



Week Seven – Revelation 12-13

Community Group Study Guide for the week of April 18, 2021

Suggested Reading: Revelation 12-13 prior to meeting

Study Revelation 12:1-13:1, “The Woman and the Dragon.” Choose some or all of these questions to answer and discuss:

1. How does it feel to be accused of something you didn't do?
2. According to the voice from heaven, how was Satan defeated? ([12:11](#))
3. What happened when the dragon tried to destroy the woman? ([12:13-13:1](#))
4. When the dragon was unable to kill the woman, where did he redirect his destructive efforts? ([12:17-13:1](#))
5. In what way does Satan try to oppose God today?
6. In what ways does Satan try to tempt and hurt us?
7. What can you do this week to strengthen your hold on the testimony of Jesus?

Life Application Bible Notes

[12:1-14:20](#) The seventh trumpet ([11:15](#)) ushers in the bowl judgments ([15:1-16:21](#)), but in the intervening chapters (12-14), John sees the conflict between God and Satan. He sees the source of all sin, evil, persecution, and suffering on the earth, and he understands why the great battle between the forces of God and Satan must soon take place. In these chapters the nature of evil is exposed, and Satan is seen in all his wickedness.

[12:1-6](#) The woman represents God's faithful people who have been waiting for the Messiah; the crown of 12 stars represents the 12 tribes of Israel. God set apart the Jews for himself ([Romans 9:4, 5](#)), and that nation gave birth to the Messiah. The son ([12:5](#)) is Jesus, born to a devout Jewish girl named Mary ([Luke 1:26-33](#)). Evil King Herod immediately tried to destroy the infant Jesus ([Matthew 2:13-20](#)). Herod's desire to kill this newborn king, whom he saw as a threat to his throne, was motivated by Satan (the red dragon), who wanted to kill the world's Savior. The heavenly pageant of [Revelation 12](#) shows that Christ's lowly birth in the town of Bethlehem had cosmic significance.

[12:3, 4](#) The large red dragon, Satan, has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns, representing his power and the kingdoms of the world over which he rules. The stars that plunged to earth with him are usually considered to be the angels who fell with Satan and became his demons. According to Hebrew tradition, one-third of all the angels in heaven fell with Satan. For more on demons, see the notes on [9:3ff](#) and [Mark 5:1 -20](#).

[12:6](#) The wilderness represents a place of spiritual refuge and protection from Satan. Because God aided the woman's escape into the wilderness, we can be sure that he offers security to all true believers. Satan always attacks God's people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual harm. God will not let Satan take the souls of God's true followers. When Satan's attacks seem overpowering, remember that God is ruler overall. Trust him.

[12:6](#) The 1,260 days (3¹/₂ years) is the same length of time that the dragon is allowed to exercise his authority ([13:5](#)) and that the holy city is trampled (see the second note on [11:3](#)).

[12:7](#) This event fulfills [Daniel 12:1ff](#). Michael is a high-ranking angel. One of his responsibilities is to guard God's community of believers.

[12:7ff](#) Much more happened at Christ's birth, death, and resurrection than most people realize. A war between the forces of good and evil was under way. With Christ's resurrection, Satan's ultimate defeat was assured. Some believe that Satan's fall to earth took place at Jesus' resurrection or ascension and that the 1,260 days (3¹/₂ years) is a symbolic way of referring to the time between Christ's first and second comings. Others say that Satan's defeat will occur in the middle of a literal seven-year tribulation period, following the rapture of the church and preceding the second coming of Christ and the beginning of Christ's 1,000-year reign. Whatever the case, we must remember that Christ is victorious—Satan has already been defeated because of Christ's death on the cross ([12:10-12](#)).

[12:9](#) The devil is not a symbol or legend; he is very real. Originally Satan was an angel of God, but through his own pride, he became corrupt. The devil is God's enemy, and he constantly tries to hinder God's work, but he is limited by God's power and can do only what he is permitted to do ([Job 1:6-2:8](#)). The name *Satan* means "accuser" ([12:10](#)). He actively looks for people to attack ([1 Peter 5:8, 9](#)). Satan likes to pursue believers who are vulnerable in their faith, who are spiritually weak, or who are isolated from other believers.

Even though God permits the devil to do his work in this world, God is still in control. And Jesus has complete power over Satan—he defeated Satan when he died and rose again for the sins of everyone. One day Satan will be bound forever, never again to do his evil work (see [20:10](#)).

[12:10](#) Many believe that until this time, Satan still had access to God (see the note on [Job 1:7ff](#)). But here his access is forever barred (see also [9:1](#)). He can no longer accuse people before God (see how Satan made accusations about Job before God in [Job 1:6ff](#)).

[12:11](#) The critical blow to Satan came when the Lamb, Jesus Christ, shed his blood for our sins. The victory is won by sacrifice—Christ's death in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, and the sacrifices we make because of our faith in him. As we face the battle with Satan, we should not fear it or try to escape from it, but we should loyally serve Christ, who alone brings victory (see [Romans 8:34-39](#)).

[12:12](#) The devil begins to step up his persecution because he knows that "he has little time." We are living in the last days, and Satan's work has become more intense. Even though the devil is very powerful, as we can see by the condition of our world, he is always under God's control. One of the reasons God allows Satan to work evil and bring temptation is so that those who pretend to be Christ's followers will be weeded out from Christ's true believers. Knowing that the last great confrontation with Jesus is near, Satan is desperately trying to recruit as great an enemy force as possible for this final battle.

[12:17](#) While the woman ([12:1](#)) represents faithful Jews and the son ([12:5](#)) represents Christ, the rest of her children could be either Jewish believers or, most likely, all believers.

[12:17](#) The apostle Paul tells us that we are in a spiritual battle ([Ephesians 6:10-12](#)). John says that the war is still being waged, but the outcome has already been determined. Satan and his followers have been defeated and will be destroyed. Nevertheless Satan is battling daily to bring more into

his ranks and to keep his own from defecting to God's side. Those who belong to Christ have gone into battle on God's side, and he has guaranteed them victory. God will not lose the war, but we must make certain not to lose the battle for our own souls. Don't waver in your commitment to Christ. A great spiritual battle is being fought, and there is no time for indecision.

Chapter 13

13:1 This beast was initially identified with Rome because the Roman Empire, in its early days, encouraged an evil lifestyle, persecuted believers, and opposed God and his followers. But the beast also symbolizes the Antichrist—not Satan, but someone under Satan's power and control. This Antichrist looks like a combination of the four beasts that Daniel saw centuries earlier in a vision ([Daniel 7](#)). As the dragon ([12:17](#)) is in opposition to God, so the beast from the sea is against Christ and may be seen as Satan's false messiah. The early Roman Empire was strong and also anti-Christ (or against Christ's standards); many other individual powers throughout history have been anti-Christ. Many Christians believe that Satan's evil will culminate in a final Antichrist who will focus all the powers of evil against Jesus Christ and his followers.

13:1ff [Chapter 13](#) introduces Satan's (the dragon's) two evil accomplices: (1) the beast out of the sea ([13:1ff](#)) and (2) the beast out of the earth ([13:11ff](#)). Together, the three evil beings form an unholy trinity in direct opposition to the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he wanted Jesus to show his power by turning stones into bread, to do miracles by jumping from a high place, and to gain political power by worshiping him (see [Matthew 4:1-11](#)). Satan's plan was to rule the world through Jesus, but Jesus refused to do Satan's bidding. Thus, Satan turns to the fearsome beasts described in Revelation. To the beast out of the sea he gives political power. To the beast out of the earth he gives power to do miracles. Both beasts work together to capture the control of the whole world. This unholy trinity—the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the false prophet (see [16:13](#))—unite in a desperate attempt to overthrow God, but their efforts are doomed to failure. See what becomes of them in [19:19-21](#) and [20:10](#).

Satan's Work in the World

His hatred for Christ [12:13-15](#)

His hatred for God's people [12:17](#)

His power and authority [13:2](#)

His popularity among unbelievers [13:3,4](#)

Study Revelation 13:2-10, "The Beast out of the Sea." Choose some or all of these questions to answer and discuss:

1. What alternatives to God (and faith in Jesus Christ) do some of your coworkers or friends have (such as New Age beliefs, Islam, atheism, etc.)?
2. What kind of creature did John observe? ([13:2](#))
3. Who will worship the beast? ([13:8](#))
4. What warning did John give to all who would listen? What do we need to do about this? ([13:9-10](#))
5. What difference does it make whom we worship?
6. In what sense do we need to be closed-minded about faith in Christ?
7. How can you worship God in your attitudes and actions today?

Life Application Bible Notes

13:3ff Because the beast, the Antichrist, is a false messiah, he will be a counterfeit of Christ and will even stage a false resurrection ([13:14](#)). People will follow and worship him because they will be awed by his power and miracles ([13:3, 4](#)). He will unite the world under his leadership ([13:7, 8](#)), and he will control the world economy ([13:16, 17](#)). People are impressed by power and will follow those who display it forcefully or offer it to their followers. But those who follow the beast will only be fooling themselves: He will use his power to manipulate others, to point to himself, and to promote evil plans. God, by contrast, uses his infinitely greater power to love and to build up. Don't be misled by claims of great miracles or reports about a resurrection or reincarnation of someone claiming to be Christ. When Jesus returns, he will reveal himself to everyone ([Matthew 24:23-28](#)).

13:5 The power given to the beast will be limited by God. He will allow the beast to exercise authority only for a short time. Even while the beast is in power, God will still be in control ([11:15](#); [12:10-12](#)).

13:7 The beast will conquer God's people and rule over them, but he will not be able to harm them spiritually. He will establish worldwide dominance and demand that everyone worship him. And many *will* worship him—everyone except true believers. Refusal to worship the beast will result in temporary suffering for God's people, but they will be rewarded with eternal life in the end.

13:8 See the note on [3:5](#) for more information on the Book of Life.

13:10 In this time of persecution, being faithful to Christ could bring imprisonment and even execution. Some believers will be hurt or killed. But all that the beast and his followers will be able to do to believers is harm them physically; no spiritual harm will come to those whose faith in God is sincere. All believers will enter God's presence perfected and purified by the blood of the Lamb ([7:9-17](#)).

13:10 The times of great persecution that John saw will provide an opportunity for believers to exercise patient endurance and faithfulness. The tough times we face right now are also opportunities for spiritual growth. Don't fall into Satan's trap and turn away from God when hard times come. Instead, use those tough times as opportunities for testifying for God (see [Philippians 1:28,29](#)).

Study Revelation 13:11-18, "The Beast out of the Earth." Choose some or all of these questions to answer and discuss:

1. What is the most amazing trick you have ever seen a magician or an illusionist perform?
2. How did the second beast deceive everyone all over the world? ([13:13-14](#))
3. How did the beast out of the earth use his Satanic power in relation to the image of the beast out of the sea? ([13:15](#))
4. What happened to those who refused to worship the image of the beast out of the sea? ([13:15](#))
5. What are some chief ways people are deceived or blinded by Satan today?
6. What should we do to be wise about the schemes of Satan?
7. What actions could you take today to instruct or guide a young Christian?

Life Application Bible Notes

13:11ff The first beast came out of the sea ([13:1](#)), but this second beast comes out of the earth. Later identified as the false prophet ([16:13](#); [19:20](#)), he is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. He seems to do good, but the purpose of his miracles is to deceive.

13:14 Throughout the Bible we see miracles performed as proofs of God's power, love, and authority. But here we see counterfeit miracles performed to deceive. This is a reminder of Pharaoh's magicians, who duplicated Moses' signs in Egypt. True signs and miracles point us to Jesus Christ, but miracles alone can be deceptive. That is why we must ask with respect to each miracle we see: Is this consistent with what God says in the Bible? The second beast here gains influence through the signs and wonders that he can perform on behalf of the first beast. The second beast orders the people to worship a statue in honor of the first beast—a direct flouting of the second commandment ([Exodus 20:4-6](#)). Allowing the Bible to guide our faith and practice will keep us from being deceived by false signs, however convincing they appear to be. Any teaching that contradicts God's Word is false.

13:16, 17 In every generation, Christians need to maintain a healthy skepticism about society's pleasures and rewards. In our educational, economic, and civic structures, there are incentives and rewards. Cooperating Christians must always support what is good and healthy about our society, but we must stand against sin. In some cases, such as Satan's system described here, the system or structure becomes so evil that there is no way to cooperate with it.

13:16-18 This mark of the beast is designed to mock the seal that God places on his followers ([7:2, 3](#)). Just as God marks his people to save them, so Satan's beast marks his people to save them from the persecution that Satan will inflict upon God's followers. Identifying this particular mark is not as important as identifying the purpose of the mark. Those who accept it show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to operate within the economic system he promotes, and their rebellion against God. To refuse the mark means to commit oneself entirely to God, preferring death to compromising one's faith in Christ.

13:18 The meaning of this number has been discussed more than that of any other part of the book of Revelation. The three sixes have been said to represent many things, including the number of a man or the unholy trinity of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet ([16:13](#)). If the number seven is considered to be the perfect number in the Bible, and if three sevens represent complete perfection, then the number 666 falls completely short of perfection. The first readers of this book probably applied the number to the emperor Nero, who symbolized all the evils of the Roman Empire. (The Greek letters of Nero's name represent numbers that total 666.) Whatever specific application the number is given, the number symbolizes the worldwide dominion and complete evil of this unholy trinity designed to undo Christ's work and overthrow him.