

The two beasts and doing the calculation

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[0 : 00] Revelation 13, it's obviously a nice and easy chapter, so let's pray for some help shall we?! Lord, and to be able to serve you in the world where we now live, and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Right, here's a question. Who are you going to vote for on May the, whatever it is, May the 7th?

That's a question. You don't have to answer it out loud, but it is a question. Who are you going to vote for on May the 7th? There will be local elections for ward councillors.

Do you know who your ward councillor is at the moment? Do you know who the candidates are? And in the national elections, probably know who your MP is.

Who will you be voting for? Do you know who the candidates are in these elections? We live, we have the privilege of living in a parliamentary democracy.

[1 : 36] Not everybody lives in a parliamentary democracy. Not everybody lives in a functioning parliamentary democracy. You may say our parliamentary democracy doesn't work as well as it could, which I'm sure is true.

But we would be very foolish people to think that it doesn't work at all. It is far better than many of the systems of government that many human beings have to live under.

The political system that we have was fought for, in particular by Protestant Christians. There's a way of thinking that Protestantism has, sort of a democratic way of thinking.

And it was obtained at cost after long struggle. So no Christian should be thinking, oh, that is all irrelevant. Because Christians over centuries have fought and in the end prevailed.

Not in every respect, but in some substantial respects regarding the political system in which we live. So let me ask you, perhaps this is the question, will you vote at all?

[2 : 54] Now I would say that in a parliamentary democracy we have the ability to influence the rule of those who rule over us.

We have the ability to influence, perhaps you might say in a very small degree, but nevertheless in a degree. We have the ability to influence the policies, the implementation, the people who have authority over us.

So will you vote? Well, I hope you would. Will we support the state? Will we support the state?

Will we be supportive of the things that are going on? Because there will be some places where that question would be far more difficult to answer than it is in the UK.

And you might reach a different conclusion in some places. When I say state, I mean the government authority and the government system. So you might think, well, I thought I was coming to a Christian meeting this morning.

[4 : 06] What's all this about politics? Well, the answer is that Christianity, in quite a deep sense, is a political religion.

And in the deep sense, because the statement of the Christian is, Jesus is Lord. That's a claim to authority and a claim to power in a world where human beings claim authority and power.

And sometimes that works out quite neatly. And at other times, that leads to very deep division and conflict. And that, I think, is what Revelation 13 is about.

So, we're going to try and make our way up to the chapter first by this question.

What should we think of the state as Christians? Our master gave this piece of wisdom, and I think it is a very profound statement, from Luke 20, 25, when he was asked by the people in his day and age on this subject.

[5 : 25] He said, give to Caesar, that was the emperor of those days, give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.

That's a very profound answer. Notice what he's saying. There are some things that Caesar, the state, the political authority, does have a right to expect of us.

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. And there are some things that the state does not have a right to expect of us. Those things belong to God. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's.

What did Paul say? You might, if you're good at finding places in the Bible, you might like to flick over to Romans 13, where he says quite a few things, but I think it's simply enlarging what Jesus said.

I'll read some of it. In Romans 13 he says, Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

[6 : 37] Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. The rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong.

The ruler is God's servant to do you good. If you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. Then going down to verse 6, this is why you pay, no, verse 5, that's why it's necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment, but also because of conscience.

In other words, it's a right thing to do. That is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him.

If you owe taxes, pay taxes. If you owe revenue, pay revenue. If you owe respect, then respect. If honour, then honour. So it's actually quite a radical thing to say that the government is not just a mistake or a joke.

It's something that's been put there by God. And there is a sense that whoever takes the office of government, you know, maybe they do it badly or whether they do it well, the position is put there by God.

[8 : 06] And therefore, in Christian understanding, we owe something to that ruling authority. If you owe taxes, pay taxes.

If you owe revenue, pay revenue. If you owe respect, then pay respect. If you owe honour, then honour. And Peter says much the same thing. That was Paul writing in Romans.

Peter says, submit for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, and he included honouring the king. And he says a little bit more than that, but I've just picked out some of the main points there.

It is a good thing and a right thing to fall into our proper role into our proper place vis-a-vis the governing authorities.

Well, that's a main teaching of the Bible, and it goes back to Jesus himself. But in Revelation, it's answering not exactly that question, but a slightly different question.

[9 : 20] When the state insists by force on something that the state does not have a right to, what do we do then? When the state insists by force on something that it does not have a right to.

And I'm going to enlarge that. When our state, or our culture, or the empire, or our school, or our university, or our job, or our career, or our business, insists on something that it does not have a right to.

That's what Revelation is. Revelation 13 is saying, what do we do then? So in the social context of the book of Revelation is the Roman Empire.

And in those days, there were trade guilds, you know, the guild of potters, the guild of weavers, the guild of whatever. And in many cases, perhaps in all cases, but certainly it would have happened, that you might, if you wanted to be in the world of trade, have to join a guild dedicated to a particular god or goddess.

Remember the cry, greatest Diana of the Ephesians, the silversmiths of Ephesus, saying, you know, that's our business. What would you do then? And you might remember that Nero, I think it was, had on the coins that he printed, stamped Nero, saviour of the world.

[10 : 55] And that raises a question really, isn't it? How do you feel about buying and selling with those coins in your pocket? It's also apparently the case that Nero, after his death, it was rumoured that he was still alive.

I haven't done the homework to give you chapter and verse on that, but that's what the commentators are saying. So let's look at this chapter. The context in the book, I'm very sorry if this is the first time you're here and you're trying to catch up on what this book is about.

It's a letter to seven churches in those ancient days. It had a section of seven seals of world history, going through the history of the world up to final judgment, and seven trumpets for repentance, going up to the end of the world and its final judgment.

And the section we're in is seven visions of reality. And last time we looked at the woman who was representing the people of God, who was pressured but secure, and the dragon, Satan, who was defeated but angry.

And we're looking today at the two beasts. Deke Lucas said, you must not waggle on the tea, you must get to the substance of your talk within the first ten minutes.

[12:18] So I've got about thirty seconds to go before that runs out. There are some words in here. Giving, there's quite a bit of giving going on, and making as well.

The giving, it talks about the relationships between the different players in Revelation 13.

Sometimes God gives, and it just says, it was given to so and so.

And Satan gives. Just notice that in passing, I won't say any more than that. Now, there's a little bit ragged on this. This is 13.

Right, let's read it. And I saw, we've got the dragon. The dragon, I hope, will pop up in a moment.

The dragon is in the background there, on the shore of the sea, verse one.

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns, and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head, a blasphemous name.

[13:21] The beast I saw, resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear, and a mouth like that of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast, his power, and his throne, and great authority.

So let's see how much of that we can put in. There's the dragon. The dragon, who we saw in the previous chapter, is Satan, spiritual being, spiritual adversary, the one who likes to wreck everything for everybody, and hates God.

And the dragon gives this beast, some of his, no, does it say some? His power, and his throne, and great authority.

The beast, has power. The ten horns, horns in the symbolic language of the book of Revelation, mean power.

And seven heads, so I said, the seven usually means completeness of something, so if you have seven heads, I suppose that you're very, very intelligent, I don't know, something like that.

[14:33] It has power, and I would say intelligence, and blasphemous names, verse one. And verse three says, one of the heads of the beast, seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.

So I couldn't draw that, but I drew a sticking plaster over the beast, because it had been mortally wounded, but healed. And the commentators say, this must have resonated in those days, with this, what do you call it, gossip, rumor, that Nero had been killed, but he was actually alive somewhere. When I was in Sri Lanka, I said this, it's like the Tamil Tiger rebel leader, Prabhakaran, who was dead, but somebody said, oh no, he's not dead.

Because they've got a, a sort of a rumor, that he wasn't really killed. That's a rebel leader over there, the same rumor, idea attached to, one of the emperors, in this day.

The fatal wound, had apparently been healed, and the whole world, ah, let's wind that back. Where does this business, of the leopard, the leopard, and the bear, and the lion, three, those three, things come from?

[16:02] Well I can give you the answer to that, because as, as John often does, he's quoting from the Old Testament, and in the book of Daniel, ah, Daniel, way back, in the time of exile, he had a vision, and he saw three, four beasts actually, and they were in order, no, I'm just, I think perhaps not in order, but they were, a leopard, a bear, and a lion.

And in the book of Daniel, they represented symbolically, three kingdoms, and a fourth, which was not, described in any particular, animal form.

A, there were four kingdoms, which came up, and were the very opposite, of the kingdom, that God was going to set up. So hopefully, there we go, in the book of Revelation, the four beasts, are the enemy of, are the enemy kingdoms, of the kingdom, that the son of man sets up.

And so that's what I read, right at the beginning, the son of man approaches, the ancient of days, and is given power, an authority, and a kingdom, and he wins.

So that's where, this idea of beasts, is coming from. So where have we got to? We've got, this beast, and, he has this power, he has this authority, this blasphemy, he seems to have been, fatally wounded, but has been healed, and the whole world, is astonished.

[17 : 40] There we are, there's the whole world, and they, the dragon gives power, to the beast, but the world gives worship, to the beast. Men worshipped, the dragon, because he had given authority, to the beast, and they also worshipped, the beast, and said, who is like the beast?

There's a Christian song, which says, something, something, who is like him? Anybody know that one? Who is there like him? Who, something, something. It is, a, a, a form of words, of worship, that's used in the Bible, about God.

Who is like me, says the Lord? To whom can you compare me? I am incomparable. That is a form of worship, offered to God. And here, they're saying, who is like the beast?

No one like him, he's incomparable. He's incomparable, and he's undefeatable. Who can make war against him?

So it gives you an idea, of what people were saying. He's so brilliant. There's nobody greater, than our great beast. And, let's see what happens.

[19 : 03] In verse five, the beast was given a mouth, to utter proud words, and blasphemies, and to exercise his authority, for 42 months. I think the 42 will pop up, in a minute.

He was given power, to make war, against the saints. So he's given, power, to make war, against the saints, and to conquer them. And he was given, authority, over every tribe, people, language, and nation.

Does that, succession of words, tribe, people, language, and nation, ring a bell, anywhere in the book of Revelation? I think.

Yeah. Yes, when worship is given, to the lamb, he's given worship, by every tribe, and people, and language, and nation.

that's his glory. And here, it seems, that the beast, pretty much, has the same thing. John loves to say something, and then contradict himself, and that's what he does, in verse 8.

[20 : 12] He says, all inhabitants, of the earth, will worship the beast. Well, actually, all except, all except, those whose names, have been written, in the book of life, belonging to the lamb, that was slain, from the creation, of the world.

So he's given, he's given to make war, on the saints, the people of God, and to overcome them. And they're the, but they don't, capitulate to him.

And there's a connection, with the lamb, that was slain, and the book of life, that belongs to the lamb. And that's the picture, of this first beast.

This kingdom, of course that's what beasts represent, this empire, if you like, that is so, powerful, and so persuasive, that everybody, says, you know, if you don't think, the emperor is great, you must be crazy.

And we love to worship, this state of ours, this emperor, he's the savior, of the world. And that's, that's the picture, that's described here.

[21 : 35] And the only people, who have an if and a but, about it, the people, whose names, are written in the lamb's book, of life, they get a very rough, end of the stick, because this beast, is given authority, it seems, to, to overcome them, to make war, verse seven, against the saints, and to conquer them.

And that's this, this picture that is given, of what happens, when the state, goes bad. When the state, is no longer, a servant of God, but is deriving, its power, from Satan.

And, in verse nine, it says, he who has an ear, let him hear. So, the Bible says, this is a word from God, you weren't expecting this, I wasn't really expecting this, I thought, there would be something, different to say, but it says here, he who has an ear, to hear, let him hear.

It's saying, listen up, this is something, from God. And it goes on, to say, there will come a point, when everything, gets fixed, and you can't change it, if anyone's going to go, into captivity, into captivity, he will go, if you're going to be killed, by the sword, you will be killed, by the sword.

There'll be no further chances, there'll be no changing, of minds, you'll be committed. And for me, preaching it, I think, what's the application of this?

[23 : 18] How am I going to bring this, to these people at Calvary, and apply it? Well, mercifully, the application is built in. It says, what this calls for, it calls for, patient endurance, verse 10, and faithfulness, on the part of the saints.

This is a call, brothers and sisters, for us, to be patiently, enduring, under whatever pressure, we are put under, and to be faithful, under whatever pressure, we are put under.

And we might say, that in fact, our state is not as bad as this, and we're not suffering persecution, and I might say, yeah, that's probably, probably true.

But it still says, you've still got to, don't write this off as irrelevant. There are many places in the world, where this is completely relevant.

Christians in Syria, for example, for whom it has become illegal, let me simplify it, and put in a few guesses, for whom the pressure, of the prevailing state, is so strong, that you either, capitulate, and deny Jesus, and say you'll become a Muslim, or you get killed.

[24 : 45] And the word of God says, this is a call. It's not a call for negotiation, it's not a call for capitulation, it's a call for courage, sticking to it, not losing your nerve, holding on to what you believe, patiently enduring, and being faithful, even if it costs you your life.

And I could enlarge on that. The Bible says, he, the person who endures to the end, will be saved. And I would agree, I don't think the main thing that we face these days is persecution, but there are lots of things that we do face. And I would enlarge on it and say, we need to set up our Christian lives, for the long haul.

We need to set up our Christian lives, expecting that we will walk with God, through valleys, as well as sunshine. So if our Christian life is only for sunny days, we are at risk.

It's saying, you need to be the sort of person who is feeding your faith, and keeping your faith, and making decisions as you go through life, with a view to the fact that you're going to be under pressure, this way and that way, and you jolly well need to keep your eyes fixed on where you're going, and to make those decisions accordingly, because this is a call for patient endurance, and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

[26 : 33] And we could enlarge it and say, that God actually promises, that we will learn lessons, and he promises, that even if the lessons are difficult, he'll still teach us them, and that will certainly, at some point, involve difficulties in life.

That's Hebrews chapter 7, is it? Where it says, or is it 11, 12? God disciplines those whom he loves. What father is it who doesn't discipline his child?

The Lord disciplines us. There will be tough times. He does it. He doesn't stop loving us. We have to fix our minds on that, and have patient endurance, and faithfulness.

Beast number one. Beast, oh no, beast number two. Beast number two, from verse 11 onwards. Now this is another beast.

Beast number two. The first beast came from the sea. This one comes from the earth. I'm afraid I haven't done all the details on my drawing, but this beast is a bit different.

[27 : 54] He has two horns like a lamb. And you might look at him, out of the corner of your eye, and think he was a lamb.

But when you listen to what he says, it's very different. He speaks like a dragon. He looks like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon.

And he exercises all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and makes, this is one of the making words, he makes the earth, and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

Now whether I managed to get that all onto the, there's the first beast whose wound had been healed. He speaks in a certain way. There's the people who are being made or caused to worship the first beast whose fatal wound had been healed.

Now how does he do it? The first beast, you could say, is to do with intimidation. The second beast is to do with deception. And he performs great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven in full view of men.

[29 : 06] Now did I put that in? No. It's going to come up in a minute. He was, and because of the signs he was given, he was given, you see this?

He was given power to do this on behalf of the first beast. He deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword yet lived.

He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast so that he could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. How much of that did I get in there?

There's the image of beast number one. It can speak. There's fire, these signs, and he also, he's the sort of spokesman for the first beast.

He's the publicity propaganda agent for the first beast. And he also forces everyone, he makes everyone, verse 16, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark.

[30 : 13] So this is the trade thing. So if you're trading, you need the mark of the beast or the number of the beast. Now, did I put any more in?

Oh yes. What's the application of this? This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast.

Yeah, that's the implication. That's the application for this. Do a calculation. Do a calculation.

So this second beast, if you like, the propaganda machine for the first beast. In the Roman Empire, they had a very, very effective propaganda machine. So the priestly system, the religious system, was as it were the deceptive arm of the state.

So in totalitarian systems nowadays, religion is obliterated. So if you think of what Marxism does, what communism has done, it tends to obliterate religion.

[31 : 25] But in the Roman Empire, they used religion. So if you wanted to get on in the world, you had to worship at the temple for whatever and included in that as worship of the emperor.

And that was the way it was. And John is saying, well, what you're actually facing is a beast. And what it was wanting you to do is to worship the wrong person.

And it even gets into the economic system so that you can't be in your guild, you can't do your trade, unless you're marked in this sort of symbolic way as belonging to the beast with his symbolic number.

And he says, here's the application. Do the calculation. Do the calculation. Work out.

Work it out. It's a call for wisdom, it says. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number. So I brought some example calculations with me.

[32 : 41] When I was a school teacher, I used to see scribbled sums in people's books and give them a mark out of 10. So I've got a couple of example calculations for you to look at.

So here's a piece of algebra. Let X equal Pope. X, therefore X equals 666, therefore Pope equals beast. So little calculation there.

And in the Middle Ages, of times around the Reformation, Martin Luther and people like that would have said, let's look at the medieval papacy.

It is totally corrupt. I mean, there are good people there, but as a system, it's got well beyond its sell-by date. And what's happening is religion is being used as an instrument of corruption.

And who's at the top of this? Well, the Pope. And he would have done the calculation and said, this is what it says, the Pope is the beast. So it's the calculation.

[33 : 45] How many marks out of 10 would you give to Martin Luther for that? I think I'd give him quite a good mark because I think that's quite perceptive of the situation in that day. But he doesn't say, read somebody else's calculation.

He says, you do the calculation yourself. So I would say, if you were to hand that in as your homework, I wouldn't give you very many marks because you've just copied someone else's work for a start.

And the situation's different now. The place of Roman Catholicism is different and different in different countries. But I wouldn't give you many marks for just copying their calculation.

Here's another calculation. Let X equals credit card. X equals 666. Therefore, credit card is beast. So you might have heard this idea.

I'm sure you'll find it on the internet with great ease. And this says, it's economics. It's the economic system. If you have a credit card, you've got the mark of the beast on you.

[34 : 47] And if you buy anything using your credit card, you are worshipping the beast. Okay, that's somebody doing the calculation. And I don't know how many marks out of 10 I would give that one.

Because there's some truth in it, isn't it? There's some truth in the fact that we're all embedded in an economic system which contains within it unfairness and exploitation.

So I think I might say you're more likely to be involved in exploitation if you don't use your credit card and you buy very, very cheap textiles from the Far East.

In which case, you would be participating. This is a suggestion. It's not a dogmatic assertion. But you might be participating in exploitation of workers who have been sewing those garments at such low prices that you can buy them at low prices.

Do you see what I mean? So if somebody said, it's easy. You don't use a credit card. You're completely free of any suggestion you're worshipping the beast.

[35 : 54] I don't think I'd give many marks out of 10 for that. So that's not a very good calculation. It's not a very perceptive calculation. I'm not going to do the calculation for you. It says, if anyone has insight, let him calculate the number.

So I'm going to leave it as an exercise for the reader. But it's saying, we all need to think the situation's always changing. The beast is very deceptive.

We always need to be on our guard. What are we being drawn into? What are we being drawn into in, well, in our politics, but in our religion, in our culture, in our patterns of buying and selling, in our household expenditure?

What are we being drawn into? He doesn't say, what he does say is, do the calculation. And that's a good piece of advice.

Well, it's not advice, it's a command. Isn't it? You need, we need wisdom. Don't let's go to sleep and say, oh, well, the only thing we ever had to worry about was the Pope.

[37 : 07] We're not Roman Catholics, so we're fine. The beast deceives. Or don't let's say, oh, well, I don't use a credit card because I saw that on the internet, so I'm fine.

I think that would be a very superficial thing to think. A call for wisdom, a call for patient endurance and a call for discernment, for us to be discerning Christians in this world in which we live, where it's not the beasts that ought to get the honour and the worship, but the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

To Him belongs all authority and power and wisdom and glory and strength. Amen. Amen. Give to gods what is gods and to Caesar what is Caesar's.

We're going to sing a military sort of song to end with. To ending with...