

## Background of Beast Imagery

1. **Old Testament Background:** Daniel 7,8 and Leviathan
2. **Ancient Roman Background:** Nero/Roman Empire and Local Governors enforcing imperial cult

## Already, but Not Yet: The Kingdom, The Tribulation, and The Antichrist

*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:18 ESV)*

In my view of the teachings of the antichrist in Scripture, these two beasts refer to future individuals, just as both the kingdom and the tribulation refer to future periods of history. However, like the kingdom and the tribulation, the spirit of both beasts is alive and well today and at work in both the kingdoms of this world and the church itself.

## The False Trinity

Satan and the two beasts of chapter 13 form a false trinity as a lesser copy of the true trinity in order to mock God, deceive the world, and oppress disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Dragon:** False God | **First Beast:** False Christ and Kingdom | **Second Beast:** False Gospel and Testimony

**Our allegiance does not belong to any earthly leader or kingdom, but to Jesus and his kingdom.**

**The False Promises of Earthly Kingdoms:** Whether it be the ideal future of progressivism, the ideal past of conservatism, or the ideal humanity with limited government of libertarianism, all of them are fantasies that, like the antichrist will, offer the kingdom without Christ and lead people into idolatry.

**When living under wicked regimes, disciples of Christ are called to rest in God's sovereignty, endure persecution, and keep the faith.**

"As in the Old Testament, it is YHWH who wins the wars on behalf of his people, and the message is clear: do not make war against the beast; that is the work of God. Live faithfully and persevere in your witness, but leave the battle to the Lord." – Grant Osborne

## Five Ways to Live Under Wicked Rulers

1. Honor them. (1 Pet. 2:13-17)
2. Pray for them. (1 Tim. 2:1-4)
3. Maintain a faithful witness. (Daniel)
4. Seek the welfare of the city. (Jer. 29:1-7)
5. Uphold justice. (Micah 6:8)

## Significance of the Mark of the Beast

saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." (Revelation 7:3 ESV)

<sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (Deut. 6:6-8)

"In the Old Testament, God told Israel that the Torah was to be 'as a sign on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead' in order to remind them of their commitment and loyalty to God...The 'forehead' represents their ideological commitment and the 'hand' the practical outworking of that commitment." – G.K. Beale

**The Temptation of the Mark:** Temporary security/prosperity at the expense of faithfulness to God.

**The Sin of Receiving the Mark:** Rejecting God and committing oneself to idols and works of the devil.

As Satan always does, he seeks to twist and make a mockery of what God has done, offering something lesser in its place. Satan's mark offers temporary security that is nothing more than an illusion. Genuine security is provided by the seal of the Living God, the Holy Spirit.

### What is the mark?

First, it is important to recognize three things:

1. Genuine believers of Jesus Christ cannot and will not receive the mark of the beast. You either are sealed by the Spirit or marked by Satan.
2. "John is exhorting saints to spiritual and moral discernment, not intellectual ability to solve a complex math problem." G.K. Beale
3. You cannot receive it by accident.

Second, "because the text reveals very little about the meaning of 666, it is unwise to speculate." – John MacArthur

"The number 6 falls one short of God's perfect number, 7, and thus points to human imperfection... the threefold repetition of the number is intended to emphasize man's identity. He is emphatically imperfect, not almost perfect."

– John MacArthur

"Neither the beast's mark nor the seal of God on believers' foreheads (cf. Rev. 7:3; 14:1; cf. also Ex. 28:36–38; Ezek. 9:4) have to be understood as physical features, though they may be that. Both symbolize the spiritual control of heart allegiance and behavior, either by the beast or by the Lamb; but God's seal secures safety... The invitation to one with understanding to calculate this number, however, suggests the use of *gematria*, an ancient code using the numerical values of letters. Both "beast" and "Nero Caesar," written in Hebrew characters, add up to 666, but many interpreters expect a future, greater fulfillment in a world ruler who is violently opposed to God and his people." – ESV Study Bible Notes

### The Point? Be on guard against false teaching that seeks you to misplace your loyalty, confidence, and worship.

#### Good News: Life transforming redemption is available through faith in Jesus Christ.

Instead of worshipping empty and imperfect idols, you will worship the Living God who perfectly satisfies.

Instead of walking in the destructive path of wickedness and lies, you will walk in the way of truth, righteousness, and peace as you follow Jesus Christ.

**Who are the 144,000?** (See Genesis 28:13-15) Here are 2 faithful views:

Literal Understanding of 144,000	Symbolic Understanding of 144,000
These 144,000 are a special army of Jewish men who function as missionaries during the Great Tribulation and are used by God to bring about the full restoration of ethnic Israel as well as the Gentiles. Receiving the seal of the Living God is not limited to the 144,000, see also Rev. 9:4, cf. Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30.	The 144,000 ( $12 \times (10 \times 10 \times 10) \times 12$ ) symbolically speak to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in that they represent the full restoration of ethnic Israel, which includes all the families of the earth, who together in their white robes make up the Lion of Judah's Messianic army and will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (12,000 stadia x 12,000 stadia x 12,000 stadia).

**Key Point of Agreement:** Both have the full restoration of ethnic Israel and the Gentile nations primarily in view and demonstrate God's faithfulness to his promises and his people.