



REVELATION

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 3

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your silliest or most random phobia?

666: THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Chapter 13 of Revelation paints the picture of two beasts: one who rises up from the sea and another who looks like a lamb but is actually a dragon in disguise. These two beasts are different sides of the same coin. The first represents Roman military conquest, pulling images from [Daniel 7](#), where it tramples God’s people and makes blasphemous claims calling people to worship it instead of God. The second beast is more subversive but no less dangerous; this beast looks like a lamb but speaks the words of the dragon (Satan). This beast is the false prophet, representing those who think you can have it both ways, worshiping God on the one hand while worshiping the beast on the other.

Rev. 13:16-17 says, the Beast “causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 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.” Carrying a mark on your hand or forehead was a symbol of allegiance, it meant you belonged to the one who marked you ([Deut. 6](#), [Exodus 28](#)). These two beasts, while described separately, speak to the same question: In whom are you placing your allegiance?

NT Wright says, “From quite early on the Christians were faced with a stark alternative: stay true to the lamb and risk losing your livelihood, the ability to sell or buy; or capitulate to the monster, sacrifice to Caesar at the behest of the local officials, and then everything will be all right—except your integrity as one of the lamb’s followers.”

Revelation suggests we either bear the mark of God or the mark of the beast. We can't have it both ways. Our allegiance cannot be divided—we either belong to God or we belong to the beast, and ultimately the one to whom the beast gets its authority: the Dragon, the great enemy of God.

Take a minute to discuss this idea with your group. What does it mean to place your allegiance in something? How are we called to symbolically bear God's name on our foreheads, and in what ways might this be a counter-cultural message for us today?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week or last? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. In Rev. 11 we meet two witnesses that ultimately represent the church as a whole. What does it mean for the church to act as a witness today? What does this mean for us as individuals?
3. Revelation speaks to the reality that some Christians will die because of their faith. While that won't be true for most of us today, it doesn't mean Revelation doesn't have an important message for us. How are we called to model Jesus' example of sacrificial love and mercy today?
4. Are there places where you're tempted to believe you can have it both ways: worshiping God while also worshiping things like consumerism, materialism, success, power, pleasure, etc.?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

God tells John to “eat the scroll” (Rev. 10:9), a way of saying to internalize its message. God warns that while it will taste sweet, the message is also hard to stomach at times. For thousands of years, Christians have internalized the message of Scripture as a way of getting God's truths deep into their hearts and consciousness. This week, let's join them in that practice by memorizing a few verses of God's Word. The themes of [Psalm 23](#) pair well with this section of Revelation but feel free to pick any passage you're drawn to. If you're new to Scripture memorization, here are a few tips:

- Index Card: Write the verse(s) on an index card, and carry the card around with you so you can work on memorizing it in your free time.

- **Record Yourself:** Try recording yourself on your phone reading the verse(s). Listen back to the recording while you're driving, working out, cleaning your house, grocery shopping, etc.
- **Make It Visible:** Tape the verse(s) to the bathroom mirror or to your car dashboard, and work on memorizing it as you go about your day. You can also put it as your desktop or phone background. You'll honestly be surprised by how much that helps.
- **Repetitive Writing:** Transcribe the verse(s) by hand. Rewrite the verse(s) over and over, or use hand-lettering or other creative illustrations or pictures as a way of putting it in your mind.
- **Repetitive Recitation:** Read the verse(s) out loud in two-minute increments and repeat (while allowing some time for your mind to rest).