

The first ten verses of chapter 13 introduce us to the beast, the Antichrist. We read that the dragon who is Satan gave his authority and power to the beast. The first readers would have understood this beast as Rome because of Daniel 7. But the beast also represents all anti-Christian systems of man. The beast suffers a mortal wound but lives, counterfeiting the resurrection of Jesus. He claims to be God and the world worships him. He makes war on all who are in Christ and slaughters them. But it is we who ultimately overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (12:11<sup>i</sup>). Our death in Christ is our graduation to glory.

Jesus told Pontius Pilate that everyone on the side of truth listens to me. Pilate replied with the most important question anyone could ever ask. “What is truth?” Truth incarnate was standing before him and he did not recognize it (John 18:37,38<sup>ii</sup>). How do we recognize truth? Jesus said that He is the truth (John 14:6<sup>iii</sup>). He rose from the dead, which validates His claim. But the beast claims to speak the truth and he came back from death too. Which one is right? They contradict one another so they both cannot be true. There are people who call themselves Christians and yet teach things contrary to Scripture. Our passage for today challenges us to know God’s Word so that we might have spiritual discernment and wisdom to know truth from deception.

*<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.* Revelation 13:11,12

Counterfeits look as much as possible like the thing they are copying, but they are worthless and cause us to doubt what is real. Think of Moses before Pharaoh's court. He showed the signs God gave him, but the magicians in the court did counterfeit signs. Moses staff turns into a snake, so the magicians had their staffs turn into snakes. But Moses’ snake ate their snakes (Exodus 7:10-12<sup>iv</sup>)! Moses staff turns the Nile to blood and the magicians imitated the same (Exodus 7:20-22<sup>v</sup>). Eventually, they are forced to confess that what Moses was doing was God working through him (Exodus 8:19<sup>vi</sup>).

In this passage we are introduced to the second beast who is called “the false prophet” (16:13<sup>vii</sup>). In chapter eleven we saw God's prophets prophesy. They were able to send plagues on the earth at will. Fire devoured anyone who would harm them. Now we see the counterfeit, the beast with two horns like a lamb. Jesus is the Lamb that was slain in chapter 5<sup>viii</sup>. The big difference is that this beast speaks like a dragon. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34<sup>ix</sup>). Jesus told us to beware of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15<sup>x</sup>). This seems to indicate that he will look like a true prophet, but his words will be lies full of zeal and conviction. He speaks like the dragon, the devil. Jesus said of the devil, *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies”* John 8:44. Like the snake in the Garden of Eden, he will cause people to doubt God’s Word. “Did God actually say...?” Genesis 3:1<sup>xi</sup>

He backs up his speech by exercising the authority of the first beast, which is the authority of Satan (13:4<sup>xii</sup>). He makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.

He does not just influence them to consider worshiping the first beast; he *makes* them do so. We will see how in just a moment.

How do you know this is not a genuine prophet of God? How do we know today when we listen to preacher filled with enthusiastic zeal if the message is from God? Can you line it up with Scripture and see if it is Biblical or a counterfeit? We must know the Word of God to discern truth from lies. Looks can be very deceptive. Words with charisma can be very persuasive. Scripture taken out of context can seem to back up what they are proclaiming. That is why we must know the context of any Scripture that is quoted as well as other passages that bring greater clarity to the subject. There is a famine for hearing the Word as people are too lazy to dig into it themselves. They want someone else to do it for them instead of being like the Bereans and searching the Scripture to see if what is being taught is true (Acts 17:11<sup>xiii</sup>). Do not believe me unless you find in Scripture that what I am teaching is true. The Word of God is the rule by which we judge truth (Romans 3:4<sup>xiv</sup>; John 17:17<sup>xv</sup>).

Let me suggest five rules to apply: 1. **Is the person exalting Jesus** as Lord and Savior whose sacrificial death saves the repentant sinner? That is the message of the whole Bible. 2. **Is the message contradicting a truth taught in Scripture?** Godly preaching exalts God's Word. 3. **Is the person exalting God instead of man,** whether himself, another person, or you? Recognizing the gifts God has given a person and the way God is working through their life is different from praising them. The right focus is on God's greatness, not a person's abilities. 4. **Does the message advance the kingdom of God and encourage personal sacrifice** for the sake of others? 5. **Given a little time, the fruit of the person's teaching will become obvious** (Matthew 7:20<sup>xvi</sup>). Signs and wonders can come from an evil source as we will see later in this chapter. What the enemy of our soul cannot reproduce is the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22<sup>xvii</sup>). Genuine love and deep joy along with peace in the heart can only be faked for a time. Eventually the true nature is seen.

In the case of this false prophet every one of these tests would show the man is a fraud. He has power and is zealous, but the message is deceptive and demands idolatry for self-preservation. He is making the earth worship a man other than the man Christ Jesus who is God incarnate. In worshiping the beast, they are worshiping Satan who gave his authority to the beast. He is an incredible spokesman, but the results of following him will be worse than one can imagine.

*<sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, <sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.* Revelation 13:13,14 The false prophet makes people worship the beast who was dealt a deadly wound but lived. In these verses the second beast causes a counterfeit resurrection, and counterfeits the miracles of the two prophetic witnesses. The two witnesses consumed their enemies with fire that came from their mouths (11:5<sup>xviii</sup>). The false prophet calls fire from heaven and other great signs too. Jesus predicted that false Christs and false prophets would perform signs (Matthew 24:24<sup>xix</sup>). Moses warned that when these false prophets show signs and wonders asking us to turn to idolatry, it is a test from God to see if we really love Him (Deuteronomy 13:1-3<sup>xx</sup>). Elijah called fire from heaven after the false prophets were unable to do so (1 Kings 18:38<sup>xxi</sup>). This false prophet will use these signs to deceive the world into thinking the beast is worthy of worship. He will convince them to make an image of the resurrected

beast. God allows him to do these things, but it is a test from God separating the wheat from the chaff. If miracles point to anything other than exalting Jesus of Nazareth and proclaiming forgiveness of sins through His death, burial, and resurrection, you can know it is not of God, but is a Satanic lie (Galatians 1:8<sup>xxiii</sup>).

The reason for the false prophet's signs is to get mankind to violate God's commandment in Exodus 20:4<sup>xxiii</sup> regarding the making of images. He causes the earth dwellers to make an image of the beast to worship, a giant idol (1 John 5:21<sup>xxiv</sup>). The clearest way to tell if a person is a false prophet is their encouragement to violate what God has forbidden. He is having the people make an image of the beast who was resurrected. His imitation of Jesus results in some people being unable to tell the difference.

We do not worship the cross. When we talk about the power of the cross what we mean is what Jesus accomplished by his death on the cross for our sins. Those who dwell on the earth in that day will be deceived into worshipping the image of the beast. It is important to note in verse 14 that God has *allowed* the false prophet to perform these signs. God is still on the throne of heaven. This is what Paul wrote of God sending strong delusion that those who refuse the truth might believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12<sup>xxv</sup>). They refused to love the truth. God is making it clear that they want a god of their own making so that they will be without excuse in the judgment. While knowing God's Word to discern truth is critical, it still comes down to the willingness of the heart to receive the grace that enables us to love truth.

*<sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. <sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.* Revelation 13:15-17 The image will appear to come to life. I think it will be much more than an animatron, for it breathes. Is this a clone of the beast? The image causes those who refuse to worship it to be slain. Those whom it slays will be true believers who will worship none other than God. This threat of starvation and execution along with his deceptive teaching is how he will make the world worship the beast. Remember the three in Babylon who refused to worship the image of king Nebuchadnezzar. They knew God could deliver them from the furnace but even if He did not, they boldly declared that they would not worship the image (Daniel 3:17,18<sup>xxvi</sup>).

China has developed a credit system of patriotism to control the public. The more your social media account praises the government, and you sacrifice for the government, the higher your score. Facial recognition notes the behavior the government desires and that which it disapproves. There is a surveillance camera for every three citizens. If you associate with anyone with a low score it brings your score down. Want a job, a passport, a vacation? Then you need a high score. It makes societal pressure so intense that all forms of dissent will be isolated. I asked a Chinese couple working in the states what they thought of this form of behavior control. They said it was wonderful. People are kinder and there is less crime. Everyone wants to be a good citizen. But that means not attending those forbidden Christian churches. It is bowing down to the state and whatever the state proclaims that is opposed to Christ. The state's morality becomes a new standard of "goodness."

The beast and false prophet take this even further. Want to buy or sell? You need the mark in your right hand or forehead that says you are a worshipper of the beast. This is also a counterfeit of the servants of God who were sealed in their foreheads (7:3<sup>xxvii</sup>). It goes back to Deuteronomy where God told Israel to bind the Word of God on their foreheads and their arms (Deuteronomy 6:8<sup>xxviii</sup>). I already use facial recognition and my thumb print to access the phone and computer. There will be no hiding from the Antichrist and his enforcers. Even now, the big tech companies are refusing to service those they disagree with, calling their opinions dangerous speech. Want to use PayPal to support the other view on global warming? Good luck. Would you like to post a testimony of a person detransitioning and the horror they endured? You will probably lose your account. The path for Antichrist control is already laid out and being implemented. We saw how easily the whole world accepted the so called science during the COVID crisis and how horribly people were treated who would not conform.

Several countries are pledging to go cashless and just use the chips in cards to do all transactions. That means everyone will have to report all income and therefore there will be no cheating on taxes. It sounds reasonable. But it also means big brother knows all your habits, where you are, and what you support. Tech companies unfriend people from conservatives and sign them up for other points of view that align with that of the company. And now with AI, the viewpoint of government can become the only opinion that is allowed. Developers are talking about the ultimate AI god. It has the power to speak. You can be sure that what it speaks will be convincing but anti-Christian as it has no soul. Once the state turns openly against what they call intolerant Christians, it will be easy to isolate them, or in the scenario we are reading about in this chapter, to execute them. The conditions are already in place for this chapter to be fulfilled.

In Daniel chapter three the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told to bow down to the image or be thrown into a furnace. People of God have been burned at the stake, thrown to beasts, and tortured. It continues to this day. Those three Jewish men gave an answer to the king that is a standard for every believer. They said, *<sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.* Daniel 3:17,18 They were saying, “Our God can deliver us, but if He does not, we still refuse to bow to your image.” Either way, we win, and Satan loses. As it turns out, Jesus was in the fire with them, and He will go through the fire with us (Isaiah 43:2<sup>xxix</sup>). Whether that means deliverance or death, I would rather side with Jesus and have His presence with me than anything this world can offer.

*<sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.* Revelation 13:18 Seven is the number of completeness. There are the seven spirits of God in chapter one, the seven churches with seven messages and seven angels, the seven days of creation, seven seals, trumpets, and vials, seven horns on the lamb, and triple sevens point to the holy trinity. But there are also sevens used for the horns on the beast and seven mountains on which the whore sits. In all cases it implies completeness of good or evil. It is used in Revelation 55 times. Six is the number of man. That implies being incomplete. Even though we are made in the image of God, we are incomplete without our Savior. The Antichrist wants complete power but is incomplete, like mankind, he falls short of the

glory of God (Romans 3:23<sup>xxx</sup>). *But the triple repetition of sixes connotes the intensification of incompleteness and failure that is summed up in the beast more than anywhere else among fallen humanity.*<sup>xxxi</sup> Jesus said, “Without me, you can do nothing.” John 15:5b<sup>xxxii</sup> And that is the result of all the dragon’s efforts to strike back at God, nothing! The number is pictured in Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar’s image being 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits wide (Daniel 3:1<sup>xxxiii</sup>). His image was a great idol that the government said you had to worship. It is also seen in Solomon obtaining 666 talents of gold (1 Kings 10:14<sup>xxxiv</sup>). The chapters following described how he violated God’s instruction for kings not to amass gold or horses or wives (Deuteronomy 14:14-17<sup>xxxv</sup>).

Hamilton suggests another view that *If you put the name Nero Caesar into Hebrew consonants, their numerical value is 666. Similarly, if you transliterate the Greek word for beast into Hebrew consonants, the numerical value is also 666. This appears to be what John means when he mentions in 13:18 "the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."*<sup>xxxvi</sup> He goes on to explain that John may be employing the legend of Nero’s return to point to a final evil ruler of an empire that Satan will use to persecute the church. It will be an empire that relies on the incompleteness of man as the answer the worlds’ problems while being in opposition to the followers of Jesus who claim man is sinful and incomplete without Jesus.

Perhaps the wisdom John is asking us to employ is the truth that man is incapable of saving himself. *All powers that promote man as the answer are inherently antichrist.* True wisdom about the condition of man leads us to seek a Savior who is more than man, and is complete, our Creator. Wisdom discerns the truth from the counterfeit.

In the next chapter we will see the result of following the truth and the end for those who follow the lie. The narrow road that leads to life can be hard (Matthew 7:14<sup>xxxvii</sup>). The churches that first read this letter were sometimes in poverty because they would not worship the god of the guild in which they were trained to work (2:9<sup>xxxviii</sup>). Natural disasters and epidemics were blamed on them. It is still happening in countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, China, and other nations. Christians are not allowed to drink from the community well because they are thought to contaminate it, so they walk for miles to haul water. The impositions the world imposes on believers is meant to get them to conform to the local culture. But when we see the results that we will read about in the next chapter, we are encouraged to be people of faith and to endure hardship (2 Timothy 2:3<sup>xxxix</sup>). We know the promises to those who endure. We know God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6<sup>xl</sup>). We are blessed to discern the truth from a lie, not only in the last days, but every day of our lives!

Questions:

- 1 Review the first ten verses of chapter 13.
- 2 In what ways does the second beast act as a counterfeit Christ?
- 3 What are the ways we discern truth from a lie?
- 4 Why does God allow false prophets to perform signs and wonders?
- 5 Why does God send strong delusion?
- 6 How is the world now set up for this to take place?
- 7 What was the example set for us by the three in Babylon?
- 8 What is the meaning of 666? 9 What is the message of this chapter?
- 10 How does this differ from what many are preaching in our day?

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**<sup>i</sup> Revelation 12:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

**<sup>ii</sup> John 18:37-38 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him.

**<sup>iii</sup> John 14:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**<sup>iv</sup> Exodus 7:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. <sup>11</sup> Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. <sup>12</sup> For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

**<sup>v</sup> Exodus 7:20-22 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood.

<sup>21</sup> And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup> But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

**<sup>vi</sup> Exodus 8:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

**<sup>vii</sup> Revelation 16:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

**<sup>viii</sup> Revelation 5:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." <sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

**<sup>ix</sup> Matthew 12:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

**<sup>x</sup> Matthew 7:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

**<sup>xi</sup> Genesis 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

**<sup>xii</sup> Revelation 13:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

**<sup>xiii</sup> Acts 17:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**<sup>xiv</sup> Romans 3:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

**<sup>xv</sup> John 17:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

**<sup>xvi</sup> Matthew 7:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

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xvii **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,  
23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

xviii **Revelation 11:5 (ESV)**

5 And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed.

xix **Matthew 24:24 (ESV)**

24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

xx **Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (ESV)**

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup> and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' <sup>3</sup> you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

xxi **1 Kings 18:38 (ESV)**

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

xxii **Galatians 1:8 (ESV)**

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

xxiii **Exodus 20:4 (ESV)**

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

xxiv **1 John 5:21 (ESV)**

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

xxv **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (ESV)**

10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. <sup>11</sup> Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,  
12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

xxvi **Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)**

17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

xxvii **Revelation 7:3 (ESV)**

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

xxviii **Revelation 7:3 (ESV)**

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

xxix **Isaiah 43:2 (ESV)**

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

xxx **Romans 3:23 (ESV)**

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

xxxi G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 722.

xxxii **John 15:5b (ESV)**

5b for apart from me you can do nothing.

xxxiii **Daniel 3:1 (ESV)**

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

xxxiv **1 Kings 10:14 (ESV)**

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

xxxv **Deuteronomy 17:14-17 (ESV)**

14 "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' <sup>15</sup> you may indeed set a king over you whom

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the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. <sup>16</sup> Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' <sup>17</sup> And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> James Hamilton Preaching the Word - Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> **Matthew 7:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> **Revelation 2:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> "'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

<sup>xxxix</sup> **2 Timothy 2:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

<sup>xl</sup> **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.