

Revelation Chapter 13

We will now continue in our study of the Book of Revelation and learn much more about the Antichrist.

Revelation 13:1 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his wound, the deadly one, was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the one having given the authority unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy; and power was given unto him to make war forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and those tabernacling in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds and people, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone is for leading away into captivity, into captivity shall he be brought: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANTICHRIST:

St. Justin Popovich, *Commentary of the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, Sebastian Press, Alhambra, CA, 2009, pp. 30-31).

1 John 2:18: *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

Everything in opposition to Christ's goodness in the world arose from Satan's evil: in opposition to His [God's] Truth -- all of Satan's lies; in opposition to His [God's] Love -- all of Satan's hatred; in opposition to His God -- the complete devil. Simply put, the opposition to Christ is the Antichrist. *Anti-Christ* = *ἀντί-χριστος*; instead of Christ, in place of Christ, and against Christ. Yes, the main desire and the essence of his being are to replace Christ, and to occupy His place. To achieve this, he uses any and all means. Foremost, through craftiness, disguise, and through misuse of the Gospel: he has the appearance of piety, but has renounced its power; he has the appearance of humility but, through it, conceals and hides pride. He has the appearance of benevolence, but at heart is a murderer of man. He is all of this just to tempt the chosen, to tempt a greater number of people, all people. The Antichrist will be like an incarnation of the devil because Christ is the incarnation of God; the Antichrist will be the personification of evil, hate, lies, pride, and unrighteousness; for Christ is the embodiment of good, love, truth, humility, and righteousness. In this way, the main Antichrist will be he who will appear before the Second Coming of the Lord Christ, stand in God's place, and proclaim himself God (*cf. II Thes 2:4*). But before him there will be a countless number of his forerunners and countless number of antichrists. For an antichrist is anyone who wants to occupy Christ's place, anyone who will put their truth in place of Christ's Truth, their righteousness in place of

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Christ's Righteousness, their love in place of Christ's love, their goodness in place of Christ's goodness, their gospel in place of Christ's Gospel. All the more so, the Antichrist is any and every opponent of Christ: everyone who battles against the Person of Christ, against Christ's Truth, Love Righteousness -- simply put: against Christ's Gospel = against Christ's Church, for the Church is the incarnation of the Gospel. Yes the incarnate Gospel because it is the Body of Christ. The holy Seer of Mysteries [St. John the Theologian] proclaims: **1 John 2:18:** *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time ... 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ [the Messiah]: He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*¹

Now, lets consider the beast from the sea:

Revelation 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

St. Andrew of Caesarea: According to holy Methodius and holy Hippolytus and others [Irenaeus], this beast is to be interpreted as the Antichrist who comes from the tumultuous and rough sea of this life. Archbishop Averky: From this it is clear that Antichrist will not be some kind of spirit or demon, but a heinous offspring of the human race. He will not be the devil incarnate as some have thought, but a man ... He has likewise seven heads just like the devil (as seen in the previous chapter), the dragon himself, and these heads are crowned with names, blasphemous names, for the open depiction of his inward impiety and his despising of everything holy. His ten horns are crowned by diadems (crowns) as a sign of the fact that he will make use of his God-fighting power with the authority of a king on earth. This authority he will receive with the help of the dragon or the devil who will give him his throne ... The ten horns, along with the crowns, and the seven heads refer to his (the Antichrist's) union with the devil.

[The Antichrist, born in the image of God as all men, will grow into the likeness of the devil and be totally under the power of Satan. He will tell him that he will give him all of the kingdoms of the world, just as he did to Jesus in the wilderness, if he will worship him, and that he will reign over the whole world. And the Antichrist agrees to gain the whole world and "sell his soul" for power, i.e., lose his soul, and worship the Devil. Thus, the actions of the Antichrist are a diabolical contradiction of Christ's actions.]

Contemporary Russian Orthodox author Vladimir Moss writes that St. Nilus the Myrrh-Gusher reposed AD 1651) prophesied: "Yea, evil will be incarnate (the Antichrist will be born) without any masculine seed. Yea, he will be born of seed, but without man's sowing, but will be

¹ Popovich, J., *Interpretation of the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, Munich, 2000, pp. 36, 38 (in Russian) as quoted by Vladimir Moss, *Apocalypse: The Book of the End*, 2011, p. 189.

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born through artificial insemination [artificial, unnatural means???]."²

He again writes that St. Seraphim of Sarov says: "Jesus Christ, the true God-Man, the Son of God the Father, was born in Israel by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the true Antichrist, the devil-man, will be born amidst the Russians. He will be the son of a fornicating woman of the tribe of Dan and the son of the devil through the artificial transfer to her of the seed of the man, with which the spirit of darkness will settle in her womb. But one of the Russians who will live to the time of the birth of the Antichrist (like Simeon the God-receiver, who announced the birth of the Child Jesus to the world) will curse the newborn babe and will announce to the world that it is the true Antichrist."³



² St. Nilus, in Archimandrite Panteleimon, op. cit., p. 78. The editor justly notes here: "This concept [artificial insemination] was entirely new at the time of this revelation which further proves its divine origin." as quoted by Vladimir Moss, *Apocalypse: The Book of the End*, 2011, p. 191.

³ St. Seraphim, text supplied by Fr. Victor Potapov, personal communication. Vladimir Moss, *Apocalypse: The Book of the End*, 2011, p. 191-2.

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Revelation 13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

St. John's description of this beast should quickly remind us of the Prophet Daniel's vision:

Daniel 7:1 *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And **four great beasts** came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The **first was like a lion**, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5 And behold another beast, a **second, like to a bear**, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6 After this I beheld, and lo **another, like a leopard**, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a **fourth beast**, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and **it had ten horns**.*

Thus, the beast from the sea in the *Apocalypse* appears to be a composite of the first three of Daniel's beasts: lion, bear, and leopard, corresponding to the Babylonian Kingdom of King Nebuchadnezzar; the Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great, Darius the Great, and Xerxes; the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and his 4 generals; but also like the 4th dreadful and terrible beast with its 10 horns -- all pagan Godless kingdoms. Many have thought this 4th beast to be the pagan Roman Empire in the early centuries, a revived Roman Empire in more recent times, with speculation about the Ottoman Empire, Napoleon's Empire, the Soviet Russian Empire, the revived Islamic Jihadist world, etc., with many books written about each -- [All are purely speculation, and most already in the dustbins of history.]

Revelation 13:3 *And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his wound, the deadly one, was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave authority unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

Archbishop Averky: St. John notes that one of the heads of the beast is as it were, mortally wounded. But this mortal wound has been healed, and this has astonished the whole earth which follows after the beast.

Vladimir Moss: Speculation as to the person with the near-mortal wound have included Nero, the Roman Kingdom, the Papacy, Napoleon, the Muslims, the Ottoman Turks, Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet Empire, Stalin. -- [All are purely speculation.]

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Archbishop Averky: And this has caused frightened people to submit both to Satan (the dragon) who gives power to the beast and to the beast himself. All bow down to him saying, “Who is like unto this beast? Who can compare to him?” All this signifies that it will not be easy for Antichrist to acquire authority over all mankind; but at the beginning he will have to wage fierce wars and even experience a mighty defeat. But then there will follow his astonishing “resurrection” [a false resurrection, a parody of Christ’s Resurrection], victories, and his reign over the world.

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and those tabernacling in heaven.

This is also reminiscent of Daniel’s prophecies:

Daniel 7:8, I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. [Hebrew sometimes expresses the opposite of what is meant.]

Daniel 11:36. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

Archimandrite Athanasios: There is something else that also demands our attention here. It is a fact that no other religious founder such as Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, or anyone else, is blasphemed as harshly as Jesus Christ. Of course, we don’t reside in Buddhist countries or those with different eastern religions, but rest assured, the founders of these religions are not blasphemed. Only Christ is blasphemed; and the reason for this is because all of these religions of the world are the creations by the devil. They are natural religions. They do not emanate from God’s revelation. They are simply creations of the devil, so the devil does not have any reason to incite the people to blaspheme Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. On the other hand, he has many reasons to incite people to blaspheme Jesus Christ. Hare Krishna, Ba’hai, Mohammed are not adversaries of the devil; they are the names of blasphemy. Only Christ is the opponent of the devil, which is precisely why he pushes people to blaspheme Christ.

Revelation 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds and people, and tongues, and nations.

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This is also supplemented by the Vision of the Prophet Daniel:

Daniel 7:23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: ... 8 And then shall that Wicked [one will] be revealed, ... 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness [deceit] of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.** 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Revelation 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 And if anyone leadeth into captivity, into captivity shall he be brought: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Archimandrite Athanasios: These are the servants or the followers of the Antichrist, who abuse, persecute, and do harm to the faithful. They arrest them, lead them to captivity, or kill them, using the sword. [Islamic countries are examples today, as is Communist China.]

[Nevertheless, each will receive according to his deeds. So let us continually strive to love, trust, and follow Christ with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength, even as Faith, Hope, Love, and their mother Sophia, our Holy Martyrs commemorated today did. As the Lord Jesus Christ said, *He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved* (Matthew 24:13). So, let us strive to live holy lives, pleasing to Christ Jesus, and fully trust in Him to deliver us from the evil one, and care for us in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves in!]

INTRODUCTION TO THE FALSE-PROPHET:

Revelation 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them

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that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, [that they shall give to them]⁴ a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six. [We will discuss this last verse in the next class.]

Revelation 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Archbishop Averky: In these verses St. John speaks of the helper of the Antichrist - the False Prophet - and his activities. This is also a beast, in Greek *therion*, which signifies a beast whose beastly nature is especially manifest, as for example in wild animals - e.g., hyenas, jackals, tigers. But he is not depicted as coming out of the sea like the first beast, but out of the earth. This signifies that all his feelings and conceptions are entirely earthly, of a sensuous character. [Bu] he will have *two horns like a lamb*. In the explanation of St. Andrew this is so -- to hide his murderous nature of a wolf hidden under a lamb skin, and because in the beginning he will strive to look like a lamb, [i.e., a gentle pious person] but in reality is a deceiver and a false prophet.

Archimandrite Athanasios: The image of this 2nd beast is in perfect agreement with the forewarnings of our Lord. *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt 7:15)*. The Lord said to be aware, be careful. They are wolves, and not sheep. They are beasts! They are not harmless men. They are scheming to [tear you apart], to devour you, to swallow you up, to lead you astray by the method of deception! They want to lead you to perdition! Be aware!

Revelation 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

Archimandrite Athanasios: The 2nd beast has all the authority of the first beast (i.e., meaning the Antichrist, who has been granted authority by the dragon, or devil). Thus, a transfer of authority takes place. Accordingly, the position of the second beast is subservient to the first; he acts on behalf of and according to the commands of the first beast. Essentially the 2nd beast is a type of forerunner. He comes before the Antichrist, and promotes all the propaganda that will open the road that leads to the Antichrist. This is another sad imitation--this time of St. John the Prophet and Forerunner of Christ, who prepared the way for the coming of Christ. The False Prophet prepares the way for the coming of the Antichrist.

⁴ KJV text ~~to them~~. Constantinople text: *δώσουσιν* future active indicative 3rd person plural, = (that) they shall give (to them)

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The purpose of the work of the False Prophet is to promote the worship of the Antichrist, and through the Antichrist, the worship of the dragon, Satan. In order to be successful in this endeavor, the False Prophet performs signs and great wonders, as the next verse informs us. And of course, all these things take place with God's permission.

With regard to the healing of the wound of the beast, there are various speculations: however, a "counterfeit resurrection" of a "counterfeit son" in imitation of Christ's Resurrection may be a leading contender. We will not know until it happens.

Revelation 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Archbishop Averky: The false christ-will perform everything through sorcery and deceit for the deception of men, so that the Antichrist might be considered as God. He will be the glorious performer of such miracles and worthy of undoubted glory, like St. John the Baptist who brought believers to the Saviour ... Therefore it is not at all astonishing that fire would be seen coming down from heaven, since from the history of Job we know that, by God's allowance, fire came down from heaven by the activity of Satan and burnt his flock.

But these will not be true miracles, as God alone performs, but "false miracles" (*cf.* 2 *Thess* 2:9). They will consist of cunningness, of the deception of the senses [illusions, delusions, as some of our monastic fathers have experienced and written about], and of the use of natural but hidden powers of nature, with the help of the devil, and only within the limits of the authority of his powers.

He will deceive those whose hearts have their constant dwellings upon the earth; but he will not deceive the senses of those who have acquired a dwelling in the heavens -- they will be made perfectly firm by the prophecy of his coming (St. Andrew ch. 37).

There are accounts of how the demons, by sorcery, have often spoken by means of images, statues, trees, water, etc., and even perhaps through dead bodies ... Therefore there is nothing unfitting in the fact that the fore-runner of Antichrist, acting with the help of demons, should make an image of the beast and falsely show it to be speaking, or that he should command that those who do not worship him should be killed (St. Andrew ch. 37).

Vladimir Moss: But again, science can imitate these miracles. St. Cosmas wrote in the eighteenth century: "There shall appear a box of the devil which will stupefy the world and

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whose horns shall be on the roof." He was clearly referring to television, which can make an image of the beast and of almost anything else - an image, moreover, which speaks. With the advent of computer and laser and robot technology, the situation portrayed in these verses seems still closer to realization. Some computer experts are even referring to the most complex computers of the near future as "living creatures" with capacities far exceeding those of men. Computers are now able to create "virtual reality", the appearance of real men and real situations. And there are some indications that children brought up in the computer age sometimes take the creations of computer technologists for living beings. Some scientists are even talking about a time when computers will be talking to each other without the intervention of man...

“These signs in the sky could also be related to the UFO phenomenon. As Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: the 'message' of the UFOs is: prepare for Antichrist; the 'saviour' of the apostate world is coming to rule it. Perhaps he himself will come in the air, in order to complete his impersonation of Christ (Matthew 24.30; Acts 1.11); perhaps the 'visitors from outer space' will land publicly in order to offer 'cosmic' worship of their master; perhaps the fire from heaven (Revelation 13.13) will be only a part of the great demonic spectacles of the last times.

“Still more frightening is the spectre of genetically engineered supermen, or the formation of hybrid demon-men like the giants of Noah's time, which some claim is taking place through the abductions of human beings by demonic aliens appearing to them from UFOs. The Antichrist himself, as indicated above, may be born through a kind of demonic genetic engineering. Thus we may suppose that the false prophet will use both science and magic; for as science emerged out of magic at the beginning of the modern period, so they will tend to unite again for the glorification of the Antichrist at the end of time.”

Revelation 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, ~~to receive~~ [that they shall give to them⁵] a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Archimandrite Athanasios: St. John the Evangelist lists all social classes in this verse -- the rich, the young, the poor, the slaves -- in order to show the success of the False Prophet in placing the seal of the Antichrist on everyone, regardless of gender, age, or social status. No group of people will be excluded. The direct ultimatum of demanding that honor be rendered to the image of the Antichrist under threat of death will be coupled with an indirect method of compulsion, which is of an economic nature, and which also ultimately includes the threat of death.

Archbishop Averky: In the days of the Antichrist, the faithful and the elect will be guilty of one crime: Their unwillingness to worship the Antichrist, who will turn against them in a terrible way.

⁵ KJV has a different Greek Text: δῶσι to receive, from the Constantinople text δώσουσιν future active indicative 3rd person plural = (that) they shall give (them)

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All who bow down to the antichrist will receive *a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads*, just as slaves in antiquity once bore marks branded on their foreheads and soldiers upon their hands.

St. Cyprian in his *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, affirms in Book 2.22 “That in this sign of the Cross is salvation for all people who are marked on their foreheads. In Ezekiel the Lord says [This is in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have previously discussed.]:

Eze 9:4 ... Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. 5 And to the others He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.

To them that mourned over the sins of Israel and only they are given an ink mark on their foreheads to protect them from those who are given authority to slay all the remainder. The Antichrist will do exactly the same thing, in imitation of the Lord in Ezekiel’s time, and, as shown in Revelation chapters 7 where *another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

Just what was that ink mark? In the *Septuagint (Lxx)* the Greek word is *σημειον* which means *a mark by which a thing is known*. That fits the context well, since it is a mark by which the true Israelites who continue to put their trust in the Lord can be distinguished from the apostate Israelites who have forsaken the Lord and were now putting their trust in the idols and the gods of the pagan nations, for which they were condemned. Here the mark of the Antichrist shows those who put their trust in the Antichrist and will distinguish them from those who refuse to worship and bow down before the Antichrist. However, it tells us nothing about the sign itself. The ink mark in Ezekiel’s time would actually have been a “cross,” like two crossed sticks. So the true Israelites in Ezekiel chapter 9 were marked with the “sign of the cross.” In Revelation chapter 7 the faithful were sealed on their foreheads for protection against the numerous plagues cast down upon the unrighteous -- and probably with the sign of the cross, just as we in the Orthodox Church are sealed for protection in baptism and chrismation with the seal of the Holy Spirit in the form of a cross with holy oil starting on the forehead. Similarly, at Matins in our Vigils (Russian Typicon), during the Canon, after we venerate the Gospels and the festal icon, the priest applies holy oil on our foreheads in the form of a cross before we partake of a portion of the Five Loaves. So sealing with a cross on our foreheads comes as no great surprise to us Orthodox, and that the mark would be a cross would come as no great surprise as well.

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Contrast this with the False-Prophet: *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that they shall give to them a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.* So, it is not just the number of the beast, the “666.”

St. Andrew of Caesarea: He will strive to place upon all the outline of the ruinous name of the apostate and deceiver, in their right hands, in order to cut off the doing of right and good deeds, and likewise in their foreheads, in order to instruct the deceived to be bold in deception and darkness. **But it will not be received by those sealed in their faces with the Divine Light.** And the seal of the beast will be spread everywhere, in buying and selling, so that those who do not receive it will suffer a violent death from want of necessities.

Vladimir Moss: “And, lastly, St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher prophesied: ‘The Antichrist will begin to seal people with his seal as if in order by this sign to save them from woes (for only he who has the seal, according to the Apocalypse, will be sold bread). Many will die on the roads. People will become like birds of prey hurling themselves on rotting matter. They will devour the bodies of the dead [which happened already in Soviet times]. But of what kind will be the people who will devour the dead? Those who are sealed with the seal of the Antichrist; Christians, even though they will not be given or sold bread because they do not have the seal on themselves, will not eat corpses; but those who have been sealed, in spite of the availability of bread for them, will begin to devour them. Finally, he who is sealed will himself be killed by the antitype: on the seal will be written the following: 'I am yours.' 'Yes, you are mine.' 'I go willingly, not by force.' 'And I accept you in accordance with your will, and not by force.' These are four utterances, or inscriptions, which will be written in the middle of this accursed seal...

"But when the accursed glory will see Enoch and Elijah preaching and telling the people that they should not receive the seal of the Antichrist, he will order them to be seized. But they will continue to persuade people not to receive the seal of the Antichrist; they will say that he who shows patience and is not sealed with the seal of the Antichrist will be saved, and God will unfailingly receive him into Paradise for the sake of the single fact that he did not receive the seal. And let everyone sign himself with the honourable cross, making the sign at every hour, for the sign of the cross frees man from the torments of hell; but the seal of the Antichrist leads man to the torments of hell. If you are hungry and want to eat, be patient for a little while and God, seeing your patience, will send you help from on high; you will be filled with life through the help of God the Most High. But if you are not patient, you will be sealed with the seal of this impure king, and will then repent of this

"People will say to Enoch and Elijah, 'Why then are those who received the seal thankful to Antichrist?' Enoch and Elijah will say: 'They are thankful, but who is really thankful? It is not the people who give thanks, but only the seal itself.' What is their thankfulness? It is that Satan has entered into them, is conceived in man's feeling, and man does not know what has happened to him. The one who is sealed with the imprint of Antichrist becomes a demon; even though he asserts that he feels neither hunger nor thirst, he craves food and drink even more, and not only

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more, but seven times more than you. Be patient for only a little while. Do you not see rather that he who receives the seal of Antichrist will not live (he is dead in spirit, and eternal suffering awaits him)? Is it possible you too desire to perish with the seal in eternal suffering, there to be with those, who were sealed with it? - *where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth?*"⁶

Revelation 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that they shall give to them a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark [seal], or⁷ the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

Archimandrite Athanasios reminded us that the foreheads of slaves or animals were sealed or branded, to identify them as property of a particular owner: "This method was also used to mark fugitives or slaves during the Roman Empire. When a slave escaped and later would be apprehended the letter F (or FUG) was burned on the forehead of this slave as a permanent reminder to him and everyone else of his attempted escape. He was a fugitive ...

Contemporary Russian Orthodox writer Vladimir Moss raised the question, "How will it [the seal] be used? We know from the Holy Fathers that the seal will be used as a sign that the person willing and consciously accepted the seal and believes in the Antichrist." Mr. Moss quoted St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher who prophesied:

"On the seal will be written the following:

- (1). 'I am yours.'
- (2). 'Yes, you are mine.'
- (3). 'I go willingly, not by force.'
- (4). 'And I accept you in accordance with your will, and not by force.'

These are four utterances, or inscriptions, which will be written in the middle of this accursed seal..."

[However] "The faithful will be sealed [by God] and thus find themselves under God's protection. ... God seals the members of His Church to safeguard them from the false Christs, the false prophets, and mainly the Antichrist whose deception will take on universal dimensions. This is the purpose of the living seal of God ... Only those who have the Spirit of God can detect deception ... the Spirit of God acts as an aid to detect delusion and protect them from falling into it ... The purpose of this protection is to keep us from worshiping the Antichrist, for the Antichrist also seals his followers as well" [with his name or the number 666.]

⁶ St. Nilus, in Archimandrite Pantaleimon, *A Ray of Light*, Jordanville, 1996, pp. 83-84.

⁷ Revelation 13:17, Greek Text, Constantinople, 1904 vs. KJV *Textus Receptus*

τὸ χάραγμα, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.

τὸ χάραγμα, ἢ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.

Thus, a literal translation of the Constantinople text would be: *the mark/seal of the beast, the name of the beast or the number of the name of him.*

A literal translation of the KJV *Textus Receptus* would be: *the mark/seal of the beast or the name of the beast or the number of the name of him.*

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Archbishop Averky writes: “An extraordinary mysteriousness is bound up with the name of Antichrist and with the *number of his name*. There have been many attempts even in ancient times to unriddle the significance and the meaning of these words, but they have not resulted in anything positive. Most frequently of all, there have been attempts to seek out the name of Antichrist by putting together letters which have a numerical value of the letters of the name [e.g., *Nero*,] *Latinos*/[*Lateinos*] or *Titan*/[*Teitan*]. [See page 7: Greek “666” and table of numbers in Greek. Note: the names of some have been intentionally misspelled so that their sum came to 666]. Certain others have found the number of the beast in the name of Julian the Apostate; later in the title of the Pope of Rome -- Vicarius Filii Dei (Vicar of the Son of God); in the name of Napoleon, and so on. Our sectarians in Russia strove to find the number 666 in the name of Patriarch Nikon.”

St. Andrew of Caesarea: “If we examine words, then, in the opinion of St. Hippolytus, one might find a multitude of names - both personal names and titles - which correspond to this number. A careful examination of the number, and likewise of everything else written about him, will reveal the time of temptation to those who think soundly and are vigilant by the time of the temptation.”

Archimandrite Athanasios: “In these previous decoding efforts, the Greek alphabet was used, as well as the Latin, and the Hebrew alphabets. If you want my humble and lowly opinion, which is the opinion mainly accepted by the Church, the decoding of the number will require the use of the Greek alphabet. The reason is that Revelation was originally written in the Greek language. The letters of the Greek alphabet were used to create the numerical systems of those times in the Greek language. The letters of the Greek alphabet were used to create the numerical systems of those time in that each letter of the alphabet was used to correspond to a number.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: “We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of the Antichrist; for it if were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed at this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision ... But he indicates the number of the name, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is: the name, however, is suppressed, because it is not worthy of being proclaimed by the Holy Spirit.”⁸

However, with regard to all these interpretations we must consider the word of Bishop Photius of Triaditsa, the current Chief Hierarch of the Old Calendar Bulgarian Church (2010) who writes:

“There are countless theories concerning the secret meaning of the number ‘666’. But few are they who approach these issues with humility, profundity of thought and, indeed, spirituality! One who understands **that the mark of the beast is, alas, inscribed on our hearts** will not worry and be disquieted, waiting anxiously for its appearance, for example, in some new change in the official documents and passports that a government may issue. Instead, he will

⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 28, 30.

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concentrate all of his attention on identifying this mark in the heart, where it is evilly inscribed.

“Few Orthodox faithful, I suspect, realize that their feverish concerns and questions – [such as] ‘What will the mark look like? Will it not likely be the latest thing in technology, some sort of electronic microchip?’ – have their provenance in Protestant texts and Protestant fundamentalistic theology. This kind of speculation cannot be found at the core of the Orthodox Church, and particularly in the theological consensus of the Holy Fathers. Indeed, the truth is that we do not know what form the Mark of the Beast will take. Will it perhaps be a technical process – or perhaps one of the rituals of the false religions of the future world? Perhaps a rite that will blasphemously imitate the Christian rite of Chrismation? We simply do not know. That of which we should be aware is one thing: no outward action and no outward safeguard can guarantee and ensure that we will remain faithful to our Lord. **The effectiveness of this mark will be thwarted only by our conscience and by our will. It will be powerless to the extent that we are willing to live in a constant state of spiritual effort of conscience and indefatigable struggle against sin, continuously exercising our willpower in standing up for and maintaining our uninterrupted fidelity to Christ – even after falling over and over, or by betraying Him through our feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds.**

“No amount of protestation, no organizations and earthly resources directed against passports and the symbol ‘666’ – which is purported, for example, to appear on Russian passports – will save us from the proliferation of this Mark of the Beast. Our sole aim should be the preservation of our fidelity to the Patristic spirit and to Orthodoxy’s Tradition...”⁹

So then, how are we to deal with this enigmatic number? St. Irenaeus counsels us in his book, *Against Heresies* 5.30: **“It is safer and less dangerous to await the fulfillment of the prophecy than to attempt to conjecture and decode the possible names, especially, since many names correspond to the afore-said number.”**

Archimandrite Athanasios: “It is true indeed that time reveals the prophecies. However, it is through spiritual experience and *nepsis* of the heart that one ascertains that the fulfillment of the prophecy is at hand. What is *nepsis* of the heart? A *neptic*, in the literal sense, is one who exercises sobriety in all things; his mind is clear. It is well-known that the different passions cause a type of drunkenness; they darken the *nous* and the heart. Thus, if we are free from this drunkenness of the passions and we maintain a state of *nepsis*--a clarity in our heart, then we can see every single thing clearly in order to interpret the events of history. On this St. Ignatius exhorts St. Polycarp in his epistle, **‘Study the times profusely in full expectation of the One to come.’** The Second Coming of Christ, as we will see, is chronologically connected with the appearance of the Antichrist, since Christ will come immediately after the appearance of the Antichrist. So, **when St. Ignatius exhorts that we study the times profusely, it means to keep a close watch on the unfolding of events so that you can see clearly. All of this presupposes a *neptic* heart, a heart cleansed from passions, evils and weaknesses -- to be a believer, a person of faith.** Thus St. Andrew states: “The time and experience will reveal to those who are *neptic*.”

⁹ Bishop Photius, “Faithfulness to Christ Will Save Us From the Mark of the Beast”, *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XXVII, no. 1, 2010, pp. 11-12.

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Our own Metropolitan Cyprian of Oreoi and the monastic fathers at the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, have spent years studying and writing about this in *The Orthodox Church and Eschatological Frenzy*, CTOS, Etna, CA, 2012, pp. 135 [only pp. 34-60 today].

It should especially be emphasized that during the eschatological period, when the Antichrist will commence his public activity, the faithful will not be caught by surprise, since the Lord, in His love for mankind, **will send His two Prophets and Witnesses, Saints Enoch [for the gentiles] and Elias [for the Jews]¹⁰, to preach repentance, to inform and strengthen the Christians and to protect them from the deception of the lawless one**, and also to draw away from him all those who may have been enticed by his false miracles ... **for it is said that they will come forth and testify in advance that the miracles that he is going to perform are a deception and that one should not give credence to the wicked one.**

God will arm these Saints with the power of true signs and miracles in order to confute falsehood and darkness by the juxtaposition of truth and light and to convert those led astray ... and to expose the impostor, without suffering anything from him or from anyone else until the conclusion of their preaching.

Consequently, **the dilemma of the mark of the Beast**, as the eschatological reality *par excellence*, **does not exist today in any way shape, or form, since neither the two Beasts nor the two Witnesses have appeared on the stage of history.**

Clement of Alexandria says ... “Each of the passions is like a letter, a mark, or an impression for us. The Lord now stamps another mark on us, and other names and letters, faith instead of unbelief, and so on.”

Consequently, unless we take pains to blot them [the passions] out carefully, then these diabolic marks are sufficient to alienate us from purifying, illuminating, and deifying communion with our Lord, with the result that we very easily accept the eschatological mark of the beast.

The eschatological mark will be received only by those who worship the Antichrist as God and venerate his image by way of the propaganda of the False Prophet, who will *deceive them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the Beast.*

God will permit the unrepentant, the carnal, the earthly-minded, those who have their hearts darkened, and in general *them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, to be dominated by a strong delusion; because of this they will believe the lie and worship the Antichrist ... But those whose faces are marked with the Divine light will not receive [him] ...

¹⁰ According to St. John of Kronstadt as quoted by Vladimir Moss in *The Apocalypse: the Book of the End*

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The procedure for imposing the *mark of the beast on their foreheads and on the right hand* is profoundly symbolic and intimates the special spiritual relationship that is inaugurated between the Antichrist and man from the moment the Beast is worshipped as God.

This new relationship, to which the mark alludes, is one of ownership, and also one of fellowship ... [he] becomes henceforth his property and is completely under his control ... [he] belongs, in terms of dominion, to him in whose name he is sealed or marked; that is, he comes under his control and becomes his servant.

[Let us now contrast this seal of the beast with the Seal of our Lord God and Saviour]

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He Which [e]stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, Who hath also **sealed us**, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, **in Whom ye are sealed** unto the day of redemption.

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, **having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His**. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

Revelation 3:12. Him that overcometh ... , I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the name of the city of my God ... : and I will write upon him My new Name.

Revelation 7:2-5, 8; 9:4 And I saw another Angel ... having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice ... saying, Hurt not ... till **we have sealed** the servants of our God **upon their foreheads**.

Song of Songs 8:6, **Set Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm**: the Bridegroom exhorts it [the soul] to form every thought and action in accordance with His image ... Or the Bridegroom says this to it, *Set Me as a seal*, in order to seal your thoughts and your actions.

(St. Athanasios the Great:) The Spirit is called unction and is a seal ... ; created things are sealed and anointed by this [the Spirit] and taught about all things ... , The Spirit is unction and a seal, whereby the Word anoints and seals all things The seal bears the form of Christ Who seals, and those who are sealed partake thereof and are formed in accordance therewith, as the Apostle says: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Gal 4:19)*. Thus sealed, we fittingly become partakers of the Divine nature, as Peter said, and in this way all of creation partakes of the Word in Spirit.

(St. Makarios of Egypt:) Let us, therefore, seek first and foremost to have the brand and seal of the Lord on ourselves, for the time of the Judgment, ... when the Shepherd summons His flock, all those who have the brand will recognize their own Shepherd, and the Shepherd, knowing those who bear his own seal, will gather from them from among all the nations. For those who are His hear His voice and go behind Him; and He will place everyone in two divisions; and those who bear His own sign, that is, the seal of the Spirit, He will call to Himself as His very own and will set them on His right hand.

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(St. Symeon the New Theologian:) Learn, brethren, what is the true imprint of the seal of Christ ... The illumination of the Spirit is truly a single seal, even though the forms of its energies are many and the signs of its virtues are many ... The spiritual wolf does not dare to look upon the seal of Christ the Chief Shepherd whereby He seals His own sheep.

(From the Prayer “O Lord of mercy and Father of lights,” in the “Order for the Preparation and Sanctification of Holy Chrism”:) Yea, O master God Almighty, show this [Chrism], by the descent of Thy Holy and adorable Spirit, to be the vesture of incorruption and a **perfecting seal** imprinting upon those who receive Thy Divine laver Thy Divine Name and that of Thine Only-Begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be known in Thy sight, as friends and citizens, servants and handmaids, sanctified in soul and body, delivered from all evil and redeemed from all sin, clad in the raiment of Thine immaculate Glory, be recognized through this holy sign by the Angels and Archangels and all the Heavenly Host, and be fearful to all wicked and unclean demons.

The foregoing idea, that through being “sealed” or “marked” he who submits to this procedure belongs to the one who seals or marks him and partakes of him in whose name the act is performed ...

From all of the foregoing it naturally follows that the man who does not bear the “Seal of the Lamb,” that is, does not live the Hesychastic and Eucharistic ethos of the Orthodox Church, abides in an inner condition in which both vision (θεωρησις) and practice (πραξις), that is, both his mind (νόος, the energy of the soul) and his deeds (practical virtue), are predisposed to be fully and decisively enslaved to the Devil through the Antichrist.

(St. Arethas, *Collection of Interpretation of the Apocalypse*:) The worship of the Beast and the reception of his seal [mean] that one reckons the Antichrist to be God, while devoting oneself submissively to him and either in word or in deed doing and proclaiming what is pleasing to him; for this is what the mark on the forehead and the hand signifies, forehead being understood as speech and hand as deed; the image [of the Beast] he calls the impious way of life. “Have you not heard the Divine Chrysostomos saying that the Devil fears him who studies the Divine Scriptures and has inscribed the Divine law on his heart, and that he flees far from him? Do you wish to hear his own words? Hear them: ‘For when the Devil sees the law of God written in the soul, and the heart becomes tablets whereon to write it, he [the Devil] will not approach thence forth. For wherever the king’s writing is, not engraved on a pillar of brass, but stamped by the Holy Spirit on a mind that loves God and gleams with much Grace, he [the Devil] will not be able even to look at it, but will turn his back on us from afar. For nothing is so terrible to him and to the thoughts suggested by him as a mind that meditates on the things of God, and a soul which ever cleaves to this fountain.’ Hence, why do ye fear him who, rather fears you (St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite).”

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.