



The Real Pressure: A Series in Revelation 7/11

Dave Ellis – 2nd August 2026 (watch talk [here](#))

In this sermon Dave unpacked Revelation 13 for us; a chapter in which we read of beasts, a dragon and the number 666. As we look at these images in context, we find the central message is this: the greatest pressure facing Jesus' followers is the slow pull of compromise in order to belong, succeed, or avoid discomfort. Revelation 13 calls us to examine who and what is shaping our thinking, desires, actions and ultimately receiving our worship.

Zoom Out

John wrote to first-century Christians living under the Roman Empire, where worship of Caesar was woven into everyday life. The pressure was rarely direct persecution. Instead, it came through social expectations, economic pressure, and the desire to belong. Rome did not always force people to conform, it simply made non-conformity costly. Therefore, Revelation 13 is not primarily about identifying the Beast, rather it is about asking whether followers of Jesus will remain faithful to the Lamb when faithfulness becomes costly. *"This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people."* (Revelation 13:10)

Reflect: The pressure to compromise is powerful

The desire for acceptance, security and control can cause us to stay silent, compromise convictions or conform to expectations.

Questions:

- Where do I feel pressure to 'fit in' at the expense of faithfulness to Jesus?
- Where am I tempted to compromise because faithfulness feels costly?
- Are there areas where I have accepted cultural values without testing them against Jesus' teaching?

Zoom In

Key passage: Revelation 13:9-18

For its first century hearers who were immersed in the scriptures of Israel, the images described in Revelation 13 would have called to mind the time of Daniel. In Daniel chapter seven, he too has a vision of four beasts each with features reflected in John's beast in Revelation 13. Daniel is told these beasts represent kings, kingdoms and empires - human powers that become beastly when they exalt themselves above God. John's readers would immediately have recognised Rome as the current example of beastly power.

The first beast symbolises a recurring pattern throughout history: human power exalted above God, kingdoms demanding ultimate loyalty and systems that shape people away from faithful worship to God.

The second beast promotes worship of the first beast and deceives people into allegiance. Rather than violent coercion, its role is one of cultural formation as it influences our desires, values, ways of thinking, and ultimately, what / who we worship.



The dragon is Satan (Revelation 12:9). John traces the story back to the Garden of Eden: the same voice that tempted humanity to live independently from God continues to work through cultures, kingdoms and systems today.

Understanding 666 and the mark of the beast - This likely pointed first-century readers toward Nero Caesar. Using the Hebrew numerical values of Nero's full name produces the number 666. Nero became an example of a recurring beastly pattern: power without submission to God, authority demanding worship and human systems replacing God.

The mark on the forehead and hand echoes Deuteronomy 6. God's people were called to have His word shape their thinking (forehead) and their actions (hand). Therefore, the beast offers a counterfeit formation to the formation the Lamb offers us. Revelation 13 presents two rival discipleships:

The Lamb's way

- Faithfulness
- Worship of God
- Obedience
- Endurance

The Beast's way

- Self-rule
- Compromise
- Cultural conformity
- False worship

The mark is fundamentally about allegiance and formation, not merely identification.

Reflect: Everyone is being formed

The Lamb and the Beast represent two competing visions for life. Every day, something is shaping our values, desires and decisions.

Questions:

- What is shaping me most right now: Jesus, or the culture around me?
- How are my daily habits shaping my thinking and actions?
- Which voices influence me most each week?

Press In

Today, believers face a similar challenge. The struggle is ultimately spiritual: the dragon (Satan) seeks worship, the beast (ruling person / culture) exercises power and God's people are called to faithful endurance. The pressure is often subtle: no one has to drag us away from Jesus, just make it uncomfortable enough that compromise begins to feel reasonable.

So then, how do we remain faithful? Looking to Daniel as a model, we learn that his faithfulness in moments of crisis was formed long before the crisis arrived. Key practices Daniel exercised include:

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| • Daily prayer & worship | • Trusting God for his protection |
| • Consistent obedience | • Fasting and self-denial |
| • Learning to say "no" | • Spiritual discipline before pressure comes |

Reflect: Faithfulness is built before the crisis - Daniel's courage did not appear overnight; it was formed through daily habits of obedience.

Questions:

- What would "patient endurance and faithfulness" look like in my current circumstances?
- What practices am I cultivating today that will help me remain faithful tomorrow?
- What daily habits of obedience help me stand under pressure?



Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Help me recognise the pressures that pull my heart away from you. Form my thoughts, desires and actions through your Spirit and your Word. Give me courage to remain faithful when compromise seems easier. Like Daniel, help me develop habits of obedience today so that I can stand firm tomorrow.

Amen.