
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson #7 (26 February 2016): Revelation 12-13 The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon: “And there was a war in heaven”

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INTRODUCTION: THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON (12:1 – 13:18)

The seven seals have been opened and the seven trumpets have sounded. The heavens are cheering that Jesus reigns over the earth, and though that is the inevitable outcome, the actual event has not yet occurred. But rather than take us straight there, John’s vision turns to some related topics on a different timeline and sets the stage with fascinating characters for the grand finale coming in chapters 19-22.

Some see seven divisions of content in chapters 12-14, though the division is not as clear as with the seven seals, trumpets, and later the bowls. There are, however, seven “signs of the end” (in contrasting pairs for the first six) in the woman and the dragon, the war in heaven and the war on earth, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, and finally the judgment by the angels. Two interludes where we hear a song of praise in heaven and a vision of the redeemed complete the chapters.¹ This seven-fold division is reflected in the outline below.

Chapter 12 is the most changed chapter in Revelation in the Joseph Smith Translation; the changes are found in the LDS Bible Appendix and included below for convenience (note the changed verse order in a couple cases). These changes not only help us understand this chapter but ripple through the next several chapters giving us insight into how best to interpret those events, as we see what happens to the various beings first presented here. “Chapter 12 serves as the pivotal point of the whole book. It is the key to understanding all that went before and that comes after.”² Indeed, it is at the center of a chiasmic structure of the whole book.³

Here is a list of the major persons and creatures introduced in chapters 12 and 13, and the general

meaning we can apply to them from the JST and other sources (see the verse notes below for more details). “The activity of these characters helps to outline and explain the troubles which may beset God’s people at any moment in the history of salvation, and provides an assurance that ultimately the messianic community will prevail over the forces of evil.”⁴

Chapter 12

Woman clothed in the sun	The church of God
Child she delivers	The kingdom of God and his Christ
Red dragon	Satan

Chapter 13

Beast out of the sea	Power and politics
Beast out of the earth	The false prophet
Mark of the beast	Pursuit of wealth

A woman, child, and dragon were familiar symbols to the Saints in John’s day. Here are examples the New Testament itself and from other cultures:⁵

- New Testament: Christ taught that he was the bridegroom, the Church the bride; their faithful union could bring about a son—Zion.
- Egypt: Set-Typhon the red dragon pursued Isis and was later killed by her son, Horus.
- Egypt: Each day Nut, the goddess of heaven, gave birth to the sun which was chased by the dragon of darkness who ate it at the end of the day.
- Babylon: Tiamut, the seven-headed dragon, was killed by young Marduk, the god of light.
- Greece: The pregnant Leto was pursued by the dragon Python, but she was brought to an island

¹ Smalley, 311.

² Draper and Rhodes, 751.

³ Arnold, 317.

⁴ Smalley, 310.

⁵ Mounce, 230.

where she gave birth to Apollo; Apollo returned (at four days old!) and killed the dragon.

OUTLINE

There are many ways to outline any book, and Revelation is no exception. Below are the eleven lessons in this series with chapter summaries. For the lesson in these notes, the chapter is broken down into more detailed sections and bolded.

1. The Majesty of Christ (1:1-20)
2. The Messages to the Seven Churches (2:1 – 3:22)
3. God and the Lamb
 - a. The Vision of Heaven (4:1-11)
 - b. The Sealed Book and the Worthy Lamb (5:1-14)
4. The Scroll Begins to Open
 - a. The Six Seals (6:1-17)
 - b. The Seal of the Living God (7:1-17)
5. The Opening of the Seventh Seal
 - a. The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets (8:1-13)
 - b. Two Trumpets and the Great War (9:1-21)
6. John's Mission; Two Prophets
 - a. The Little Scroll (10:1-11)
 - b. The Seventh Trumpet (11:1-19)
7. **The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon**
 - a. **The Church and the Devil (12:1-17)**
 - i. **The woman, child, and dragon (12:1-6)**
 - ii. **The war in heaven (12:7-12)**
 - iii. **The war on earth (12:13-17)**
 - b. **The Beasts of Revelation (13:1-18)**
 - i. **The beast from the sea (13:1-10)**
 - ii. **The beast from the earth (13:11-18)**
8. Judgment and Praise
 - a. The Winepress of the Wrath of God (14:1-20)
 - b. The Seven Angels (15:1-8)
9. Seven Last Plagues and Babylon the Great
 - a. The Seven Bowls (16:1-21)
 - b. Babylon the Great (17:1-18)
10. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 - a. The Fall of Babylon (18:1-24)
 - b. The King of Kings (19:1-21)
11. Heirs of the Celestial Glory
 - a. The Thousand Years (20:1-15)
 - b. The New Jerusalem (21:1-27)
 - c. Blessed Are They That Do His Commandments (22:1-21)

THE CHURCH AND THE DEVIL (12:1-17)

The JST changes for the whole chapter are presented here for convenience in the two-column format used in the other notes. References to the individual wording will be made in the verse by verse commentary below.

12:1-17 KJV	12:1-17 JST
1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:	1 And there appeared a great sign in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth ; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.	2 And the woman being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations, with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and his throne.
3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.	3 And there appeared another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.	4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was delivered, ready to devour her child after it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.	
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred <i>and</i> threescore days.	6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore years.
7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,	7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought against Michael,
8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.	8 And the dragon prevailed not against Michael; neither the child, nor the woman, which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.	9 Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon who was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and also called Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he who was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.	"10 Verse correct" ⁶
11 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.	11 For they have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; for they loved not their lives, but kept the testimony even unto death.
12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.	12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. And after these things I heard another voice saying, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, yea, and they who dwell upon the islands of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man <i>child.</i>	13 For when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.
14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.	14 Therefore to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.
15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.	15 And the serpent casteth out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.
16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.	16 And the earth helpeth the woman, and the earth openeth her mouth, and swalloweth up the flood which the dragon casteth out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.	17 Therefore, the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have also the testimony of Jesus Christ.

⁶ JST manuscript, NT2, Folio 2, p. 152.

THE WOMAN, CHILD, AND DRAGON (12:1-6)

In a nearly eternal battle of good versus evil, the woman who is the church gave birth to a son, the kingdom of God. The dragon, representing Satan, tries desperately to defeat one or both of them. He has never been nor ever will be successful.

12:1 **a great wonder**; (JST) **a great sign**. Or, “A great and wondrous sign” (NIV). The JST changes “wonder” to “sign” (remember, the Prophet did not know Greek when he did this). A sign is a proof of authority or truth, a miracle that is either true or false.⁷ For example, Christ did miracles among the Jews to prove he was indeed the Messiah. In this case, the great sign is a woman arrayed with celestial imagery. The “great” part refers to her importance

12:1 **in heaven**; (JST) **in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth**. Though the sign was seen in the heaven or the sky, it was something that John recognized as a familiar, earthly thing, though armed with symbolic meaning.

12:1 **a woman**. The identity of the woman is a subject of much debate among scholars and Christian commentators. Some see her as Mary, the mother of Jesus, though others favor the interpretation of Israel, the bride of Christ.⁸ The JST tells us that she is “the church of God” (v. 8) which is closely aligned to the Israel interpretation and indeed encompasses both covenant Israel of the Old Testament and the church of the New. Because of the rest of the narrative, we see her generally as the New Testament church which ends in apostasy, though she could certainly represent the church in all ages.

12:1 **clothed with the sun**. See Psalm 104:2 (clothed with light). She is clothed in the brightest light known to man, a symbol of knowledge, purity, and power. Based on the meaning of “clothed” also meaning ‘to put something around,’ it could also represent the

protection of God, such as how walls protect a city from attack.⁹

12:1 **the moon under her feet**. She had dominion over the moon; it also shows her relative position above the earth itself.

12:1 **a crown**. The woman’s crown is a *stephanos* or victory wreath, like the twenty-four elders had, and again represents her victory over the wicked world.¹⁰

12:1 **twelve stars**. Since we know the woman is the church (v. 8), the twelve stars on her head likely refer to the apostles, though they could also represent the twelve tribes; indeed, both are found in the heavenly temple, lending the possibility of a dual meaning that ties back to the woman’s identity as the church in all ages.¹¹

Many scriptures mention the sun, moon, and stars together,¹² but in Joseph’s dream, the sun (Jacob), moon (Rebekah), and stars (brothers) all bowed down to him (Genesis 37:9). In apocryphal books such as the Testament of Abraham, Abraham, Sarah, and their posterity are portrayed as the sun, moon, and stars. And Philo and Josephus, from the time of John, see those symbols in the dress of the high priest.¹³ In short, the imagery is associated with ancient Israel, with the covenants made with them, and with the priesthood—all fitting tie ins with the church.

Notice the pattern of the symbols on the woman: the stars are on top (on her head), she is clothed in the sun (her body), and standing on the moon (under her feet). This is how the Nauvoo, Salt Lake, Palmyra, and other temples display those symbols—stars highest, then sun, then moon. They do not represent the three degrees of glory (as some have supposed; if that were the case, why are the stars on top?). Instead, they derive from the Woman/Church as shown in this chapter.¹⁴ The symbols mean that it is within the temple that the kingdom of God is born!¹⁵

⁷ Smalley, 313.

⁸ Smalley, 314; Arnold, 318.

⁹ Draper and Rhodes, 759.

¹⁰ Draper and Rhodes, 756.

¹¹ See Revelation 21:12, 14; Smalley, 315.

¹² For example, Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 148:3, Ecclesiastes 12:2, Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 31:35; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10; Matthew 24:29; Luke 21:25)

¹³ Beale and Carson, 1122; Smalley, 315.

¹⁴ See

http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism_and_temples/Symbols_on_the_Nauvoo_Temple.

¹⁵ Wilcox, 162.

12:2 **she being with child**. This is NOT Christ, as some have supposed;¹⁶ Christ is the bridegroom and thus not born of the Church. Rather, the child is the kingdom of God, or Zion; see JST verse 8.

Israel as a woman about to give birth is a common OT theme; see Psalm 48:7; Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; 42:14; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; Micah 4:9.¹⁷

12:3 **another wonder in heaven; (JST) another sign in heaven**. The second sign is the dragon but unlike the woman, he is not “great.”

12:3 **a great red dragon**. Greek *drakōn* meaning a large serpent or monster, equivalent to the Old Testament *leviathan* or *tannim*, monsters of the land or sea. It was more like the Loch Ness monster than a medieval dragon; see Psalm 74:13-14 which portrays a multi-headed leviathan. The dragon is red to tie him with fire, murder, death, and blood.

The woman versus the dragon harkens back to Genesis 3:1-6 with the confrontation between Eve and the serpent. The serpent/dragon has always sought to devastate God’s plans by his personal intervention, but both Genesis and Revelation show that he is not successful, “for he knew not the mind of God” (Moses 4:6).

12:3 **seven heads**. Evil has many faces, each one different, but together they were perfectly, wholly evil.¹⁸

12:3 **ten horns**. Horns are power, and the dragon shares the attribute of having ten horns with the beast of Daniel 7:7, 24, and the beast from the sea (13:1) and the evil woman (17:3). The horns represent their power over earthly kingdoms and nations, and ten is only used in Revelation with the enemies of God;¹⁹ it represents “the whole of a part, but not the whole part,” as in the Ten Commandments which are whole as a group but represent only a portion of God’s commandments.²⁰ To many Gentiles in John’s audience, it would also mean the mimicry of divine rule (because 10 represented people working in harmony).

12:3 **seven crowns**. Greek *diadēma* or royal crown, not the crown of victory of the woman and elders; Satan

never wears the victory crown, only the temporary and less meaningful crown of earthly dominance.

12:4 **the third part of the stars of heaven**. The dragon used his tail to pull down a third part of spirits in the pre-existent world (see D&C 29:36-37).

12:4 (JST) **ready to devour her child**. Like Moses and Jesus, Satan attempted to have them killed as infants, but that plan will be spoiled by God and the infant preserved.

12:5 (JST 12:2) **rule all nations**. Rule is *poimēn*, which means ‘to shepherd’ (tend, protect, or nurture); the same term is translated “feed” in 7:17. It has a firm sense to it, giving the idea that the shepherd will drive or goad the nations into obedience.²¹

12:5 (JST 12:2) **rod of iron**. Or, ‘scepter of iron.’ Psalm 2:9 states, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.” Nephi/Lehi’s image (where the rod of iron equals the word of God) is still valid because the authority of the kingdom of God IS the word of God. This also ties back to the blessing of Thyatira in 2:26-27, especially the JST version (also in the Appendix).

12:5 (JST 12:2) **caught up unto God**. As soon as the child was born, it was brought into the safest place in the universe, the very presence of God and his throne. The word “caught up” represents taken with power; the first century church didn’t have time establish itself before being snatched away by a merciful Father.²²

12:6 **the woman fled into the wilderness**. Going into the wilderness represents apostasy (see D&C 86:3), even as the wilderness represents safety. In D&C 109, the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland temple, Joseph Smith asked: “That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens...” (D&C 109:73-74). The reference to “the wilderness” in D&C 109 is clearly an allusion to this event and image here.

12:6 **feed her there**. She would be nourished during her time in the wilderness, like Elijah when he was hiding in

¹⁶ E.g., Mounce, 234.

¹⁷ Draper and Rhodes, 757.

¹⁸ Wilcox, 165.

¹⁹ Arnold, 318.

²⁰ Draper and Rhodes, 764; 775, n. 15.

²¹ Draper and Rhodes, 768.

²² Draper and Rhodes, 768.

the wilderness from the rulers who were trying to kill him (1 Kings 17:2-6).

12:6 **a thousand two hundred and threescore days;** (JST) **years.** In the JST, 1260 years shows a period of evil's triumph. Given the events of the last 2,000 years, it was a miracle that any remnant of Christianity survived or any shred of scripture. It shows God's hand in history.

Some try to match the years to the events of history, but this is a fairly pointless exercise.²³ Since the number is symbolic of both a long time and an incomplete period, it just means that the apostasy would last for an extended period but would finally come to an end.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN (12:7-12)

These verses are an interlude, a reminder that what was happening to the Church went all the way back to the pre-earth life. The outcome that John described reminds us that the outcome today will be the same—it will end in God's victory.

12:7 **there was a war in heaven.** Certainly the war represents the great battle in the pre-earth life, but it also continues in John's day and ours. The fact that some of those engaged in the battle die (v. 11) shows that the pre-existence cannot be the only thing in view.²⁴

12:7 **Michael and his angels fought.** The battle was once fought before we all came to earth (Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 3:28; Isaiah 14:12-20) and will be fought again at the end, when Satan gives it one more mighty try (D&C 88:111-115). Michael is Adam (D&C 27:11; 107:54).

12:9 **that old serpent.** The snake was equated with cunning and malicious behavior.

12:9 **called the Devil.** "Devil" is the Greek *diabolos*, meaning 'liar, slanderer.' It also has the sense of a prosecutor in a legal setting.

12:9 **called Satan.** A Hebrew word interjected into the Greek, *sātān* means adversary or accuser (see verse 10), and is similar to the Greek *diabolos*.

²³ Parry and Parry, 154-155, give examples of this, such as counting back from the First Vision or the start of the

12:10 **And I heard a loud voice in heaven.** This begins a doxology or praise segment that goes from verses 10-12. The voice is not identified but is likely the twenty-four elders or something similar, given its origin in heaven and the reference to "our God" and "our brethren."

12:10 **Now is come salvation.** "Jesus" is Yeshua in Aramaic, which means "salvation."

12:10 **the accuser of our brethren is cast down.** Satan is sometimes portrayed in a heavenly court scene accusing people of sin (1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 82:1; 89:5-7; Job 1:6-12; Jeremiah 23:18, 22; Zechariah 3:1-3). Now he is evicted from the courtroom and cannot make such accusations any longer.

12:11 **they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb;** (JST) **they have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.** How we all overcome the world—through the blood of Christ and by our testimony kept under all circumstances. In the JST, it's more of an ongoing process than a one-time activity.

12:11 **by the word of their testimony.** The other power that allows us to overcome Satan is our witness of Christ. The word here is *martyrias*, which has been encountered before in Revelation, and refers to actively declaring the truth about the gospel being willing to suffer for it. Indeed, some of them "kept the testimony even unto death" (JST).

12:12 **having great wrath.** Satan knows he has lost but has not yet given up and so is in a great rage to do everything he can to thwart God's plans in the time he has left.

12:12 **he hath but a short time.** Satan already knows he has lost so he hits the Church hard in a final attempt.

THE WAR ON EARTH (12:13-17)

Armed with an understanding of the nature of the eternal battle, in verse 13, our attention is turned back to the woman and the dragon introduced in the first six verses, as the dragon attempts to defeat her and her children.

Reformation, but agree that "all such efforts are no more than speculative."

²⁴ Parry and Parry, 156.

12:13 **he persecuted the woman.** Having been unsuccessful in devouring the child, the dragon tried instead to harm the woman or the church.

12:14 **given two wings of a great eagle.** To aid the woman in her flight into the wilderness, she was given two eagle's wings, recalling the Lord's words in Exodus 19:4, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." See also Isaiah 40:31 and Deuteronomy 32:10-11.

12:14 **into her place.** The place was prepared ahead of time (v. 6), in the foreknowledge of God.

12:14 **nourished for a time.** Like the olive tree allegory in Jacob 5:30-48, though the fruit is bad, the Gentile grafts kept the roots alive so Joseph Smith could be prompted via scripture to pray and seek truth.

12:14 **time, and times, and half a time.** As in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, this refers to 3-1/2 years, which equals

1260 days in the Jewish calendar, echoing v. 5 (though the JST changes 1260 days to years).

12:15 **out of his mouth water as a flood.** Representing lies, falsehoods, and apostate doctrines to try and drown the woman and child.²⁵

12:16 **swalloweth up the flood.** Probably a reference to the story of Korah (see Numbers 16:31-33) but also Pharaoh and his army being swallowed up (Exodus 15:12). See also 2 Nephi 26:5 where the earth swallows up evil.

12:17 **the dragon was wrath.** Or, "the dragon was enraged" (NIV, NAS, NJB). His anger was to the point of being out of control.

12:17 **remnant of her seed.** The remnant of the woman's seed are members of the Church; see D&C 76:25-29, in which Satan falls and makes war with the Saints of God.

THE BEASTS OF REVELATION (13:1-18)

Chapter 12 laid out the battle. In chapters 13-18, John shows us Satan's arsenal—political power; apostate doctrine; and economic temptation. Satan was saying, in essence, 'I will take the treasures of the earth and buy armies, power, and false priests, and reign with blood and war upon this earth where you have cast me!'

Joseph Smith is recorded to have taught, "When God made use of the figure of a beast in visions to the prophets, he did it to represent those Kingdoms who had degenerated and become corrupt—the Kingdoms of the world, but he never made use of the figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent his kingdom." He continued, "John saw beasts that had to do with things on the earth, but not in past ages; the beasts which he saw had to devour the inhabitants of the earth in days to come." After reading Revelation 13:1-8 to the congregation, he explained that some say "the beast that received the wound was Nebuchadnezzar,...some say it means the kingdom of the world. One thing is sure, it dont mean the kingdoms of the saints." He stated, "The beast John saw was an actual beast to whom power was to be given. An actual intelligent being in heaven and this beast was to have power given him...it must have been a wonderful beast that all human beings wondered after it, and I will

venture to say that when God gives power to the beast to destroy the inhabitants of the earth, all will wonder."²⁶

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (13:1-10)

13:1 KJV	13:1 JST
1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.	1 And I saw another sign in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth , a beast rise up out of the sea, and stood upon the sand of the sea , having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

In the JST, John is not the one standing on the seashore, but the beast that rises out of the sea which then steps onto the land. The JST also defines the nature of the beast—he is "in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth," meaning his power is political and kingly.

²⁵ Wilcox, 169.

²⁶ Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 183-187.

13:1 **sand**. Also can mean ‘multitudes of people’ (see Abraham’s promise from God of posterity like the sand in Genesis 22:17 and with Jacob in Genesis 32:12).

13:1 **the sea**. Or, people and nations (see 17:15), but it can also represent the abyss from which the dragon came. This beast from the sea is described in Job 41:1-34 as Leviathan, the sea monster.

13:1 **a beast**. This is a *thērion* or wild beast, which fits the description in v. 2 of it being a combination leopard, bear, and lion.

13:1 **seven heads and ten horns...ten crowns**. Nearly identical to the dragon, his seven heads have ten horns. The only different he has ten crowns representing his reign on earth.

13:1 **name of blasphemy**. He wanted and tried to be a replacement for God. His name was not “blasphemy” but his name was blasphemous, something which is designed to denigrate God.²⁷

The image of the beast came from Daniel 7-8 (especially 7:7-8, 19-25); compare what happened there to understand this. John knew Daniel’s vision and so did his readers.

13:2 **leopard...bear...lion**. The wild beast has elements of three very feared predators.

13:2 **the dragon gave him his power**. So there is no confusion about the nature of the beast, we are told directly his source of power—Satan himself.

13:3 **his deadly wound was healed**. This represents the destruction of evil, yet with more rising up. One comparison in our day might be WWII which was followed by the Cold War which was followed by terrorism.

The word “wound” used is similar to the one with the Lamb that was standing as it had been slain (1:18; 2:8). This shows the copycat nature of the beast, mimicking the Lamb and his authority. In the beast’s case however, it was actually mortally wounded but not yet dead, allowing it to continue for a short time longer but not forever like the lamb made alive again.

13:4 **worshipped the dragon and they worshipped the beast**. The worshippers adored the power of these

two creatures. They especially worshipped the dragon who was the source of the beast’s power.

13:4 **who is like unto the beast?** The beast seems endowed with great power, and cannot be defeated. He has survived a serious injury and is still alive, and he exerts rule over much of the world.

13:5 **there was given unto him a mouth**. The beast would have no ability to speak without the implicit permission of God; the phrase “there was given” implies divine permission for it to happen. God is always in control, even when we don’t see his apparent hand.

13:5 **forty and two months**. Another reference to 3-1/2 years, the imperfect amount of time that the beast is allowed to speak his foul words.

13:6 **he opened his mouth in blasphemy**. The beast continually spoke evil of God and his name, his holy place, and those who worshipped him in heaven.

13:7 **was given unto him to make war with the saints**. As with his speaking, he is allowed to make war with the holy followers of Christ. That he has some victory in his efforts is shown that it was also given unto him “to overcome them.” Though we are warned that he will exert power and ‘have his day,’ yet his power is limited and short-lived, like his time of ruling.

13:7 **over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations**. He doesn’t just have some power over the Saints but over many on the earth who worship him and the dragon.

13:8 **the book of life**. See Daniel 12:1, where after “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” God’s people will be delivered, “every one that shall be found written in the book.”

13:8 **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**. The Lamb was a willing sacrifice from the beginning of time, when he said in the grand council, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27).

13:9 **If any man have an ear, let him hear**. This verse might be written today, ‘Pay attention to what comes next!’ (the same phrase was used in chapters 2-3).

13:10 **he that killeth with the sword must be killed**. Though the dragon and the beast look powerful the triumphant, judgment is coming.

²⁷ Draper and Rhodes, 841.

13:10 **patience and the faith of the saints.** John paused to remind us of his core message—Christ will win! Compare Daniel 7:18: “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH (13:11-18)

13:11 **another beast coming up out of the earth.** This second beast is Behemoth, the partner monster of Leviathan in Hebrew legend (see Job 40:15-24).

13:11 **two horns like a lamb.** This was a beast in sheep’s clothing, pretending that power was not important by his gentle appearance but getting it from the first beast as shown by his horns. He was imitating the true Lamb but really was like a dragon or serpent. Later he will be called the ‘false prophet’ (16:13; 19:20; 20:10) also showing he was tied to the religious establishment; this was apostasy in all its forms, people who are dominated and under the control of false religious systems.

13:12 **causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast.** The goal of the false prophet in sheep’s clothing is to testify of and encourage worship of the beast.

13:13 **he doeth great wonders.** Making “fire come down from heaven” and other wonders, the land beast/false prophet convinces many of his power, which comes from the dragon. This could be to counteract the impact the prophets of chapter 11 had on the world, with the miracles for 3-1/2 years. The beasts are declaring that they have just as much power and since the prophets are gone anyway, the beasts are the ones to worship.

13:14 **deceiveth.** Greek *planaō*, to ‘cause to roam,’ meaning it intentionally gets them out of the path of truth.²⁸

13:14 **they should make an image of the beast.** This recalls Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (see Daniel 2, especially verse 44) and the story of the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:15-18). The image in Daniel’s dream, which represents the kingdom of the world, was destroyed by the rolling stone—the woman and the child!

13:15 **the image of the beast should both speak.** Common in John’s day were stories of images of gods coming to life and speaking. The reality was that priests would throw their voices into statues as people prayed to them to take advantage of them.

13:15 **should be killed.** As John wrote this in his day, failure to worship the emperor was a capital offense. However, the phrase may express not what happens but merely the false prophet’s desire and intent, assuring those who do not worship the idol of some protection.²⁹

13:16 **a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.** Contrast with the seal or mark given to saints in 7:3-4 and 9:4. The word for “mark” means a brand or a tattoo.³⁰ The imagery possibly comes from several sources:

- Deuteronomy 6:7-8 (*shema* and *tefillim*/phylacteries)
- Heathen marks in the forehead for other gods
- Runaway Roman slaves marked in the forehead or hand to show their shame
- Some slaves who decided to commit to their masters for life were marked to indicate their loyalty
- Soldiers defeated in battle were sometimes marked as the losers

Michael Wilcox wrote, “If the things of the world—wealth, possessions, and power—become the central focus of our lives; if we transfer these ambitions to our children; if we think of positions, influence, riches, investments, and owning more and more constantly; if we find ourselves talking about them during the day; if the last thoughts of our minds before retiring and the first thoughts upon rising gravitate toward all that Babylon has to offer; if our hands reach to grasp more and more while our eyes wander and roam through the stocked shelves of material gain and domination; if we fear that we cannot survive without acquiring the qualities of the predatory beast—then we may be assured that the mark is beginning to burn its way into our foreheads and hands. The beast with his false prophet and his image is receiving our worship. They may one day claim us as their own.”³¹

²⁸ Draper and Rhodes, 882.

²⁹ Draper and Rhodes, 887.

³⁰ Draper and Rhodes, 888.

³¹ Wilcox, 197-198.

13:17 **no man might buy or sell.** The ways of the world are not those of God. D&C 1:16 teaches of our day: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.” Alma 30:17 adds this insight about the pattern of worldly success: “...therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.”

13:17 **the mark, or the name of the beast.** The nature of the mark is explained—it is the name of the beast. The loyalty of the people is clearly indicated in the name they have marked on their foreheads and hands.

13:18 **Six hundred threescore and six.** The name of the Father was tied to the seal in foreheads of the righteous (7:3-4). In contrast, the name of Satan was tied to the mark of the wicked beast. What better number to represent him than ‘incompleteness thrice emphasized’ for Satan?

CONCLUSION

John’s vision of the beasts must have been remarkably similar to Nephi’s of the “great and abominable church,” “the whore of all the earth” (1 Nephi 13:6-8, 26-28; 14:3, 9, 15; 22:13; 28:18). That institution persecuted the Saints, focused on the riches and power that the world could offer, and inflicted wars and rumors of wars upon the nations of the earth.

The dragon and his two beasts make an evil trinity, but it was the trinity of imperfection. Satan seeks to replace God; Christ got his authority from the Father, and the first beast gets his from Satan; the Holy Ghost testifies of Christ, while the second beast declares the power of

the first. They know their time is almost up but are determined to go out in a blaze of glory, taking as many of us with them as they can.

Those marked by the Father remain faithful in the midst of persecution, loss of financial opportunities, inability to interact with the world, and more. But God is surely caring for them, giving them the Bread and Water of life. The patience of the saints will pay off in the end, as they remember to whom they owe everything and reject the temptations of the dragon and his beasts of power, politics, prosperity, and possessions.

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- KJV – King James Version (Authorized Version)
 - JST – Joseph Smith Translation
 - BYU – BYU New Testament Rendition (from Draper and Rhodes)
 - CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
 - LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
 - NAB – The New American Bible
 - NASB – New American Standard Bible
 - NIV – New International Version
 - NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
 - NLT – New Living Translation