



 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Searching Deeper

ANTICHRIST REVEALED



ANTICHRIST REVEALED

The sun filtered through the trees onto the pathway of the travelers as they enjoyed the natural beauty. In the path ahead, a hidden danger would have taken them by surprise, but they had been warned by a trustworthy guide who said, “Follow me, I’ll show you the right way to go.” With each step along the safe path they had nothing to fear, and they thanked God for His wise counsel. The prophecies in the Bible are a trustworthy guide that warn us about a hidden danger. God’s warning in Revelation 12 and 13 includes a symbolic dragon and a beast, but there is no need to fear. God’s warning is a message of love that also points to the safe path—the path of following Jesus. As always, before you study, ask God for His help to understand His Word.

1 What good news prepares us to look into the book of Revelation?

Revelation 1:1 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ ...”

Revelation 22:10 “... ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.’”

The book of Revelation is all about Jesus, and what He reveals gives us confidence because He is our faithful Friend. In the book of Revelation, God shows the future in signs—images with symbolic meaning. “... ‘And He ... signified it by His angel to His servant John’” (Revelation 1:1). God promises that the Book of Revelation is not sealed shut. When we ask God for wisdom and study what He has revealed in all of the Bible, His messages will be open for us to understand.

2 What background information in Revelation 12 helps us understand God’s warning?

Revelation 12:1 “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.”

When a pure woman is used as a symbol in the Bible, she represents God’s pure church (Jeremiah 6:2; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23). The sun, moon, and stars are symbols used to identify this church as God’s people of Israel in the Old Testament (Genesis 37:9–10). God’s people in Israel were radiant with heavenly light given by God. This light was God’s righteousness (Malachi 4:2) that came from trusting God’s words of Scripture. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

3 What opposition is the woman experiencing?

Revelation 12:2–4 “Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”

This scene reveals a vicious attack as a promised Child is about to be born in Israel. The dragon is “the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9), who wants this newborn baby dead immediately. Acting through a Roman ruler, Satan tried to have the Child killed (Matthew 2:16).



“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness...”
Revelation 12:14

4 Who is the Child the dragon desperately wants to destroy?

Revelation 12:5 “She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”

This Child is Jesus, the Messiah. The “rod of iron” is a symbol of His rightful authority because He died for our sins and was raised from the dead (Psalm 2:9; Matthew 28:18). When Jesus ascends to Heaven after His resurrection, He entrusts the work of sharing the message of salvation to His followers, the Christian church (Acts 1:8).

5 What happened to God’s church after Jesus rose to Heaven?

Revelation 12:13 “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.”

Satan had so far failed in his war to overthrow God’s authority. When He had been expelled from Heaven, he spread his sinful rebellion to this Earth. To Satan’s surprise, God revealed a plan to rescue sinners through Jesus. Satan fought against God’s plan of salvation, but he could not destroy Jesus at His birth, or even by having Him crucified. In fact, Jesus’ death and resurrection defeated the power of sin, and Satan’s expulsion from Heaven was complete and final. So, Satan turned his intense attacks against the pure woman—God’s true followers who follow all of His Word, even when it means endangering their lives.

6 How did God care for His persecuted followers who remained loyal to the Bible?

Revelation 12:14 “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time ...”

God carefully preserves His true followers—symbolized by the eagle’s wings (Exodus 19:4). The wilderness is a symbol of God’s faith-

ful church in hiding, literally in desolate places. They are nourished by their commitment to the full Word of God (Matthew 4:4). The familiar time frame, “time and times and half a time,” comes from Daniel 7:25 (see Lesson #18). It is also called “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Revelation 12:6). This prophetic time period represents God’s true church being sustained through persecution for 1,260 years.

7 What was Satan’s tactic to destroy God’s true church while it existed in hiding?

Revelation 12:15 “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.”

The flood from Satan’s mouth represents many deceptive teachings. Isaiah 59:19 says, “the enemy comes in like a flood” (Isaiah 59:19). Speaking through a serpent in the garden of Eden, Satan deceived the first woman God created (Genesis 3:4–6) and flooded the world with sin. Then, during the 1,260 years when the pure woman representing God’s true church was persecuted, Satan tried to sweep away anyone who remained faithful to all of God’s Word with a flood of false doctrines.

8 How do those who resist Satan’s false doctrines stand out from others around them?

Revelation 12:17 “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Even after the time of persecution was over, the “rest of her offspring” were recognizable, because they continued to keep all of God’s Commandments unchanged and shared God’s clear message of salvation through Jesus alone. Satan has a special hatred toward this small group who will not compromise their Bible-based beliefs. They stand out from the majority of religious people who have been influenced by Satan’s flood of deceptions.

9 What worldwide means will Satan use to try to overcome anyone who loves God’s law and trusts in Jesus?

Satan’s goal is to deceive the whole world (Revelation 12:9). In Revelation 13, John saw two earthly kingdoms that would be involved in Satan’s final spiritual battle against God’s faithful followers throughout the world. We discover the first of these earthly kingdoms in this lesson.

Revelation 13:1–7

Verse 1 – “Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising

up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”

A beast in Bible prophecy represents an earthly kingdom (Daniel 7:23). The crowns worn indicate kingly authority. The sea represents a populated area (Revelation 17:15); so this world power arises in populated areas just like the beasts that came from the sea in the vision of Daniel 7.

Verse 2 – “Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”

What Daniel saw looking forward (a lion, bear, leopard, beast, and ten horns), John now sees, looking back (ten horns on a beast, body like a leopard, feet like a bear, and mouth like a lion). Those beasts in Daniel 7 had a combined “seven heads and ten horns,” just as John saw in Revelation 13 (Daniel 7:4–7). This tells us that the ideas and activities of this world power resemble an amalgamation of those pagan kingdoms.

Verse 3 – “And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”

This world power suffers a deadly blow and goes into a period of inactivity before regaining its former authority and prestige. Finally, it becomes a universal power with followers worldwide.

Verse 4 – “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’”

This world power is a religious entity that asserts great authority, even influencing who people worship.

Verse 5 – “And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

The 42 months of authority given to the beast is a prophetic time frame. This time period is described seven times in Scripture, using three phrases that always refer to a time of apostasy and opposition to God:

- A time, times, and half a time (Daniel 7:25, 12:7; Revelation 12:14)
- 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3, 12:6)
- 42 months (Revelation 11:2, 13:5)

Applying the day-for-a-year principle in Bible prophecy, this predicted 1,260 years of dominance.

Verse 6 – “Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.”

This world power makes bold religious claims.

Verse 7 – “It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.”

This world power engages in religious persecution against God’s saints, and its influence is felt in every nation.

10 What world power does this beast represent?

An important part of Bible study is comparing Scripture with Scripture to get the accurate message from the whole Bible. Daniel 7 and 8 introduce a power called “the little horn,” which has many similarities with this symbolic beast (explained in Lessons #18 & 19). The historical entity that matches the details in Daniel 7 and 8 and Revelation 13 is papal Rome, with its headquarters in Vatican City. While numerous Bible students have reached this conclusion, it is not safe to trust what another person says. Confirm what the Bible says for yourself.

- **It arises from the populated area of Europe** (Daniel 7:2–3; Revelation 13:1)
- **It has sovereign power over a nation, the Vatican City** (Revelation 13:1)
- **It begins small, but grows in power** (Daniel 7:8, 8:9)
- **It arises after the 10 tribes of Europe (the 10 horns), and comes up among them** (Daniel 7:8)

The papal system arose in Europe. It received full authority in A.D. 538, after the tribes were established that developed into the modern European nations.

- **It is different from the other political powers because it also has religious authority** (Daniel 7:24–25; Revelation 13:4, 6)
- **It uproots three powers to come to unopposed power** (Daniel 7:8)
- **It has a man at its head** (Daniel 7:8; Revelation 13:18)
- **It becomes a worldwide power** (Revelation 13:3, 7)
- **It persecutes God’s saints** (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:7)

Using the authority of civil governments, a vast number of faithful Christians on multiple continents were persecuted or killed by the authority of the Vatican. Religious campaigns like the Inquisition, or the attempts to obliterate the Waldenses, Albigenses, and Huguenots in France, took the lives of many.

- **It operates unhindered for 1,260 years during the Dark Ages** (Daniel 7:25, 2:7; Revelation 13:5, 14)

In A.D. 538, with the overthrow of the Ostrogoths, the papacy began 1,260 years of governing authority in Europe, ending in 1798.

• **It recovers from a deadly wound** (Revelation 13:3)

In 1798, Pope Pius VI was taken captive and imprisoned by Napoleon, ending the Vatican's authority as an independent government. In the years since then, the papal organization has regained some of its governing authority and influence with world leaders.

• **It speaks words of blasphemy** (Revelation 13:1, 5–6; Daniel 7:8, 8:10–12)

Blasphemy is when a mere man claims to be God (John 10:33), or claims to forgive sins, which only God can do (Luke 5:20–24). An official title applied to the leader of the papal government is “Vicar of Christ,” a phrase meaning to “be in the place of Christ.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered” (*Catechism*, 1997 ed., Paragraph 882). This is a contradiction to the Bible since Jesus, alone is the true Head over His church (Colossians 1:18).

In the Roman Catholic faith, confession must be made to a human priest in order to receive forgiveness. “Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance ...” “Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins ...” (*Catechism*, 1456 & 1461).

The office of the pope takes the title “Holy Father,” which is addressed to God (John 17:11). Speaking in a spiritual sense, Jesus said, “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9).

The 1870 Vatican Council declared the pope to be infallible when speaking officially on matters of faith and doctrine.

Blasphemy includes claiming God's authority to change Bible teachings. The papal organization has done this by introducing doctrines contrary to Bible teaching, including:

- Church tradition has equal authority with the Bible (*Catechism*, 82)
- We can earn salvation through acts of penance (*Catechism*, 980, 986-7)
- We should pray to “saints” who have died (*Catechism*, 2683)
- The practice of venerating images (*Catechism*, 2131-2132)
- God punishes sinners throughout eternity (*Catechism*, 1035)

• **It has attempted to change God's Ten Commandments** (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:6)

God's law does not change (Matthew 5:18). Despite this, papal leaders

claim to have authority to change God's Law by:

Replacing God's seventh-day Sabbath with Sunday sacredness: “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath ... for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath” (*Catechism*, 2175).

Removing the second commandment forbidding the worship of images in its official list of God's Ten Commandments. To keep the list of ten, the tenth commandment was divided in half (*Catechism* Part 3, Section 2).

11 Has God condemned individual Christians because of the church organization they are part of?

Ezekiel 18:20 “... The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. ...”

It is important to distinguish between an official organization and the choices of individual people. Each of us is responsible only for our own decisions, faith, and actions. There are honest people in many religious organizations who sincerely follow everything they know about God. Jesus refers to these as “other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice” (John 10:16). God loves each person individually (Romans 5:8) and invites us to make a personal choice to follow Jesus based on what we learn from the Bible, even if that differs from what a church or religious leader teaches.

12 How does the sea beast try to counterfeit the ministry of Jesus?

Satan hates Jesus and His character of self-sacrificing love, and he knows that sinful people can only be saved through Jesus. To divert sinners away from salvation through Jesus, Satan uses the earthly power of the papacy to counterfeit Jesus' ministry. On the following page, notice how this symbolic beast substitutes itself for Jesus in Revelation 13.



“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice ...” (John 10:16)

	THE BEAST FROM THE SEA	JESUS
Verse 1	... comes out of the water ... has ten crowns	... began His ministry coming out of the water in baptism (Acts 10:37-38) ... has many crowns (Revelation 19:12)
Verse 2	... receives power and authority from the dragon ... receives his throne from the dragon	... received power and authority from the Father (Matthew 28:18) ... sits on the throne with the Father (Revelation 3:21)
Verse 3	... returns to activity after a mortal wound ... impresses people who marvel after its power	... died and was raised to life (Matthew 28:6) ... is worshiped after His resurrection (Matthew 28:17)
Verse 4	... is praised with the words, “who is like the beast?”	... is called Michael, which means “Who is like God” (Revelation 12:7)
Verse 5	... works for a period of 42 months (three-and-a-half years)	... ministered for a period of three-and-a-half years
Verse 7	... influences “every tribe, tongue, and nation”	... sends His gospel “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6)

13 How does God’s Word describe anything that takes the place of Jesus?

1 John 2:18–19, 22 “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.”

Many people have wondered about the word “Antichrist.” The Greek prefix “anti” means both “against” and “in place of.” Anything that denies Jesus by attempting to take His place is anti-Christ. Even family, money, nature, or security can take Jesus’ place as our first priority. Antichrist may even appear to be spiritual, like religious beliefs or traditions that take Jesus’ place by changing God’s Word. This text teaches that Antichrist is neither a single person, nor a power that only shows up in the future. John wrote that Antichrist “went out from us,” meaning that it once submitted to God’s Word, but then departed from faithful obedience. The religious organization of papal Rome, represented by the sea beast, assumes the role of Jesus Christ, claiming both the authority over God’s Word and the power to forgive sins.

14 Why does God want us to understand the identity of the sea beast in Revelation 13?

Revelation 13:8 “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Who we choose to worship demonstrates who we love most. Although the beast’s worship is widespread and popular, it is based on man’s traditions, rather than on God’s Word. Because God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), He gives a clear warning about counterfeit worship, so that everyone can choose, based on the knowledge from God’s Word (Hosea 4:6).

15 What is true worship of God?

John 4:23 “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth”

Matthew 4:10 “... For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.””

True worship of God has three elements.

1. It is in spirit—True worship is sincere and comes from the heart. It cannot be faked or forced.
2. It is in truth—True worship is based on accepting Bible truth without changing it in any way. Jesus emphasized this when He said, “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).
3. It results in serving God—True worship submits to God’s commandments in loving obedience from the heart (John 14:15).

16 How can I be sure I am worshiping God, when “all the world marveled and followed the beast” (Revelation 13:3)?

Philippians 3:8 “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”

John 16:13 “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth”

Study Jesus, and put Him first above all things. Study the radiant light of Scripture to follow what it teaches. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you (Luke 11:13). God will work within us when we choose to follow Him (Philippians 2:13).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. Revelation 13 is an invitation to study the original—Jesus. When we do this faithfully, we will not be led astray by a counterfeit. What details from the life of Jesus are the most important to ponder, so we can love Him more?

2. As you look at your life, what tends to become so important that it can take the place of Jesus? Ask God to help you be completely honest with your response. “Search me, O God, and know my heart ...” (Psalm 139:23).

3. It is wise to evaluate religious beliefs we have been taught to confirm that they are based on God’s Word. God helps us when we ask Him. Has God shown you any way you have followed commands, traditions, habits, or priorities that are not based on what the Bible says?

4. Many of God’s loyal followers have not yet understood God’s warnings and promises in the book of Revelation. How can we show God’s love for people who are still learning what God is teaching in the Bible?

5. Who do you know that needs to hear what you have learned? “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN THE ANTICHRIST?



1. Salvation comes through Jesus, not through a church organization, or a religious leader. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

2. Jesus wants every person to hear the truth. “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46). “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

3. God is merciful to us when we act in ignorance. “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 1:13–14).

4. Many of God’s true followers have not yet understood God’s Word. “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness ...” (Romans 2:14–15).

5. God cares for His people in all places, and He wants them to understand what the Bible teaches. “Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9–10).

6. The warnings in God’s Word show His loving care for us. “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you” (1 Corinthians 4:14). “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

7. Every person can choose to follow Jesus and obey His teachings, based on what the Bible says. “... Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

8. Salvation does not depend on the kindness of another sinful person, because God alone forgives our sins. “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him” (Daniel 9:9).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. The book of Revelation is about Jesus, and God promises to help us understand its important message.

2. Satan could not destroy salvation through Jesus when He was born, or by having Him killed on the Cross.

3. Satan could not destroy God’s faithful followers through persecution, or by false doctrines.

4. Satan’s final target is a remnant “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

5. Satan’s plan to deceive God’s remnant includes a beast from the sea that claims God’s authority on Earth. This beast represents the earthly kingdom of papal Rome.

6. God makes a clear distinction between organizations and honest individuals within those organizations who have a sincere desire to follow what the Bible teaches.

7. God invites each one of us to make a personal choice to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

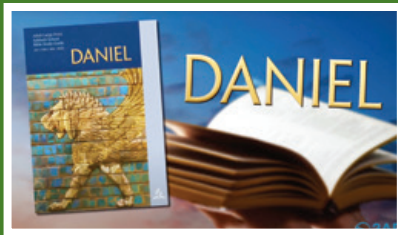
Additional Notes:

WATCH PROPHECIES COME ALIVE!



SCAN AND GO

James Rafferty and Ivor Myers examine the prophetic themes and symbols of Daniel and Revelation.



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Our 3ABN Sabbath School panelists uncover the wonderful prophetic truths of the Bible and what they mean for us today.



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