of them. But no one will dare to mention the concentration camps and prisons for those who refuse to conform.

There will still be a handful of genuine Christians, who refuse to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 20:4). They will flee from place to place. They will only be able to persevere, because they know that this empire of the antichrist will not last long and that the kingdom of Christ will triumph!

But Christ makes it very clear that this situation will NOT carry on forever. This kingdom of the (evil and antichristian) world has the following characteristics:

- It has as centre of motivation only hatred against Christians.
- It has as confession of faith an unlimited confidence in the abilities of man.
- It has as hope only the desire to get drunk with pleasure.
- It has as foundation of morality that no one may think of himself as an individual personality (made in the image of God) and that no one may assume that he has personal responsibility and personal accountability (towards God).
- It has as only goal the extinguishing of every spark of personal life, personal joy and a personal relationship with God.
- It is built on a colossal lie, a denial of reality.
- It is a culture of the suppression of the truth and the exchange of the truth (Romans 1:18,25). It is a culture without the God of the Bible.

One day this house of cards must crash!

(6) The mark of the beast out of the sea (13:16-18)

13:16 He also continuously made (forced) (Greek: poieo)(present) all: small and great, rich (Greek: plousios) and poor (Greek: ptochos), free (Greek: eleutheros) and slave (Greek: doulos). The evil work of the beast out of the earth affects every individual. Without regard to a person's age, economic or social status he is given a mark. By nature every person in the world carries the mark of the beast, unless by God's grace and faith he has been given the seal of God (7:4).

Of course, between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming Jesus Christ is drawing people from all over the world to himself (John 12:32). As long as it is still a time of grace (up to Christ's second coming) the preaching of the gospel will turn people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Until Christ's second coming God will rescue people from the dominion of darkness and bring them into the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13). Now is the time of God's favour. Now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)! "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

Therefore, if you as a reader have not yet received Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, then do it now (John 1:12-13; Revelation 3:20)!

that they give (Greek: didomi)(subjunctive, aorist) a mark (Greek: charakma) on their right (Greek: dexios) hand (Greek: cheir) or on their forehead (Greek: metopon). Cattle were branded to indicate that they belonged to someone. Slaves were branded to indicate that they belonged to someone and served him. In some religions devotees are branded to indicate that they serve and worship a particular deity. People put tattoo marks on themselves to proclaim who they associate with (cf. Leviticus 19:28). These are *literal marks*.

In the Old Testament, the writing of God's laws on the forehead (Deuteronomy 6:8) and the putting of a mark on the forehead as a protection against God's judgement (Ezekiel 9:4) are *symbolical marks*. Just as all the followers of Jesus Christ are sealed with the name of God or Christ (14:1; 22:4) on their foreheads (7:3; 9:4) throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, so all the followers of the beast are branded with the name of the beast on their foreheads and right hands (13:16-18) throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. This invisible spiritual seal of God or mark of the beast will be visible in the convictions, attitudes, motives, words, actions and character of the people bearing them.

'The right hand' indicates the deeds, actions, trade or industry of a person and 'the forehead' indicates the mind, thought-life, philosophy or even the whole public life of a person. The marking on the right hand and forehead is figurative, indicating belonging to the company of, protected by and characterised by the owner of the mark, adhering to, serving and worshipping the owner of the mark. A person sealed with the name of Christ is characterised by being transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). He openly worships and serves Christ.

The mark of the beast is not a single, outward, visible sign that will appear on the right hands and foreheads of wicked people at one particular moment in history. A person branded with the number of the beast is characterised by being defiled more and more into the likeness of the beast (cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5). He openly worships and serves the beast.

13:17-18. so that no one could (Greek: dunamai)(subjunctive, present) buy (Greek: agorazo)(aorist) or sell (Greek: poleo)(aorist). This represents Satan's antichristian social persecution! All of social life, agriculture and commerce, etc. will be combined with his antichristian religious drive. All layers of society will be affected. The unjust and oppressive economic boycott of Christians throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming is already symbolised under the third seal in Revelation chapter 6:5-6. The godless and wicked world and their leaders will deliberately boycott Christians, because they refuse to conform to their godless and wicked ways! This is already happening at the present time in certain countries of the world! The beast's activity (antichristian religious, social and economic persecution) will be extreme during the last days just before Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:21-25).

unless (Greek: ei me) he had (Greek: echo)(present) the mark (Greek: charagma), which is the name (Greek: onoma) of the beast or the number (Greek: arithmos) of his name.

13:18 This (Greek: hode) is (calls for)(present) wisdom. If He who has (present) insight (Greek: nous), he must calculate (Greek: psephizo)(imperative, aorist) the number (Greek: arithmos) of the beast, for it is a man's number. His number is 666 (Greek: hexakosioi hexekonta, hex). The sealing of believers with a name and the branding of unbelievers with a name are both symbolical. 'The name' of God in the Bible refers to the essential nature and character of God as he has revealed himself in the Bible. Likewise 'the name' of the beast refers to the essential nature and character of the beast as he is revealed in history. When a person bears either 'name' he will reflect *the nature, character and spirit of that name*. Because 'the name' expresses the essential being or character of its bearer, the name is not a particular sound (like for example 'Nero'), but rather the nature, character and spirit of the bearer. The name and the number are both a figurative summary of the essence of its bearer.

The number cannot just symbolise a particular individual in history, because the beast out of the earth persecutes Christians throughout the centuries from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. Wherever and whenever the beast out of the earth appears in history, his antichristian religious and economic persecution appears and also the mark

of the beast will be found. The mark of the beast is *the God-opposing, Christ-rejecting and Church-persecuting spirit of the antichrist*, wherever and whenever it manifests itself. People who have the mark of the beast belong to the company of those who persecute the Church, pre-eminently in what they think, say or write, and more explicitly in what they do. The more we approach the second coming of Christ, the more this antichristian spirit will become evident and opposition to Christians will increase.

The mark of the beast is described as ‘the number of his name’ and this is ‘the number of man’. The number “6” is the number of man and the number of creation (Gen 1:26,31). The number “7” is the number of the perfection of God and the completeness of his purposes. The number 6 is not the number 7 and never reaches the number 7. It forever fails to attain to perfection. It symbolises missing the mark and failure. This symbolises two important truths:

- The number 666 symbolises the absolute highest development of man in creation by means of his science, abilities and accomplishments, without involving God (Exodus 20:11). It symbolizes the availability of all these human accomplishments for the beast (Satan’s antichristian governments and its persecutions), but turned against God and his purposes.
- Or the number 666 symbolizes the absolute failure of the beast (Satan’s antichristian governments and its persecutions) and his followers to attain the goals and perfections of God. The beast out of the sea and all those who follow him will continually experience ‘failure upon failure upon failure’. Whoever glories in man instead of in God, will certainly fail (cf. Psalm 108:12-13; 146:3; Isaiah 2:22; 30:1-5). Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives” (Jeremiah 17:5-8)!

(7) Different views about the mark of the beast (13:18)

A futurist view. The number of the beast is *a literal and specific visible name* on the back of the right hand or on the forehead of people *only during the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹⁷.

A second view. “The name of the beast” (verse 17) is a specific name *in history*. “The number of the name of the beast” is 666 (verse 17-18). By means of the numerical value of the letters of the Hebrew or Greek or Latin alphabet people try to derive at names as ‘Nero’, ‘Plato’, etc. Remembering that the numbers in the book of Revelation generally has symbolical value (cf. 1:20), people have tried to calculate the symbolical meaning of the number 666. E.g. the numerical value of the name ‘Jesus’ would be 888. Because the number 7 depicts God’s perfect and complete actions with man, Jesus would be more than merely God’s actions with man (777). By assigning the number 666 to the antichrist, it is emphasised that the antichrist is far less important or valuable than Jesus Christ (Groenewald)¹⁸

Remarks: Such attempts lead to everything and thus to nothing. The apocalypse is a book of symbols and not a book of riddles! The numerical value of the Hebrew letters must be excluded, because the book of Revelation was written in Greek for a Greek audience (cf. 9:11; 16:16). Also the interpretation ‘Lateinos’ or ‘Caesar of Rome’ cannot be the right interpretation, because Revelation 17:9-11 already points clearly to Rome and would therefore be unnecessary. The number does not represent the Hebrew, Greek or Latin numerical values of letters, because calculating the number requires ‘wisdom and insight’. Like all the numbers in the book, it should be interpreted ‘figuratively’ (cf. 11:8). As the other numbers in the book of Revelation: 2, 3, 3½, 4, 7, 10, 12, 42, 1000, 1260, 10000, 12000, 144000, also the number 666 should be interpreted figuratively.

A third view. The number of the beast was a specific symbol in ancient times and people try to guess its modern significance. The number is regarded as:

- the measurements of Nebuchadnezzar’s idol/ image, which were 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide (Daniel 3:1)
- the symbol of freemasonry
- the faces that appear on the American coin
- the monomark (the combination of letters and/or figures registered as identification mark for goods, articles, addresses, etc.)
- and the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of the week.
- the initials of the antichrist on the forehead of the wicked, etc.

A fourth but true view. The number of the beast is a figurative summary and characterisation of the final antichrist at the end of the New Testament period. The number 6 is the number man and of creation before the divine day of rest (Genesis 1:26,31). The number 7 is the number of the perfection of God and the completeness of his purposes. The number 6 is not the number 7 and never reaches the number 7. It forever fails to attain to perfection. It symbolises missing the mark and failure.

Or it symbolises the absolute highest development of man and creation without taking God into account. The final antichrist in history will stand at the pinnacle of all human science, abilities and accomplishments. The whole creation and all people will seem to be available for him and his service. Everyone will cooperate with him. But they will turn all

¹⁷ Larkin, Revelation p. 130

¹⁸ Groenewald p. 143-145

these resources against God and God's kingdom. The number 666 is the figurative summary and characterisation of the final antichrist in Revelation 11:7; 13:3,4,7,8,12-18; 17:8,11-14; 19:19-20 (Greijdanus)¹⁹.

The best explanation. The number of the beast does not represent any specific identifiable historic person, but represents all beasts during the New Testament period. The mark of the beast is his name or his number. The number 666 is a human number. On the one hand the number 666 symbolises the highest (allowed by God) development of man in the creation by means of his sciences, his abilities and his accomplishments without taking God into account, which man utilises for the benefit of the antichrist and against Christ. The beast and his allies constantly try to imitate the divine perfection, but for ever fail to attain it. On the other hand the number 666 symbolises the absolute (determined by God) imperfection of the antichristian political power that is doomed to ultimately fail. The beast and his allies plot against Christ, the Christian Church and Christians and attack them, but eventually they will be defeated! The kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon in the book of Isaiah and the kingdoms of Medo-Persia Greece and Syria in the book of Daniel are ultimately defeated, but Jesus Christ, his Kingdom and his people will ultimately triumph (17:14)!

(The correct explanation) The mark of the beast is his name or his number. It is a man's number and is 666. While the number 7 is the number of divine perfection, the number 6 always falls short and can never become the number 7. It symbolises missing the mark and failure. It symbolises the absolute highest development of man and creation without attaining to fellowship with God. *The number 666 is a symbol of divinely determined (the number 3) imperfection and failure (the number 6) of the beast.*

The number of the beast does not represent a particular identifiable historical person, but all the beasts throughout the whole New Testament period. It refers to the arrogantly claimed perfections of all the beasts (governments and their leaders), which always falls short of the genuine perfections of God. It symbolizes the absolute failure of all Satan's antichristian politics, religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences to attain the goals and perfections of God *throughout the New Testament period.*²⁰

¹⁹ Greijdanus pp. 209-210

²⁰ Hendriksen pp. 181-182