

Title: Revelation, Part 21: The Turning Tides

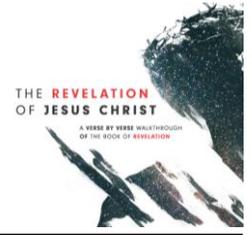
Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 13

Big Idea: Four personal choices help keep your head above water when the tides turn in your life.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 15:3b Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.

Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.



A few weeks ago, I learned something new about Canada. It's this, the Bay of Fundy that lies between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia has the largest tide changes in the world, up to 12 meters in some places.

This time lapsed video shows it so well. If you were born in Canada you probably learned this as a kid in school. This was new to me and very interesting. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3LtEF9WPt4>

This is just crazy. When the tide goes out the boats actually rest on the ground. As the tide rises, the big boats can come in and offload their fish or cargo. This works for them because these boat owners and captains are well versed in the tides. They are not surprised by them. They have prepared for them. They know the tides are changing, and they prepare and act accordingly.

Well, we have been studying the book of Revelation that describes that as the end times approach, the tide will more and more turn against the Christian faith, against a Christian world view. And just as these boat captains have prepared themselves for these changing tides, so must followers of Jesus equip themselves to respond to these changing cultural tides.

And on a personalized level, the tides sometimes turn against your personal life...things don't go well in your work or your family, stress rises from finances or lockdowns or health issues, disappointments in school or in relationships come. Sometimes when the tides of life come against us, it's hard to keep your head above water.

Well in today's passage, Rev 13, one of the most challenging chapters in the book, gives us some wisdom about what we must do when the tide turn against us.

So the big idea today is this: Four Personal Choices help keep your head above water when the tides turn in your life.

## Big Idea:

Four personal choices help keep your head above water when the tides turn in your life.

Thus far in our study of Revelation we've learned that it is a book meant to encourage Christians as things get more upside down in the world...the tides will turn against us as we get closer to the end times. The book also previews what the end times will be like before Jesus' second coming. We don't know the dates of Jesus' return, but Revelation gives us an idea of the kinds of things that will happen more and more toward the end. Yet, we should resist discouragement because God is in control, he sustains us in hard times, and we know how things will come out. Jesus wins.

John, who wrote the book, had been given these visions about what the future holds and he wrote them down as the book of Revelation. He uses his favorite number, 7, often when is the number for completeness.

We've seen groups of sevens:

- 7 cities in what is now W Turkey that the book was originally written to,
- 7 seals that sealed this scroll that when Jesus broke each seal a portion of the scroll was read which revealed more about the end times.
- Then John records visions of 7 angels with trumpets. When an angel sounded a trumpet, it revealed more detail about these difficulties to come on earth. The 7 seals, the 7 trumpets and
- another 7 coming up, 7 bowls, are like looking at something similar from different angles. These various sevens give different perspectives of some of the same events in the end times.



This passage includes one of the most controversial passages in the Bible with many different interpretations of this concept: 666, the mark of the beast.

### Rev. 13

So, let's read this and I will try to help us make sense of the parts of this vision.

**Rev. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.**

**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. <sup>2</sup> The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"**

**<sup>5</sup>The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. <sup>7</sup> He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. <sup>8</sup> All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.**

**<sup>9</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear. <sup>10</sup>If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.**

**<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. <sup>13</sup>And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. <sup>14</sup> Because of the signs he was given power to do 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 and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.**

**<sup>18</sup>This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.**

I want to give you a visual outline of this book, explain the parts, and then go to the application for us.



You have a [dragon](#) and [Beast #1](#) and [Beast #2](#).

B#1 is a [combo](#) beast with a healed [wound](#) on its head. He's a combination of a leopard, a bear, and a lion with many heads. B#2 looks something like a [lamb](#).

B#1 is to be [worshipped](#). B2 is the [enforcer](#). He enforces worship of beast 1.

B1 [blasphemes](#) God and Christianity. That is, he says terrible things about God. B2 [deceives](#).

B1 wages [war](#) on Christians. That is, he persecutes and kills them. B2 also wages [war](#). [666](#)

The dragon is satan who uses these two beasts, two activities or entities in his final attempt to wage war on this woman in the vision which represents satan's goal to squash the church.

The wound refers to the effects of Jesus death and resurrection upon satan. Jesus has dealt a fatal blow to satan when he was crucified and rose, but satan's ultimate and final defeat won't come until the end.

It seems that the whole world of unbelievers will worship this Beast 1 that B 2 enforces through deception, even deceiving some Christians. The similarity to the lamb, which is one of the word pictures of Jesus in the Bible, the perfect lamb sacrificed for our sins, is what feeds this deception. In other words, so called Christian churches and preachers will preach deception, falsehood, and even heresy and they will be a part of these forces satan uses against the true church. The lies of satan will be dressed up as the truth. That is probably what beast 2 refers to. The false religious system will support the work of the governmental system that opposes Christianity.

*[2 Timothy 4:3](#) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*

We see this prominently in anti-biblical views being taught today in some so called Christian churches: abortion is a good thing, sexuality is whatever you define it as, Jesus was not fully God, and there are many ways to God.

So, beast 1 would be world's systems, primarily governments, that resist Christianity. And beast 2 are religious systems that through deception also resist Christianity and encourage and support world systems that oppose Christianity.

Beast 2 may also refer to an economic world system that persecutes Christians through socio-economic sanctions that would, of course, affect the social and economic condition of Christians in the world. We saw in the seven churches earlier in the book economic discrimination against Christians. So in addition to religious deception it could also include an economic system that discriminates against Christians.

[16](#) He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, [17](#) so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Realize that generically speaking, worship is giving honor, adulation, commendation, and respect to anything that becomes our priority. Here, when people worship the beast, it's not used like we might think of people going into a church or a building to worship this beast.

This beast, whatever it is, has become many people's priority and thus the object they esteem, honor, respect, and worship.

This blasphemy has meaning in the context and for the future. He's probably hinting at Rome and the blasphemous names it gave its emperors who persecuted Christians. The Emperor Nero was called Savior of the World on coins and Emperor Domitian was called 'Our lord and our god.'

So what are these two beasts?

Beast 1 probably refers to government systems hostile to a Christian world-view.

*Throughout the ages governments have done evil things, from ancient history like in Rome to modern history like under communism to even today [in the west and some Muslim countries.]—William Hendriksen*

*Therefore, whatever person or system—whether political, social, economic, or religious—cooperates with Satan by exalting itself against God’s sovereignty and by setting itself up to destroy the followers of Jesus or entices them to become followers of Satan through deception, idolatry, blasphemy, and spiritual adultery, embodies the beast.*

In the end times such a power will be totalitarian, perhaps combining all of systems.

First, let me explain what 666 is not.

- 666 is not a physical brand or that some barcode is put on your forehead or your arm.
- It is not some chip the government puts beneath your skin. Yes, some people get these chips put under their skin so that they can be scanned.



- And it’s not the vaccine passport. Sherryl and I have our vaccinations and we will get our passports. Now we all ought to be concerned about government overreach into our personal lives. That will be a given in the last days. We see this in China as they are monitoring almost every move of their populace.

If this mark of the beast doesn’t mean these, what does it mean? Context will help us here.

In those days slaves were actually branded to show that they were owned by a certain slave owner. As horrible that was, the expression, “to receive the mark of someone” began to be used in everyday conversation as a way to describe that someone belonged to someone, or served another, or worshipped another. Some even tattooed themselves with their patron god.

And a mark on the forehead symbolized the mind, the thought-life, the philosophy of a person. And the mark on the right hand symbolized deed and actions.

So, the ‘mark of the beast’ is the “God-opposing, Christ-rejecting, Church-persecuting spirit of antichrist, wherever and whenever it shows itself (Hendrickson).”

Receiving the mark of the beast indicates that that person so characterized is part of that system or group that resists a biblical worldview evident in what he believes and does. To have the mark means to utterly reject Christ.

Big picture, this is John’s way of symbolically describing authentic ownership and loyalty. Those who worship the beast, are loyal to a worldview that opposes a biblical word-view has one brand of ownership on them, just as the followers of Jesus have the brand of God’s possession on them.

And, to follow Jesus whole heartedly will bring persecution, including social and economic penalties. As our culture drifts further and further away from values anything resembling biblical ones, especially when it comes to sexuality, gender, and the value of human life, those who don’t embrace official government stances on those issues will experience economic punishment more and more just like it economically affected these early Christians who refused to embrace the then current government stance to worship Caesar. They were still good citizens, as should we, but they had to draw the line where it conflicted with their deeply held values and beliefs.

What about the number 666. There are many views about what the number means.

<sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

This 666 may be a cipher of a name, a hidden code for a name. "Counting a name" or word was an easy practice in Greek and Hebrew, which used letters as specific numbers. And later, Jewish teachers often played with the numerical values of words; this form of calculation was known as *gematria*.

He could have been referring to some emperor's name or even the name of the future antichrist, but he urged caution in trying to calculate this name with numbers by called for wisdom and insight.

666 may also be a play on numbers, an allusion to incompleteness, a demonic parody to the perfection of the number 7, "Six meaning missing the mark, or failure and seven meaning perfection or victory."<sup>1</sup>

The bottom line about interpreting 666 is that John is saying practice divine discernment and don't be so interested in mathematical ingenuity.

Before we look at the application, let's take a look at this bible project animation as a review of this passage.

**Video** <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation> 2.22-4.06

When the tide turns against you where do you turn/what do you do?

That tide will eventually become more of a tidal wave against a biblical world view, maybe not in our lifetimes but it will occur based on what Revelation tells us?



Let's go back to our **Big idea: Four personal choices help keep your head above water when the tides turn in your life.**

**Choice 1: Pay attention to cultural realities.**

<sup>9</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear.



Don't dismiss what this chapter is saying with, "That's just overreaction and fanaticism and somebody's wild eyed fantasy." No it's not. This is real. These kinds of things we see in Revelation will happen. They are happening. They may not fully occur in our lifetime. Now we don't throw up our hands up in defeat. We don't go into our bunkers and hunker down. We don't do the, *see no evil, hear no evil*. We must pay attention to these realities. And He tells us specifically what we must do as the world's systems increasingly dismiss, marginalize, restrict, resist, and clamp down on a Christian worldview.

**Choice 2. Faithfully endure.**



<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

It will get more costly to fully follow Jesus. Dying for your faith or imprisonment seems so far removed from our experience here that it may seem ludicrous. But it is happening in many muslim countries today. It is not a far-fetched idea.

<sup>1</sup> Bewes, Richard. The Lamb Wins . Christian Focus Publications. Kindle Edition.

In this chapter he wrote that economic penalties may come for Christians. He already gave examples of those in these cities that were economically penalized if they didn't give in to emperor worship. Could this happen in Canada where you must check box on a loan application when to get a loan you must attest to being pro-abortion or a box to check where you have to attest to agreeing with the government stance on sexuality and gender fluidity? That's closer than you may think.

When the tide turns against us, we must faithfully endure, keep our witness, and continue to be salt and light.

*Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.*

*Rev 13:10 NLT This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful.*

### Choice 3: Guard against worldview creep.



This happens when we slowly, but surely modify and adjust our lifestyle, beliefs, and behaviors to accommodate the cultural worldview that is making us uncomfortable with some aspects of our faith or making it difficult to live fully for Christ. We may modify biblical beliefs because *nobody really believes that anymore. Why, I'm the odd person if I really believe that and my friends don't believe that.* Because we are immersed in the world every day, most of the day, compromise and belief modification can sometimes creep into our belief and behavior, our conduct and character.

Resist it. That's why we need to make sure we are putting into our minds and souls a biblical world view by

- engaging with Scripture (reading and studying it),
- by engaging in other biblical disciplines like prayer, giving, and service, and
- by being with the body of Christ in church and in small groups.

This is so important that we are making discipleship a major objective for WP for the next several years. One component will be to strongly emphasize small groups because that was the biblical pattern for spiritual growth.

So, watch for the tendency to slowly compromise to avoid the pressures from our culture.

### Choice 4: Remember that God has marked you with His Spirit.



In writing about this mark of the beast, John may be reaching back to the reality that believers have been sealed with God's Spirit. His thinking here parallels being sealed with the Spirit that the scripture says happens to us when we come to faith. It is God's promise to us that heaven awaits but also reminds us that a Christian belongs to Jesus, worships him, thinks according to His Spirit, and acts in obedience according to His spirit.

Like those who reject and oppose Christ have one kind of seal seen through their beliefs and behaviors, those who have accepted Christ have another kind of seal seen in our beliefs and behaviors.

If you are a Christian, you have been sealed with the Spirit who now lives within you. You have the promise of eternal life and abundant life here on earth, not problem-free. But you have the greatest power in the world, God Himself, residing in you to sustain you when the tides turn against you.

So, Four personal choices help keep your head above water when the tides turn in your life.

# 4 Choices

- ① Pay attention to cultural realities.
- ② Faithfully endure.
- ③ Guard against worldview creep.
- ④ God has marked you with **His Spirit**.

This week's project: review your notes or if you don't take notes, review what you remembered and summarize what you learned this week into a written paragraph. Then ask yourself, what should I apply to my life this week from what I learned.