

THEOLOGY UNBOUND — REVELATION SERIES

Episode 14

Beastly Power and Counterfeit Worship

Revelation 13

Welcome to **Theology Unbound**. This is Episode 14 in our long-form series through the Book of Revelation.

RECAP (WHY REV 13 IS ABOUT ALLEGIANCE)

Episode 13 was Revelation 12: the war behind the war. The dragon is defeated but furious, and he makes war on the offspring—those who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Now Revelation 13 shows how the dragon wages that war on earth: through **beastly systems** and **false worship**.

So, if Revelation 12 is the spiritual backstory, Revelation 13 is the earthly strategy.

Here's the central question for today:

How does satanic opposition to Christ take institutional form—and what does faithful resistance look like?

And right up front, let me give you our guardrails for this episode:

1. We will not use Revelation 13 to do fear marketing.
2. We will not treat “the mark” like a sci-fi microchip before we treat it like what the text emphasizes: **allegiance and worship**.
3. We will keep the Lamb's definition of victory central—faithful witness, endurance, no compromise.

Open your Bible to Revelation 13.

Revelation 13 (ESV) ¹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. ¹¹ Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the

image of the beast to be slain.¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

ORIENTATION: TWO BEASTS, ONE GOAL

Revelation 13 has two beasts:

- A beast rising from the **sea** (13:1–10)
- A beast rising from the **earth** (13:11–18)

And they work together.

The first beast is political/imperial power—bestly authority that demands worship and persecutes saints.

The second beast is propaganda/religious deception—false signs, coerced worship, and enforcement.

One beast rules. The other beast sells the rule.

And the dragon is behind both.

So, the simplest way to say the chapter's main point is this:

Satan's strategy is always worship-shift.

He doesn't merely want you to suffer. He wants you to worship the wrong thing.

Now we'll walk the chapter in six movements:

1. OT background: Daniel 7 and beast imagery
2. Beast from the sea: authority, blasphemy, persecution
3. The "fatal wound" and the world's amazement
4. Beast from the earth: false prophet function, signs, image
5. Mark of the beast: hand/forehead, buying/selling—allegiance economics
6. 666: "wisdom," number of a man, interpretive options

Then we'll do the grid comparison like always.

First, Daniel 7.

MOVEMENT 1 — DANIEL 7 BACKGROUND (BEASTS AS EMPIRE)

To read Revelation 13, you need Daniel 7 in your bloodstream.

I'm not going to read the whole chapter, but I want you to hear the core: beasts represent kingdoms.

Daniel 7:2–8 (ESV) ² Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴ The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. ⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' ⁶ After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them

another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel 7:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.

Now, Daniel's beasts represent empire powers opposing God, and then the Son of Man receives the kingdom.

Revelation 13 is drawing directly from this: beastly empire power that wars against the saints, in contrast with the Lamb's kingdom.

So: beasts = empire power in opposition to God, energized by the dragon.

Now we go back to Revelation 13:1–10.

MOVEMENT 2 — THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (Rev 13:1–10)

Revelation 13:1–10 (ESV) ¹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

WHAT THIS BEAST IS "DOING": BLASPHEMY + WAR ON SAINTS + WORSHIP DEMAND

Notice the key features:

- Seven heads, ten horns, diadems—power and rule
- Blasphemous names—idolatrous self-exaltation
- Receives power, throne, authority from the dragon
- Makes war on the saints and conquers them
- Exercises authority over every tribe and people and language and nation
- The earth-dwellers worship the dragon and the beast

Now, crucial: the text says the beast "conquers" the saints. That sounds like the beast wins.

But Revelation 12 already told you what conquest really is. The saints conquer by the blood of the Lamb and testimony, even unto death.

So Revelation uses "conquer" in two senses:

- the beast conquers in the sense of killing and suppressing
- the saints conquer in the sense of faithful endurance

This is why Revelation is so psychologically accurate: it admits the beast can "win" temporarily on earth.

Now, the time marker: 42 months—again the Danielic limited persecution period.

Now, "authority was given." That phrase matters:

- the beast is real and dangerous

- but still under sovereign permission, not ultimate

Now, the phrase “if anyone has an ear, let him hear” appears—and then the endurance call: this is a call for endurance and faith.

So, the point is not curiosity. It’s endurance.

When pressure comes, are you more likely to fight for comfort—or to endure for faithfulness?

Now we need to address the “mortal wound” that healed, because that’s where interpretations split sharply.

MOVEMENT 3 — THE MORTAL WOUND (Rev 13:3)

OPTIONS: NERO, EMPIRE RESILIENCE, END-TIME PARODY

The text says one of the beast’s heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled.

Interpretations:

Preterist-leaning option: Nero / Nero redivivus tradition

Many connect the wound/healing to Nero and the “Nero returned” expectation—Rome’s beastly power persists beyond one emperor. So the beast looks slain but lives.

Idealist-leaning option: the beast is resilient empire power

Beastly systems suffer collapses but revive. Empires fall and rise; the world keeps marveling and worshipping power.

Futurist-leaning option: end-time antichrist parody of resurrection

The wound/healing becomes a counterfeit resurrection sign—deception mimicking Christ.

Each of these tries to preserve the text’s point: counterfeit life produces worship.

Here’s the non-negotiable: the wound story is meant to generate awe, and that awe becomes worship. This is propaganda for idolatry.

So regardless of your identification, ask:

What makes the world marvel?

What does the world treat as savior?

Now, the second beast shows how that worship is enforced.

MOVEMENT 4 — THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH (Rev 13:11–15)

Revelation 13:11–15 (ESV) ¹¹ Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

FALSE PROPHET FUNCTION: SIGNS, IMAGE, COERCION

This beast has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon.

That’s counterfeit religiosity: it looks lamb-like, but its voice is dragon.

It exercises authority of the first beast and makes the earth-dwellers worship.
It performs signs, even fire from heaven. It deceives.
It tells people to make an image for the beast and gives breath to the image so it speaks, and then it causes those who won't worship to be slain.

This is why Revelation 13 is not just “politics.” It's worship.

The second beast is religious propaganda, ideological enforcement, deception that makes beastly power seem sacred and inevitable.

So, if you want a modern application without doing newspaper exegesis:
Any system that uses signs, spectacle, fear, and economic pressure **to demand ultimate allegiance** is acting beast-like.
Now, the next section goes straight to economic coercion: the mark.

MOVEMENT 5 — THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Rev 13:16–17)

Revelation 13:16–17 (ESV) ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

FOREHEAD/HAND: DEUTERONOMY 6 ALLEGIANCE LANGUAGE

The beast causes all people to be marked on right hand or forehead, so no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark.

Now, this is where people jump to microchips. Slow down.
Hand/forehead language echoes covenant allegiance language.
In Deuteronomy, God's words are to be on the hand and between the eyes—an embodied symbol of loyalty.

Deuteronomy 6:4–10 (ESV) ⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ 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. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. ¹⁰ “And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build,

So, the mark functions as a counterfeit covenant sign: belonging to the beast system.
And buying/selling pressure shows allegiance is not private. It's economic and social.

So, the mark is best understood first as: **public allegiance expressed in worship and compliance**—not merely a tech mechanism.

Could there be literal mechanisms?
Possibly. But Revelation's emphasis is worship and loyalty.
Now, the number: 666.

MOVEMENT 6 — 666 (Rev 13:18)

WISDOM, NUMBER OF A MAN: OPTIONS AND RESTRAINT

Revelation 13:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

Options:

- Nero gematria reading (common preterist)
- symbolic imperfection: 6 short of 7, repeated—beastly counterfeit
- future antichrist name-number identification (common futurist)
- historicist identifications vary across eras

666: BEST CASES + BEST CHALLENGES

Alright—this is where people either get obsessed or get dismissive. We’re doing neither.

The text says, “This calls for wisdom.” That means 666 isn’t a party trick. It’s a discernment test. And it says it’s “the number of a man.” So, let’s steelman three common readings.

1) The Nero reading (common preterist move)

Best case:

This view says 666 is a **name-number** using ancient letter-numbering—what people call gematria. The argument is that “Nero Caesar” can be spelled in a way that yields 666, and that would fit the first-century context where Nero became a symbol of beastly imperial power. It also explains why the text says “number of a man”—a concrete human ruler becomes the face of the beast’s system.

Best challenge:

Gematria depends on **spelling conventions** and **language choices**, and those can vary. Also, even if Nero fits, you still have to explain how Nero functions in Revelation 13 if the beast is bigger than one emperor—because Revelation’s beast looks like a composite empire power, not just one man. So the strongest form of this reading usually says: **Nero is a type** or exemplar of beastly rule, not the whole story.

2) The symbolic “triple-six” reading (common idealist instinct)

Best case:

This view says 7 is the number of completeness, so 6 is falling short—human imperfection. And 666 is **intensified imperfection**: counterfeit completeness, a parody of divine fullness. In other words, the beast is the ultimate “almost”—the ultimate imitation of God that never reaches God. That fits Revelation’s obsession with counterfeit: false lamb, false signs, false worship, false kingdom. It also fits the pastoral function: 666 is less a code to crack and more a warning to discern anything that looks ultimate but is not God.

Best challenge:

The text also says, “let the one who has understanding calculate.” That “calculate” language suggests there may be more than abstraction—possibly a concrete identification. So the symbolic view is strongest when it admits: yes, the number likely has a **historical referent** in John’s world, but it also carries **theological meaning** beyond that moment.

3) The futurist name/number reading (future antichrist identification)

Best case:

This view says 666 will correspond to a future figure or system at the end—some identifiable name or title that can be “calculated.” It treats Revelation 13’s coercion—worship enforcement, image, buying/selling pressure—as part of a final, intensified crisis. The “wisdom” is needed because the church will face powerful deception, and the number will serve as a discernment marker for that time.

Best challenge:

The danger here is turning 666 into endless speculation—slapping it on whatever modern figure you dislike. The text doesn't invite guessing games. It calls for wisdom and endurance. Also, futurist readings need to keep the first-century audience in view: Revelation was addressed to real churches under real pressure. So, the strongest futurist version says: the beast pattern was already present in John's world, but it will climax in a final, intensified manifestation.

4) The historicist identification option (666 as a long-horizon institutional marker)

Best case:

Historicists read Revelation as unfolding across the whole church age, so they tend to treat 666 as a symbol that can be “calculated” into a recognizable historical embodiment of beastly power over time. In classic Protestant historicism, that often means identifying 666 with an institutional antichrist system—not merely one emperor—using name/letter calculations in Latin or titles associated with church-state power. The reason historicists like this is that it fits their big claim: Revelation isn't only about one crisis in the first century or only about one future week; it's about the long conflict between Christ and beastly authority through history.

Best challenge:

The pressure point is that historicist calculations and identifications have varied widely, and some proposals can feel forced—picking a preferred title, preferred language, and preferred spelling to make the math work. So the strongest historicist approach holds the “calculation” with humility and keeps the pastoral thrust central: 666 exposes the recurring temptation for human institutions to claim ultimate authority that belongs to God alone.

So, here's the clean takeaway:

666 is best understood as **beastly humanity trying to become ultimate**—whether you emphasize Nero as a first-century embodiment, 666 as symbolic counterfeit completeness, or a future climactic embodiment. The interpretive goal isn't paranoia. The goal is discernment: don't worship the beast, don't fear the beast, and don't join the beast.

And now we can move on with the chapter's main point intact: Revelation 13 is about **allegiance**—who you worship, who you obey, and what you'll endure to stay faithful.

We'll go deeper on 666 when we do the beast-heavy sections later too, but for now the pastoral point is:

Wisdom means discernment.

Don't be deceived by power.

Don't worship the beast.

Now we do the grid comparison.

PART 7 — COMPARISON GRID (CONSISTENT METHOD) — REVELATION 13

1) WHAT IS THE PASSAGE DOING?

Revelation 13 is doing this:

- showing how satanic opposition takes institutional form
- exposing counterfeit worship and propaganda
- warning the church about coercion—violent and economic
- calling for endurance and wisdom

Now Category 2: primary referent.

2) PRIMARY REFERENT: THEN / THROUGH HISTORY / ALWAYS / FUTURE

Preterist

Beast as Rome/imperial power, second beast as priesthood/provincial cult enforcement, mark as allegiance, 666 often Nero.

Chilton writes:

This Beast ... is not just an institution, but a person; specifically, as we shall see, it is the Emperor Nero. This is because, particularly the way the Bible looks at things, the two could be considered as one. Rome was, to some extent, covenantally identified with its leader, as the human race was with Adam; the Empire was embodied and represented in the reigning Caesar (Nero). Thus St. John's prophecy can shift back and forth between them, or consider them both together, under the same designation.¹

Strength: strong first-century fit, especially in Asia Minor imperial cult pressure.

Pressure point: must integrate Revelation's ultimate horizon.

Historicist

Beasts mapped to historical phases/institutions; mark associated with long-term ecclesial/political systems.

One view, advocated by Victorinus, Grotius, Wette, Bede, and others, holds that both beasts represent Rome in its pagan days, the second beast being a picture of the pagan priesthood.

The second possibility, taken by Barnes, Cuninghame, and others, is that this first beast out of the sea is representative of pagan Rome, and the second beast out of the land is the revival of Roman paganism in the form of the papacy.

A third view sees both beasts as different aspects of papal Rome. The first beast is the papacy in its exercise of *political* power; the second is the same entity in its exercise of *ecclesiastical* power through its priesthood. This is the view of Vittinga, Bengel, Elliott, and others.²

Strength: reads as panoramic conflict.

Pressure point: identifications vary widely.

Idealist

Beasts as recurring patterns: beastly state power + false religion/propaganda; mark as allegiance; 666 as human counterfeit perfection.

Governments love to "play God," to command the admiration and loyalty of their subjects, and to assume to themselves ever more numerous prerogatives—including those which belong to God alone. Not a few empires have required that their subjects actually worship them as deities (as did Pharaoh of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Darius of Media-Persia, and numerous Roman emperors), or that they discontinue the worship of the true God in deference to the state's wishes (as modern Communist states have attempted to do).³

Strength: always relevant and keeps worship central.

Pressure point: must still honor first-century anchor and final climax.

Futurist

Beasts as end-time antichrist system and false prophet; mark as future enforcement; 666 tied to future figure/system.

¹ Gregg, S. (1997). [Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary](#) (pp. 278–280). T. Nelson Publishers.

² Gregg, S. (1997). [Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary](#) (p. 278). T. Nelson Publishers.

³ Gregg, S. (1997). [Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary](#) (p. 287). T. Nelson Publishers.

Mounce explains:

For John the beast was the Roman Empire as persecutor of the church.... Yet the beast is more than the Roman Empire ... The beast has always been and will be in a final intensified manifestation, the deification of secular authority.

Ladd adds a slightly idealist twist, but believes essentially the same thing:

The beast is both Rome and the eschatological antichrist—and, we might add, any demonic power which the church must face in her entire history.⁴

Strength: fits end-time coercion sequence.

Pressure point: must keep the letters-to-churches pastoral relevance and resist sensationalism.

Now Category 3: intertext.

3) SYMBOLS / INTERTEXT

- Daniel 7 beasts/kingdoms
- Deuteronomy 6 hand/forehead allegiance
- Exodus imagery of counterfeit signs
- Psalm 2 rod of iron background from Rev 12/5

Now Category 4 pressure points.

4) PRESSURE POINTS

- Don't read mark as tech-first; read as allegiance-first.
- Don't read victory as domination; read cruciform witness.
- Don't miss endurance call in 13:10.

Now Category 5: pastoral payoff.

5) PASTORAL PAYOFF

Revelation 13 calls the church to:

- **Government functions as an instrument dependent on spiritual authority**—not inherently authoritative in itself, and certainly not the ultimate source of power or meaning.⁵ Christians should never regard government as a savior, even when it provides beneficial services, since God alone sustains life and all things. This corrects a fundamental temptation: the original readers of Revelation faced a choice between trusting government or trusting God—the very issue believers continue to face.
- **Second, adopting God's perspective** was John's strategy to prepare his readers for persecution by placing their trials within a larger spiritual context. When facing life's difficulties, believers must step back to see the "big picture" through faith, since things appear entirely different from the divine perspective. This perspective enabled early Christians to resist cultural values and refuse worship of the beast—a resistance that requires the same divine perspective today to keep worldliness from corrupting the church.⁶
- **Third, taking Satan seriously** means recognizing that spiritual compromise often begins with seemingly small decisions, and unfaithfulness is born in these little things. Forsaking Christ takes countless forms—through silent complicity, involvement in condemned activities, or rationalization—and what seems inconsequential may become the instrument of spiritual destruction unless we evaluate everything through its effect on our relationship with God.⁷

⁴ Gregg, S. (1997). [Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary](#) (pp. 279–281). T. Nelson Publishers.

⁵ L. David McClister, "[The Beasts from the Sea and the Earth.](#)" in *Overcoming with the Lamb: Lessons from the Book of Revelation*, ed. Ferrell Jenkins, Florida College Annual Lectures (Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore, 1994), [115–117](#).

⁶ L. David McClister, "[The Beasts from the Sea and the Earth.](#)" in *Overcoming with the Lamb: Lessons from the Book of Revelation*, ed. Ferrell Jenkins, Florida College Annual Lectures (Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore, 1994), [115–117](#).

⁷ L. David McClister, "[The Beasts from the Sea and the Earth.](#)" in *Overcoming with the Lamb: Lessons from the Book of Revelation*, ed. Ferrell Jenkins, Florida College Annual Lectures (Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore, 1994), [115–117](#).

- Hope rests in God's sovereignty over Satan and his beast, who operate only within God's permission for his holy purposes.⁸ John's original audience found encouragement in the promise of their redemption and their enemies' judgment—truths that sustain contemporary believers as well.⁹
- **Discernment about power and deception** stands as a primary priority. Satanic authority employs power selfishly to deceive people into coerced worship, and Satan throughout Revelation imitates or parodies God, distorting and perverting what is good for selfish purposes. The beast's displays of power deceive people, and some Christians today are incredibly gullible about power—if its demonstration is magnificent enough, they will believe it, so Christians need greater knowledge about how God uses power and discernment about the motives of those who grasp for it.
- **Resistance through faithfulness rather than retaliation** forms the core Christian response. Christians are called to conquer the beast by being conquered, and the response called for is about sacrifice and suffering as the primary response to evil. Rather than matching evil's methods, Christians should imitate Christ, who conquered Satan through his death on the cross. Christians are called to faith and endurance in the face of persecution, knowing that suffering produces endurance, which produces character, which produces hope.
- **Caution against speculative identification** proves essential. Most modern speculations about details of the final Antichrist are unfounded. Until Jesus returns, the world has not seen its end of antichrists, and because Satan does not know when Jesus will return, he must always have antichrists in waiting. Rather than pinpointing contemporary figures, John's point seems to prohibit Christians persecuted as Christians from retaliation, and given his commitment to waiting on God's action, he may have preferred that Christians would avoid violence altogether.
- The passage calls those with ears to hear to understand that endurance and faith characterize the saints' response (Rev 13–14), emphasizing patient trust in God's ultimate victory rather than anxious identification of contemporary enemies or violent resistance.

How does Revelation 13 encourage perseverance in faith?

Episode 15 is Revelation 14–15: Lamb's people, three angels, harvest, and bowls introduced.

⁸ Richard D. Phillips, *Revelation*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 371–372.

⁹ James M. Hamilton Jr., *Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 276–277.