

The Apocalypse of St. John

Chapter 13

[Have someone place this example on board: A. KAI. DOMET. SEB. GE. - If added together, it equals 666.]

INTRO: READ EXCURSUS: On the Transformation of Rome and the Rise of the Beast. -OBS P.144-145

Read 13:1-2

Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) Note: 13:1,2a

Add: Just like in chapter 12, the first word of this chapter in Greek is kai which is better translated "and" b/c it is a conjunction (joining two thoughts) just as it is at the start of the 2nd sentence of this verse.

Orthodox Bible Study (OBS): In other words, this is a continuation of the persecution and ongoing war against the Church [from the last chapter]. [KEY] The dragon (i.e., Satan) was unable to kill the Church through the Jewish persecutions (in the early days of the Church). Now he is going to try something else. Standing on the sand of the sea, he summons a new monster from its depths. P. 138

OBS: This freakish beast is most likely the Roman Empire. In Dan 7, Daniel's vision saw four beasts terrorizing the earth: Babylon was the lion, Median the bear, Persia the leopard and the nameless fourth beast was the Greek Empire. Now Rome is seen as the combination and culmination of all these terrible empires. Like a lion its mouth roars after its prey with ferociousness, like a leopard it swiftly hunts down its prey, and like a bear it has crushing strength. The seven heads are the seven hills of Rome and the emperors who ruled from there. The ten horns are the many nations. The crowns have moved from the heads (in the previous chapter) now on the horns perhaps to symbolize that the persecution has moved from its centralized source of Rome now out to the various nations under Roman control. -P.139

OBS: What are the "names of blasphemy?" These were blasphemous titles of divine honors for the emperors: For example Augustus was proclaimed "divine" at his death; Nero was hailed as "Savior of the World," and Caligula demanded that everyone do his image homage. But the godless self-deification escalated with the Emperor Domitian (who was the probable emperor at the time this was written). He was addressed as "our Lord and God," and failure to worship him was (for the first time) a punishable offense. Power is give from the dragon (the devil) to the beast (Rome) as it receives demonic power & energy to persecute the Church. - P. 140

Read 13:3-4

OSB Note 13:1,2b

Add: As in 5:6, the word for "wounded" or "slain" in Greek is: σφάζω spházō, sfad'-zo; a primary verb; to butcher (especially an animal for food or in sacrifice) or (generally) to slaughter, or (specially), to maim (violently):—kill, slay, wound.

OBS The beast is seen as a demonic parody or copy of Christ the slaughtered Lamb (cf. Rev. 5:6) who is now alive. Remember "anti-Christ" means primarily "in place of" or "instead of" Christ.

OSB Note 13:3a

OBS The vision of the beast recovering from a fatal wound and rising from the dead echoes a myth about Nero (known as Nero Redivivus) that he'd rise again (possibly from Parthia) to retake his lost dominion. Nero risen from the dead was the embodiment of the worst and most impossible of fears. -P. 141

OSB Note 13:3b & c

OSB Note 13:4

OBS All the empire was united by their demonic, pagan adoration and bound together by emperor worship. The vision of the beast recovering from a fatal wound means that because of Rome's continued power, and

even the rumored possibility of Nero's returning from the dead, Rome appears invincible and, therefore, worthy of all worship. -P140

Read 13:5-6

OBS The words "was given..." is used repeatedly in Revelation to show that God remains sovereign. All events ultimately serve His purpose. The beast is given authority to act for forty two months, but no more. This is a short but savage time of persecution. -P.141-142

OSB Note 13:5

OSB Note 13:6a & b

OBS Reference to God's tabernacle or tent hearkens back to the place built by Moses according to God's instructions (Ex. 26f), so that God could dwell among His people. Here it refers to God's dwelling in His people. In other words, this is telling the Christians persecuted by Rome that they are not criminals -they are actually the earthly dwelling-place of the God of heaven. -P. 142

OSB Note 13:6c

Read 13:7-8

OBS Authority was given to the beast over every tribe, tongue and nation and people..." In other words, the beast's power spread over-all and it seemed as if there was nowhere Christians could go to avoid persecution and conflict. -P. 142-143

OBS "The book of life" (v.8) -comes from the Old Testament (cf. Ex. 32:32, where Moses prays concerning being 'blotted out of Your book'). The symbolism has its roots in an ancient custom of kings keeping a register of favored persons, a kind of "roll of honor" (e.g. cf. Esther 6:1-3). To be enrolled in the Lamb's book of life is to be friends of God, true saints who will share in the life of the age to come.

OBS They that are in it... "from the foundation of the world" shows the eternal dimension of their decision to serve Christ rather than the Roman

Empire and it encourages them to not throw away such a great salvation. Those not enrolled are those deceived who worship the beast and take part in the emperor cult. P. 143

Read 13:9-10

OSB Note 13:10

OBS "He who is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes..." is prefaced by our Lord's words, "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" which He used in the Gospels to urge men to listen with all their heart. This is a message men must hearken to now: It stresses that the coming persecution is inevitable. If this is God's will, the saints must be prepared to persevere. Ultimately they will triumph in their faithfulness to God. -P. 143-144

As it says, "Here is the patience [or perseverance] and the faith of the saints" (v.10).

"He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword..." reveals that God will judge those who persecute the Church.

Read 13:11-12

OSB Note 13:11, 12a

Add: The phrase "two horns like a lamb," (v. 11), according to Protopresbyter Fr. Thomas Hopko, is a classic reference to the anti-Christ who comes as an imitation messiah. It appears as the Lamb to be worshipped like the Lamb, but its words are destructive like the Devil.

OSB Note 13:11, 12b

Notice this second beast comes from the earth (v. 13:11) whereas the first beast arose from the sea (v. 13:1). The sea might indicate the first beast is international (like the Roman Empire) b/c the sea is everywhere. The 2nd beast rising from the earth might indicate the 2nd beast is more localized. This second beast is likely the pagan religious priesthood b/c it compels the earth's inhabitants to worship the first beast. Emperor worship in the Roman Empire was strongly localized in Asia Minor. Why would Asia Minor be important to St. John? ---It's the place from which he was writing (on the island of Patmos).

OBS Appearing as a lamb could indicate a false prophet b/c our Lord warned that false prophets would come in "sheep's clothing" (Matt 7:15). But rather than a wolf, this is a "beasts" in sheep's clothing.

Read 13:13-14

Read 13:15

OSB Note 13:13-15

OBS: "Great signs"(v.13) Foremost among these demonic miracles was the bringing to life of a statue of the emperor, so that the image would even speak There are deep roots for this passage in the Old Testament: Nebuchadnezzar had an image of himself and commanded all to worship it on pain of death (Dan 2). The ancients saw a mystical and intimate connection between the gods and their statues, so much so that proof that the gods were living was that their statues were held even to eat (see Daniel's Bel and the Dragon, v.6). The ancients thought of statues coming to life as one of the great proofs of power and divinity. St. John's description agrees with St. Paul's description of the final Antichrist where he writes (in 2 Thess 2:9-10), "The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

By these false wonders people are compelled to worship the 1st beast by the 2nd. If any Christians refuses to worship, this bestial false prophet will have them killed (v.15). -P. 146-147

Q. What does it mean for us today to worship the State? Worship of God means obedience to Him and His law. Worship of the state (or any false idol) comes about when we put anything before God and His truth. The State only becomes a problem for Christians when it begins compelling us to obey its laws contrary to our faith. If the state compels us to compromise God's truth, and we obey the state rather than God: This is false worship. The same can be said about any religious leader who tries to change God's truth. As St. Paul said, "...Even if we or an angel from heaven come teaching a Gospel other than the one you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). Remember in the Apocalypse the Dragon is Satan

and his two beasts in the world are (1) a godless & god-hating government and (2) false religion.

Read 13:16-17

OSB Note 13:16, 17a

OBS: The Greek word used here by St. John for mark or brand is "khar'agma" which means any mark that is engraved or imprinted and was used for stamps on documents, impressions on coins, and brands on horses. Slaves were likewise sometimes branded. Thus the beast will make these people its slaves.

OSB Note 13:16, 17b

OBS: In other words, integration into society and life itself is dependent on capitulation to the beast and receiving its mark. The background for these marks may be the ancient pagan practice of religious tattooing -where devotees would often brand themselves to show their devotion to their deity (mention Middle Eastern Christian practices). There is also an Old Testament precedent for this in Isaiah where the faithful are said to write on their hand that they are "the Lord's" (Is 44:5 Heb). There is no reason to understand this exclusively as a physical mark any more than the marks that Christians are said to receive from the Lord in this book (cf. Rev. 3:12, 14:1). Thus these marks (of the beast or of God) can be understood as spiritual marks rather than physical marks. In other words they belong to the beast by all they do (right hand) and by all they think (on the forehead). Without such a spiritual compromise to the Roman Beast, one will not be able to survive and cope in society, or even be able to buy or sell with one's neighbors. The Christians of the day were not able to assimilate to pagan society b/c such conformity, depended upon spiritual betrayal of Christ, which was impossible for them to accept -P. 147-148.

Read 13:18

OSB Note 13:18

OBS: The method of using numbers to indicate a name is called "gematria," and it was quite common in the ancient world. Its used here b/c it was too dangerous to name the emperor himself, clearly and plainly as the beast and enemy of God. St. Paul speaks in similar guarded language about Roman Empire in 2nd Thessalonians (2:5-8) and St. Peter refers to

the imperial city of Rome as "Babylon" (1 Pet 5:13), another code word. The use of gematria serves as a cover for the faithful. The Church is meant to understand the riddle, where as the hostile pagan world will not.

"Number of a man" = number of a person. St. Ireneaus actually did have an idea... he had several ideas including 666 = LATEINOS (the Latin one) referring to the Roman Emperor. Besides the other suggestions of it being Nero Caesar, Fr. Lawrence Farley thinks it could actually be Domitian whose Greek title in Latin is A. KAI. DOMET. SEB. GE. which, if added together, equals 666 (see example on board). Thus safely hidden from the Roman authorities, St. John was communicating that the emperor was the beast, the instrument of the devil, blaspheming against the true God and those in heaven. See handout for a fuller explanation of the meaning of the anti-Christ & 666.

Summary:

What significance does this passage have for us today? The Apocalypse is not simply warning about the dangers of the ancient Roman Empire. There is relevancy beyond this for us today. The Apocalypse warns Christians of all generations of the dangers of the godless & God-hating state -whether that state be Roman, Turkish, Soviet, Chinese -or even American. The state, previously beneficent had in John's day become brutal and began a persecution of the Church which would ong continue. But we must recall, according to St. Peter, persecution is a normal part of the Chrisitan life (cf. 1 Pet 4:12-13).

As our Lord told us, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (Jn 15:19). It's our mission and calling to make sure we remain faithful to Him and live and share His truth.

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Sub-Dn. Lazarus Der-Ghazarian