

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 356 – December 22nd – Revelation 13:1-18

Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

Chapter 13

Witherington writes, "The structure of chapter 13 is clear. This is a tale of two Beasts, neither of which is to be identified with the dragon, but both of which serve his cause and purposes. The first of the two Beasts comes forth from the sea and, like Tiamat, is a seven-headed Beast with ten horns. As we shall see, a clear understanding of Dan 7ff is required to understand some of the material in this chapter. The second of the two Beasts comes forth from the earth and appears like a lamb with two horns. While the former creature has its parallels with the OT water monster Leviathan, the latter parallels Behemoth... The most reasonable guess as to what these symbols refer to is that the former is a figure of the Roman Empire itself and its emperors, alluded to by the ten heads, while the latter stands for the priests who propagated and maintained the emperor cult, or, since this was written to an audience in Asia Minor, for the provincial council in charge of enforcing emperor worship throughout Asia Minor. Though the former Beast is not called 'anti-Christ,' this is not an inappropriate designation for him..."

"Thus, in this and subsequent chapters, we have the introduction of the unholy trinity – the dragon, the water monster, and the land Beast (the devil, the anti-Christ and the false prophet – see 16:13). These three are striving for the religious allegiance of the world. The water monster can be seen as an anti-Christ figure for it has ten diadems just as Christ has many (cf. 13:1; 19:12). He has a blasphemous name (13:1) just as Christ has a holy name (19:11 ff.). He causes people to worship Satan (13:4) while Christ causes people to worship God (1:6). He has a mortal wound and possibly even dies but then revives or lives again (13:3, 12-14) just as Christ died and lives again. He has the power, throne, and authority of the Devil (13:2), and Christ shares the power, throne, and authority of God (12:5-10). In addition Beasley-Murray points out that the land Beast seems to function rather like an unholy spirit. It performs prophetic activity and is the instrument of revelation of Satanic authority, just as the Holy Spirit mediates God's revelation. One must also recognise that the Beast combines features of the four Beasts in Daniel and features of Nero as well to create a composite portrait of evil incarnate. It is also a sort of universal image indicating the kinds of threats God's people have endured in many different generations."

Verse 1

Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον, ἔχον κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόματα βλασφημίας.

Cf. Dan 7:3.

θηριον, ου n animal, beast, wild animal
 ἀναβαινω go up, come up, ascend
 κερας, ατος n horn
 δεκα ten

"The ten horns are like those of Daniel's fourth beast (Dan 7:7). There they are the ten kings which rise out of the fourth kingdom. In Revelation 17 the ten horns are also ten kings (17:12), although in the present vision we learn only that they wear diadems, the insignia of royal authority (cf. 19:12). There are a number of suggestions as to why the diadems are placed on the horns rather than the heads of the beast. The most plausible is that the claim to authority rests on brute force." Mounce.

κεφαλή, ης f head
 ἑπτα seven

"That the beast has seven heads stresses its relationship to the seven headed dragon of chapter 12 (vs. 3)." Mounce.

διαδημα, τος n diadem, crown
 ὄνομα, τος n name
 βλασφημία, ας f slander, blasphemy

Reflects "the increasing tendency of the Roman emperors to assume titles of deity." Mounce considers that for John "the beast was the Roman Empire as persecutor of the church... Yet the beast is more than the Roman Empire. John's vision grew out of the details of his own historical situation, but its complete fulfilment awaits the final denouement of human history. The beast has always been, and will be in a final intensified manifestation, the deification of secular authority."

Verse 2

καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδον ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκου, καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος. καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην.

ὅμοιος, α, ον like, of the same kind as
 παρδαλις, εως f leopard
 πους, ποδος m foot
 ἄρκος, ου m & f bear
 λεων, οντος m lion

The beast out of the sea combines the characteristics of the four beasts of Dan 7. "In combining these beasts, which in Daniel represented four historic kingdoms hostile to the people of God (Dan 7:17, 23), John sets forth the Antichrist as the epitome of bestial opposition to the seed of the woman." Mounce.

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι
 δυναμις, εως f power
 θρονος, ου m throne
 ἐξουσια, ας f authority

"This beast is the underling of the dragon and so bears his mark. Just as God bestowed on Christ his power, authority and throne, so it is with this Beast, and the parallels are deliberate." Witherington.

Verse 3

καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον, καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη. καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου,

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
 ἐσφαγμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s
 σφαζω slaughter, put to death;
 ἐσφαγμενην εἰς θανατον fatally wounded

Witherington comments, "The exact same phrase of 'like it had been slaughtered to death' is found in Rev 5:6, referring to the death of the Lamb, which then rose. We are meant to see a demonic imitation of Christ." He continues by pointing out that though Nero committed suicide in 68 AD there were many stories circulating that he was not dead. "The Neronian imposter of most recent memory to John's audience actually persuaded the Parthians to march on Rome in AD 88-89. The return of Nero was actually the nightmare of stable Romans' dreams, but it was also alluded to in Jewish prophetic sources."

πληγή, ης f plague
 ἐθεραπεύθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
 θεραπευω heal, cure

"Since the beast is the Roman Empire in its persecution of the church, its recovery from a mortal wound could refer to the re-establishment of order under Vespasian (AD 69-79) following the chaotic and bloody revolution which had begun less than two years before with the death of Nero and extended through the abortive reigns of Galba, Otho and Vitellius. Or perhaps no historical allusion is intended and the purpose of the figure is to underscore the tremendous vitality of the beast. Though wounded he returns in increased might. From the beginning of history the pagan state has set itself against the people of God. From the pharaohs of Egypt to the emperors of Rome it has moved steadily forward with determined purpose to devour all who refused it homage. It had survived every assault and recovered from every deadly blow. Little wonder that in the last days the whole world will be drawn after the beast in wonder and amazement." Mounce.

θαυμάζω wonder, be amazed
 ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire
 ὀπίσω prep with gen after, follow

Cf. 1 Tim 5:15.

Verse 4

καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θηρίῳ λέγοντες· Τίς ὅμοιος τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ' αὐτοῦ;

προσκυνεῶ worship

"Deification of secular power is in fact the worship of Satan." Mounce.

ὅμοιος, α, ον see v.2

"The language imitates the language of the Psalms (see Ps 89:6ff.; Ex 15:11-12; Isa 40:25ff.; Mic 7:18ff.). Emperor worship is being discussed, and the hymns of the Bible are being parodied. John is speaking of a phenomenon of his day when the government became so totalitarian that it arrogated to itself all the attributes of deity and demanded absolute allegiance." Witherington.

δυναμὶ can, be able to, be capable of
πολεμεῶ wage war, fight

"The motivation of worship is not his moral greatness but the awesome power of his might." Mounce.

Verse 5

Καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ποιῆσαι μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα δύο.

λαλεῶ speak, talk

Cf. Dan 7:8,20,25; 11:36.

The primary reference of ἐδόθη in this and the following verses is to the dragon, but "John's readers would understand in these later verses a reference to God, the ultimate source of power. The reign of the beast is by divine permission. He operates within the limitations determined by God." Mounce.

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεῶ

I.e. to do, or actively carry out, the will of the dragon.

μην, μηνος m month

τεσσερακοντα forty

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two

Cf. 11:2. The restricted time again stresses that it is God and not evil powers who are in control.

Verse 6

καὶ ἤνοιξε τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εἰς βλασφημίας πρὸς τὸν θεόν, βλασφημῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ, τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας.

ἀνοίγω open

Cf. 2 Thess 2:4.

σκηνή, ης f tent, tabernacle, dwelling place

Cf. 21:3.

σκηνοῶ live, dwell

"Those who dwell in heaven are either angelic beings, or, possibly, the church viewed ideally as seated in heavenly places (cf. Eph 2:6; Col 3:1)." Mounce.

Verse 7

καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ νικῆσαι αὐτούς, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαὸν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος.

πολεμος, ου m see 11:17

ἅγιος, α, ον holy; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people
νικαῶ conquer, overcome

Cf. 15:2. The true victory belongs to the 'saints'.

φυλή, ης f tribe, nation

λαος, ου m people

γλῶσσα, ης f tongue, language

ἔθνος, ους n nation, people

"Such was the nature of the Roman Empire, which swallowed up most of the known Mediterranean world." Witherington.

Verse 8

καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

προσκυνεῶ worship

κατοικεῶ live, inhabit

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφῶ write

βιβλίον, ου n book, scroll

ζωή, ης f life

ἄρνιον, ου n lamb

Cf. Ex 32:32-33; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:19.

ἐσφαγμένου Verb, perf pass ptc, m & n gen s

σφαζῶ slaughter, put to death

καταβολή, ης f beginning, creation

κοσμος, ου m world, universe

The RSV joins this last phrase with the writing of names in the book of life rather than the death of Christ. Mounce thinks this unnatural. Christ's death was part of God's eternal plan.

Verse 9

Εἴ τις ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω.

οὖς, ὄτος n ear, hearing

Alerting the reader to the importance of what follows.

Verse 10

εἴ τις εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν, εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν ὑπάγει· εἴ τις ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι. ὧδέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων.

αἰχμαλωσία, ας f captivity; group of captives

ὑπαγω go, go one's way, depart

μαχαира, ης f sword, war, violent death

ἀποκτεινω kill, put to death

The difficulty of this double proverb has resulted in several scribal amendments.

"The first couplet teaches that the believer must accept what God has ordained, and the second warns against any attempt on the part of the church to defend itself by the use of force. Barclay writes, 'It is an intolerable paradox to defend the gospel of the love of God by using the violence of man'... This attitude of humble submission is the patience and faith of the saints." Mounce.

Witherington suggests that this is a partial quote from Jer 15:2 and comments, "probably what is in view is a call to Christians to endure whatever persecution comes and to remain faithful. They are not to take the sword against their oppressors but, rather like their master, simply suffer the wrath of evil and so stop the vicious cycle of killing and revenge. The church then is called to follow the *Via Dolorosa*. In such endurance lies the faithfulness and witness of the saints, who when mistreated did not retaliate."

ὧδε adv here

ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance

πιστις, εως f faith

Verse 11

Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, καὶ εἶχεν κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ, καὶ ἐλάλει ὡς δράκων.

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

θηριον, ου n see v.1

ἀναβαινω see v.1

εἶχεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s ἔχω

κερας, ατος n see v.1

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δύοσιν two

ὅμοιος, α, ον like, of the same kind as

ἀρνιον, ου n lamb, sheep

"His two horns like a lamb represent his attempt to convey the impression of gentle harmlessness. It recalls the warning of Jesus, 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves' (Mt 7:15)." Mounce.

"This Beast is in a sense also a parody of Christ." Witherington.

Verse 12

καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πρώτου θηρίου πᾶσαν ποιεῖ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. καὶ ποιεῖ τὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικοῦντας ἵνα προσκυνήσουσιν τὸ θηρίον τὸ πρῶτον, οὗ ἐθεραπεύθη ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ.

ἐξουσία, ας f authority

πρωτος, η, ον first, earlier

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before

The second beast exercises the authority of the first.

κατοικεω see v.8

προσκυνεω see v.8

ἐθεραπεύθη see v.3

πληγη, ης f see v.3

θανατος, ου m death

Verse 13

καὶ ποιεῖ σημεῖα μεγάλα, ἵνα καὶ πῦρ ποιῆ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

σημειον, ου n miraculous sign, sign

πυρ, ος n fire

καταβαινω come or go down

He is a false prophet who, in imitation of Elijah, calls down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38, cf. 2 Kings 1:10).

Verse 14

καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς διὰ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θηρίου, λέγων τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ποιῆσαι εἰκόνα τῷ θηρίῳ, ὃς ἔχει τὴν πληγὴν τῆς μαχαίρης καὶ ἔζησεν.

πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

Bruce refers to the beast as "Antichrist's minister of propaganda."

εἰκων, ονος f likeness, image, statue

μαχαира, ης f sword

ζαω live, be alive

"Statues of the Emperor were indeed erected all over Asia Minor, for the goddess Roma and her imperial offspring were worshiped together throughout the region." Witherington.

Verse 15

καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ δοῦναι πνεῦμα τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου, ἵνα καὶ λαλήσῃ ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ποιήσῃ ἵνα ὅσοι ἐὰν μὴ προσκυνήσωσιν τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου ἀποκτανθῶσιν.

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin διδομι

πνευμα, ατος n breath, spirit

A power like that of the Spirit of God.

λαλήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s λαλεω

ὅσος, ἡ, ον correlative pronoun, as much as;
 pl. as many as, all
 ἀποκτανθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl
 ἀποκτείνω kill, put to death

I.e. the statue by speaking passed sentence of death on all who refused to worship it.

Verse 16

καὶ ποιεῖ πάντας, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς
 μεγάλους, καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους καὶ τοὺς
 πτωχοὺς, καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθέρους καὶ τοὺς
 δούλους, ἵνα δῶσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς
 χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον
 αὐτῶν,

μικρός, α, ον small, insignificant
 πλουσιος, α, ον rich, well-to-do
 πτωχος, η, ον poor, pitiful
 ἐλευθερος, α, ον free, free person
 δουλος, ου m slave, servant

I.e. the totality of society.

δῶσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl δίδωμι
 χάραγμα, τος n mark, stamp, image

"This was a term used for the imperial stamp on commercial documents and for the impression of the Emperor's head on a coin. If this practice is in view here, the implication would be that individuals with this sign on them belong to the Emperor, being his slaves or devotees. Slaves and defeated soldiers were branded if they joined the Roman army." Witherington.

χειρ, χειρος f hand
 δεξιος, α, ον right
 ἢ or
 μετωπον, ου n forehead

A parody of the sealing of the servants of God in ch. 7.

Verse 17

καὶ ἵνα μή τις δύνηται ἀγοράσαι ἢ πωλῆσαι εἰ
 μή ὁ ἔχων τὸ χάραγμα, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ
 τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.

ἀγοραζω buy
 ἢ or
 πωλεω sell, barter
 ὄνομα, τος n name

The ἢ here is roughly equivalent to *τοῦτο ἐστιν*. It is not *either* the name *or* the number which is imprinted on people but the number of the name.

ἀριθμος, ου m number

Verse 18

ὧδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν· ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν
 ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου, ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου
 ἐστίν· καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ ἑξακόσιοι
 ἑξήκοντα ἕξ.

ὧδε adv here
 σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence
 νοους, νοος, νοι, νουν m mind, reason,
 understanding
 ψηφισάτω Verb, aor act imperat, 3 s ψηφίζω
 figure out, calculate
 ἑξακοσιοι, αι, α six hundred
 ἑξήκοντα sixty
 ἕξ six

Many solutions are attempted to this puzzle of the number of the beast. Various attempts have been made to identify it with a particular Roman emperor or series of emperors. One such common suggestion is that 666 is the equivalent of Nero Caesar (so Beasley-Murray, Witherington) – but this requires calculation from a misspelt Hebrew transliteration of the Greek form of the Latin name! GA van den Berg van Eysinga suggests that 666 is the triangular number of 36 (1+2+3...+36), and 36 the triangular number of 8 which is the number of Anichrist (cf. 17:11).

Mounce writes that "Some writers take the number more as a symbol than a cryptogram. 666 is the number which falls short of perfection in each of its digits. For Hendriksen it represents 'failure upon failure upon failure'... It is symbolic of the beast's continuing failure to accomplish his purpose. It is the trinity of imperfection. Torrence writes, 'This evil trinity 666 apes the holy 777, but always falls short and fails.'" Mounce himself suggests that the problem is insoluble.