

The Mark of the Beast

Revelation

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Turn to Revelation 13 and today we're going to finish up the chapter, Lord willing, and we're going to look at a very interesting topic, the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast. Is it a tattoo? A barcode? Computer chip? You'll find out so pay attention. It's none of those things but we'll find out.

I'll read all of chapter 13 but we're going to focus on the last three verses.

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name 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 I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power 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 blasphemies; 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 his tabernacle, and them that dwell 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 tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not 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 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. 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 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, to receive 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.

Or as we would say in modern English, 6-6-6. We now come to the final verses of Revelation where the number of the beast is given. It's one of those sections of Scripture that can start an avalanche of speculation among evangelical writers, end-times authors, with the pattern of evangelical prophecy writers is to identify someone in history as the beast or antichrist and, of course, this person always happens to be in the immediate future of the writer. That's greatly increasing the sale of books. The author often writes in such a way to leave an out if and when it is proven that such a person is not the antichrist or beast. In fact, I remember a big pentecostal church in Michigan where he spoke for a whole hour on the super-speculative idea of prophecy and then at the very end, "But of course, this may not happen." But he just spent a whole hour basically wasting his time and, of course, it didn't happen.

Hal Lindsey wrote in 1970 that the antichrist was alive when he wrote those words, and he's living somewhere in the world, probably in Europe in what will be the 10 nation confederacy. Salem Kirban the dispensational author wrote in 1977 that those of us familiar with Scriptures can easily see the handwriting on the wall as the way is prepared for the coming antichrist. Gary Blevins in his popular 1990 book, "666: The Final Warning," wrote this, "Again, the goal of this book was to share with the readers what I personally feel the Lord has shown me over a period of 12 years as I studied the word regarding the end-times events and the possible key players involved. Does this prove that Ronald Wilson Reagan is the predestined antichrist and that John Paul II will become the false prophet? In my opinion the evidence shown in this book is overwhelmingly in favor of their being history's prime candidates for these unholy positions."

Well, it's sad to say Mr. Blevin, they're both dead. Of course, that's in 1990, they were still alive then. How does Blevin come to this amazing conclusion? Well, did you know that Reagan was living in what was formerly 666 St. Cloud Road? Well, that's amazing exegesis, isn't it? Reagan is the supreme communicator. Did you know that Satan will use television to spread his Gospel which will set the stage for the antichrist? Well, let's look at this amazing exegesis of the end-times prophecy writer Blevin. He writes this, this is amazing, listen carefully to this, "Did you ever notice that the symbol Te and the words Levi and Sion are found in the word television? Te is the chemical symbol for the element tellerium which is a rare white nometallic chemical element. The Latin word is Tellus which means the earth. Satan comes to the earth as an angel of light and he will

tell, tell us, his good news, his Gospel, the same lie that Levi said would bring the Messiah back to earth from Mount Sion. Sion is the Greek word for the Hebrew name for Zion where Jesus, the real Messiah, will touch down upon his return to earth. This will usher in the real new age, the words 'kingdom on earth.' Television is a means of mind control as well as an image converter. Many at the threat of death under the instrument of Satan will worship the image of the beast. Will Satan use, "tee-Levi-Sion, to usher in his kingdom on earth? Will Satan use te-levi-sion to usher in his kingdom on earth? There is no doubt about it!" That's amazing exegesis. You see, if you combine Te with Levi and Sion, you get television. Well, that's obvious, isn't it? Satan is going to use television to take over the earth.

Well this, of course, is complete and utter nonsense. By the way, I remember in the early '90s, it was like '93-94, Time Magazine came out with an edition on Clinton and if you look at the picture a certain way it looks as though Clinton had horns and for some reason, I forget how it was, you could get 6-6-6 on the page. So then there was widespread speculation that Clinton was the antichrist because of his Time Magazine cover. But I think it's better to maybe stick with Scripture, but keep in mind that this kind of book will outsell all Reformed books on the end-times combined times 10. That's these tragic days in which we live where you can write a bunch of complete and utter rubbish that has nothing to do with the Bible, it's not based on sound exegesis or interpretation, and it will sell and you can make a bunch of money. It's sad to say. This is the kind of junk that comes out year after year after year and those of us old enough to remember the first Gulf War, there was a whole plethora of books that came out that Saddam Hussein may be the antichrist.

Let's take a look at the crucial verses on the mark of the beast. There are 16. He, that is the beast who comes out of the land or earth, causes all both small and great, rich and poor, free and saved to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads. Now dispensationalists take this, of course, very literally. It refers to the future. It refers to the Great Tribulation, some say the second half of the tribulation where he finally takes power and he's with the false prophet, of course, who wants people to worship the antichrist. There will be a literal mark of some kind, a tattoo, a bar code, a credit card number, or the popular view now is we have an embedded computer chip. An embedded computer chip of some kind. That the false prophet will give the worshipers of the beast as a reward for their allegiance and service to his empire. The mark is simply a token that they are beast worshipers and it serves as an identification necessary to conduct business and to purchase the necessities of life. It is another device to force all people to worship the beast and that's going to happen in the Great Tribulation. Now think about that. If you take that literally, can you think of anybody who would submit to that who would be a professing Christian? Of course not.

For the historicist, the mark of the beast simply signifies the open profession of a people subjected in obedience to the papacy. The right hand simply refers symbolically to a person's working to oblige and promote papal authority, and then they like to point to Pop Martin V, who in his papal bull added to the Council of Constance, prohibits Roman Catholics from suffering any heretics to dwell in their countries or to make any bargains,

use any trades, or bear any civil office. This is said to fit perfectly with this prophecy. By the way, the command of Constance was never seriously kept. There was trade going on with all sorts of nonbelievers throughout the Middle Ages so you'd better be careful trying to take that too literally.

Pistomacher(ph), the amillennialist, of course, applies it to all church history. That's the pattern here and he says this, "The explanations for this word range from slaves being branded to people placing a tattoo on their right hand or forehead. History is replete with accounts of slaves, soldiers or zealots being branded or tattooed. The verse, however, specifies the purpose for bearing the mark of the beast, it's to be able to buy or sell merchandise and that includes a much broader category than a small segment of the population. Some scholars put the sentence in the historical context of Caesar worship so that only those people who received an ink mark on either their wrist or forehead may enter the marketplace." The scholar he's referring to who made that assertion did not provide any good evidence for that. He was arguing that, I think it was in Ephesus in order to buy and sell you had to worship Caesar and you'd get an ink mark on your hand or forehead.

"The difficulty of this interpretation is that Roman historians report nothing concerning such a practice in the Empire." Now let me stop for a minute, but if it's not to be taken literally, if it's not a literal mark, then it could apply to the Roman Empire, couldn't it? And we'll see that it's not meant to be taken literally.

"If we understand John to write not for a particular moment in time and it reflects on a local incident but that the universal church of all ages and places, then we need to interpret this verse more broadly." Let me just stop again. It is a mistake to say that if it's going to apply to all church history, if we're going to make application for all church history, that it has to somehow literally apply throughout all church history. It could still refer to the first century, however the application of what it literally referred to does have meaning and we can make application from it or learn from it from all church history. You know, if my view is it's Nero or one of the Caesars that it applies to, then certainly it would apply to people like Obama today who are trying to do what Nero did, in a sense, just have total jurisdiction and authority over all people within his domain.

Okay back to the author, "First let us notice that the word 'mark' appears a number of times in Revelation. John mentions it 14:9, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead and his hand.' See also 19, 20, 24 and at 14:11 he writes, 'If anyone who receives the mark of his name.' Therefore having the mark of the beast leads to acts of worship and the bearing of his name. It designates a person as a devotee, a true worshiper, follower of the beast. It indicates a person who is hostile to God, his word and his people. He or she bears the mark of antichrist in his right hand or forehead." Okay, the part about being a devotee of the beast is absolutely true.

Next, "The symbol of the right hand means friendship and fellowship, Galatians 2:9. It is a sign of working together in a common cause, mainly to oppose God. The mark in the forehead implies that those people are influenced by the same philosophy and thought

patterns and in their antichristian thinking, they glorify the beast and his achievement and attempt to destroy the work of Christ on earth." And of course when we look at it, we're going to tie it in with Deuteronomy and how the Bible uses it a little more effectively here.

"As the devotees of the antichrist have such a mark on their forehead or right hand, so the servants of God have received a seal of the Lord and the name of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads, 7:3, 14:1. If the mark on God's people is invisible, I interpret also the marks on the unbeliever as invisible." He's right there. I think he's totally right.

And last, "Receiving the mark of allegiance to the beast is in itself a travesty of a pledge made at Christian baptism."

Now the central problem with these interpreters is that they ignore the time indicators in the book and these interpretations that have little or no meaning to the recipients of the book in the first century who are being persecuted. Remember, whenever you're doing biblical interpretation, your first question is what did this mean to the original audience? Well, if it applies to the papacy in the 5th century or it applies to an antichrist in the 21st century, well, it doesn't have a whole lot of meaning for the original church other than you could say, "Well, the church will have victory some day." Moreover, that it is tied to the first century is indicated by verse 18 which says the readers were to have understanding in order to calculate the number of the beast. I think this indicates that the beast must have been a contemporary of the first century reader.

How, we ask, do the readers understand if the beast was the pope in the 5th or 6th century in the future? How could they have understanding if the beast was Napoleon, Mussolini, Adolph Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Ronald Reagan, or Osama Bin Laden? Therefore, it seems that if we are to have understanding, we need to place ourselves in the shoes of the original audience and regarding this, let us remind ourselves by way of review of a few things first. The book of Revelation says that the events described or at least the bulk of them, obviously the description of the final judgment and so forth was to happen in the distant future, but the bulk of the book was to happen shortly, 1:1. Verse 3 Jesus says, "The time is near." Then in verse 9 of the first chapter, John is said there is to be a fellow partaker in the tribulation. John. Revelation was written before AD 70, by the way. Five times Jesus declared, "I am coming quickly," or shortly, 2:16, 3:11, 22:7 and 12 and 20. He was referring to his coming to judge apostate Israel and the Roman accomplices in the persecution of the church. The judgment of Israel occurred, of course, in AD 67-70. But he promised to spare a faithful first century church from the coming conflagration, Revelation 3:10, "Because you have kept my command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world." He wrote that to a church in Asia Minor.

The purpose of the references to the millennium, the second coming, the final judgment and the eternal state, is to give persecuted first century Christians a glimpse of the church's glorious future. The significance of the book of Revelation to its first century audience must not be ignored, and that's my greatest criticism of modern prophecy books.

If we take what they say, the book of Revelation is meaningless to those people. What did they care about nuclear war and computer chips?

Second, when this book was written, the temple in Jerusalem was still standing. John is told to measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it, 11:1. The two witnesses are murdered in the city where our Lord was crucified. How do you explain that away?

Then third, the judgment visions of Revelation 4 to 19 apply quite naturally to the historical ?? which came to a head after John wrote. The fulfillment of the majority of its prophecies would then apply to the end of the old order and the very beginning of Christianity. It is an error to apply it to the papacy in the Middle Ages or to events at the end of the world, although we do get a glimpse of the very end in the book.

Now regarding the mark of the beast, we have a satanic imitation of the seal of God in the foreheads and the hands of the righteous, Revelation 3:12, 7:2-4 and 14:1. The allusion is to Deuteronomy 6:6-8 which speaks of a believer's total commitment to Jehovah. Listen to this,

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,... And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

You see, you've got the hand and the forehead. These verses speak of a supreme allegiance and obedience to God with the mind and with one's actions or behavior. Your mind has to be in the right place, you have to have a biblical world and life view, you have to trust in God, you have to trust in the Messiah, and you serve God with your hand and, of course, they mention the right hand because that's normally the hand that people use for most of their things.

The Jews took these verses literally, of course, and began wearing what's called tefillin or phylacteries on their forehead and on their hand. Phylacteries are these little leather black boxes that had Scripture passages in them and if you watch any travel programs on Jerusalem and you'll see the Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox Jews at the temple wailing wall, you'll see they have these little leather straps, they've got a little box on their hand and they've got a little box on their forehead. They took it literally. It was not meant to be taken literally.

Now with the exception of the branding or tattooing of slaves and soldiers, there has been no literal use of a sign on the hand or on the head in church history. Certainly not a use described in Revelation. Obviously it's not meant to be taken literally and the purpose of the sign is for economic persecution. One use. The unbelieving Jews and later pagan Romans would persecute believers economically. The inability to buy or sell apparently refers to the interdiction of basic and essential economic activity, and that takes us to

verse 17 and that no man might buy or sell, except one who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Now the Roman Empire, the economic guilds were saturated with paganism and the worship of false gods. If you, let's say you were a pottery maker and you wanted to sell pottery, in order to sell it in the town where you lived or the countryside where you lived, you would have to join the local pottery guild, you would have to attend their feasts and, of course, the feast, they had their false god set up and they made offerings to the false gods, and you might have to burn incense to Caesar and worship Caesar as part of this guild. Very very bad for Christians, obviously.

Anyone who did not worship a false god or offer obeisance to the Emperor would be an outcast. Therefore is everyone soon to receive a bar code on the forehead or on the right hand in order to buy and sell goods? Is the government going to force people to have a computer chip inserted in their right hand for identification purposes? Well, all these things are possible. They have absolutely nothing to do with the mark of the beast spoken of in Revelation. As noted in the Old Testament, God spoke of total allegiance to him and his law as a putting of the law on the forehead and on the hands. Let me read it once again just briefly: you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets before your eyes, between your eyes.

In Revelation, those who were faithful to Christ, the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes, Revelation 14:4, are said to have, and this is Revelation 14:1, his, the Lamb's Father's name written on their foreheads. And John also refers to it as a seal in Revelation 7:3, do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. Then the Lord tells the church at Smyrna in Revelation 3:12, "He who overcomes, I will make them a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go out no more and I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem." I'm going to write it on him. And even after the second coming, John says and this is Revelation 22:4, "His name shall be on their foreheads." In the old covenant, Aaron wore on his forehead the name of the Lord inscribed on a crown and on the front of the priestly miter.

It is obvious that having the name of Christ or God the Father, Revelation 14:1, on the forehead is not meant to be taken literally but it's a representation of allegiance to God, ownership by God, and even the presence of God the Holy Spirit. Do you get the meaning there? Do you have an allegiance to God? Do you have an allegiance to Jesus Christ? Are you bought by the blood of Jesus Christ? Are you owned by God? Do you have the presence of the Holy Spirit within you? Have you been sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption? Therefore, the mark of the beast should be viewed as the satanic parody of the seal of God on the foreheads and on the hands of the righteous.

Israel has rejected Christ emphatically and is marked with the seal of Rome's total lordship. She has given her allegiance to Caesar as obedient to his rule and law. Israel chose to be saved by the pagan state and persecuted those who sought salvation in Christ. Now remember, they knew that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Christ was. They

saw the mighty miracles. They knew they were real but they were afraid if Christ was the Messiah that they would lose their positions of power and authority in the state and over the people, and so they deliberately chose pagan Rome over the Messiah. They did.

The mark of the beast is a counterfeit of God's seal on his people and those that give their allegiance to Caesar and the Roman state have social responsibility and the benefits that go with it: economic, political, religious. The Roman state demanded total allegiance to Caesar. Everyone was required to make an offering of incense unto Caesar as god. Revelation 13:8, "All who dwell on the earth will worship the beast," him, the beast, "whose names have not been written in the book of life." But Christians refuse to worship the beast and thus were persecuted unto death and became economic and social outcasts. So the mark of the beast reflects a wicked heart that worships and serves Caesar.

Now, we're not going to get application yet but I want you to think: are you one of those evangelicals who voted for Obama? Are you one of those evangelicals who thinks that the federal government has a responsibility to give you healthcare and provide for all of your needs? Are you making the state into your god? Think about it.

The imagery, no doubt, comes from the practice of branding slaves with the mark of their master. Christians are slaves of Christ, all others are slaves of Satan. Revelation 13 focuses on the Roman Empire and the beast, Nero Caesar. These things look very bleak for the church in chapter 13 but in chapter 14, the prophet focuses his attention upon Christ and his people. Those who persecute the church, who worship the beast, will receive their due.

Let me read just briefly from 14 to give you a glimpse, verses 9 to 11.

9 ... If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

But Christians are blessed. Yes, they suffer persecution. Yes, they didn't bow the knee to Caesar but they were blessed by God.

Verse 13,

13 ...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

You children, whatever you do for Christ will follow you into heaven and you'll be rewarded. Computer games don't follow into heaven. Watching tv doesn't follow you into heaven but serving Christ brings great reward.

Although these words should comfort Christians of all ages, they were written specifically to covenant believers suffering under the persecution of Nero, the beast, and of course, they apply to the other Caesars who persecuted the Christians heavily after that also.

Well, let's look now at the beast's identity, verse 18, and this is where it gets very interesting. Of course, it's all interesting. "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast for it is the number of a man; his number is 6-6-6." Now the statement tells us something about the beast. In other words, the number 666 is not simply a veiled way of identifying the beast or a leader, but also says something important about the leader.

From the Bible we should note the following. 1. Both man and beast were created on the sixth day, Genesis 1:24-31. Thus it is a number of a man. It is a human number.

2. Man and beast were given six days to work during the week. Here, once again, the number six, that's Exodus 28:11.

Hebrew slaves were to be in bondage, that's 3, for six years before they were released. That's Exodus 21:2.

4. There were six cities of refuge appointed by God for a man to flee in the case of an accidental killing of a man, Numbers 35:9-15.

We see that the number 6 is often associated with man in Scripture and also it's sometimes associated with evil. Who did David fight again? Goliath, 6 cubits tall. I don't want to make too much of that. David Chilton makes a whole bunch of some of these things but it's certainly interesting.

The number 6 also had a bad connotation in ancient Middle Eastern culture. The number 6 awakened a sense of dread in the breast of the Oriental who felt the significance of numbers. It fell short of the sacred 7 and thus was an evil number. To the Oriental or Middle Eastern person, there was a doom in the number 6 when it stood alone. Raised to a series of 6-6-6 and there is the representation of the potency of evil in which there can be no greater direness of fate which there could be no greater. By the symbol 6-6-6, it is evil raised to its highest power. The beast to whom John gave the number represented a combination of malignant work embodied in political power and false religion. The name expresses the inner nature of the one to whom it applied.

Now, several interpreters have noted that the cryptic number 8-8-8 was used in the Sybelline Oracles, 1:324, as the symbol for Jesus. He goes as far beyond the perfect 7-7-7 as the beast falls far short of it.

The string of 6's representative of the Christians everywhere, that which was distasteful, evil, terrible and brutal. The persecuting Roman Emperor with his forced diabolical

Emperor worship was that everything, he was the 6-6-6. He was an ally of the devil in an attempt to destroy the Christians in the church.

RCH Lenski's words on this are very good. He says this: John writes the number not in words but in Greek letters: chi is 600, and he's got these, then 60, then 6, thus 666. This is the number 6 plus its multiple by 10, namely 60. Again plus its multiple, 10 times 10. Intensified completeness. Namely 666, three times falling short of the divine 7. In other words, not 7-7, but competing with 7-7, seeking to obliterate 7-7, but doing so abortively. Its failure being as complete as was its expansion by puffing itself up from 6 to 6-6-6-.

So 6 is thus the number that man was born with, the number of his creation. The repetition of a number reveals man in opposition to God trying to increase his number, attempting to transcend his creature-hood. Remember Satan's original thing in the garden, "I want you to eat of the fruit because if you do, you're going to be as God knowing or determining for yourself what is good and what is evil. Be autonomous. You don't need God. Go out on your own. You don't need God's law. Make your own law. You can be as God."

He can be nothing more than a 6 or a series of 6's. Another comment, Austin Farrer's comments on this are also interesting. "Why should antichrist be so emphatically 6? The whole arrangement of the Apocalypse explains this. The divine work with which it deals is a work of judgment. It is judgment which has a sixfold pattern of the working days, and always in the 6th day is the culmination of judgment. On the 6th day of the week and at the 6th hour, says John, John 19:3, 13-22, Revelation 13:16-14:1. The kingdoms of Christ and antichrist looked one another in the face in Pilate's court and the adherence to the false prophet, Caiaphas, firmly wrote on their foreheads the mark of the beast when they said, 'We have no king but Caesar.' Presently, they saw the Lamb uplifted with his true name over his head, 'King of the Jews,' and for all they could do, they could not get it erased. 'What I have written,' said Pilate, 'I have written.'"

Now, aside from the ominous meaning or symbolism of the number itself, it's telling you something about the Emperor, it's telling you something about the man. He's evil. He seeks to rule without God's law. He seeks to rule apart from God. He seeks to make himself God. He believes he's God. But it also gives the recipients of the letter the ability to figure out the personal identity of the beast. Why doesn't John just say who the beast is? "This is the beast: it's Nero," or whatever, why doesn't he just say that? Well, John was writing from Patmos where he was exiled by the Romans. The church is being systematically persecuted by the Roman state under Nero. John identifies the Roman Emperor but he does it in such a way so that he protects the church from reprisal if the letter is intercepted by the Roman authorities. He could have just identified the beast in plain language, but he didn't.

Almost every church in the Roman Empire contained at that time both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews living in John's day used their alphabet for both sound symbols and phonetics and numerical values. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet had a numerical value. A Hebrew spelling of Nero's name found in documents contemporary with the writing of

Revelation is N-r-w-n q-s-r, Neron Kaiser, which equals exactly 6-6-6. Now this is not simple conjecture. We'll go into more detail on this. It's not simple conjecture. Ancient numbering systems are based on the existing alphabet. This is true of Latin, the Roman system that we still use today. I is 1. V is 5. X is 10. L is 50. C is 100. D is 500. M is 1,000. The same is true of Greek and Hebrew.

Now since the book of Revelation is written in the Hebrew or Aramaic context by a Jew with numerous allusions to the Old Testament, and we noted this many times, the key to understanding the book of Revelation is not reading the New York Times or Newsweek or Time Magazine or watching CNN. The key is looking at the Old Testament allusions. We should expect the solution to deciphering the meaning of 666 to be Hebraic. The reason clearly is that while John writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew and the thought as naturally affected to be Hebraic expression. Is there anything in the Bible, especially in Revelation, that hints at this use of both Greek and Hebrew? Well, the angel of the abyss is described in two ways: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he has the name Apollyon, Revelation 9:11. Something similar is done with Har Megiddo, the hill of Megiddo or Armageddon, the city of Megeddo, 16:16. In John's Gospel, the place where Pilate sat down to meet to judge Jesus is called the Pavement, and John calls attention to the Hebrew name, Gabbatha in John 19:13. In the same chapter, John writes how Pilate had an inscription placed on the cross of Jesus written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek, 19:20. Going from Greek to Hebrew was normal.

Now Americans who try to find a solution to the 666 problem, they try to use English but the way to do it is how would John think? How would John think? When Nero Caesar's name is transliterated into Hebrew, we get, Neron Kaiser, Nrwn Qsr. Remember, Hebrew has no letters to represent vowels. It has been documented by archaeological finds that a first century Hebrew spelling of Nero's name provides us with precisely the value of 666. In Jastrow's Lexicon of the Talmud contains this exact same spelling. When we take the letters of Nero's name and spell them out in Hebrew, we get the following numerical values: N=50, R=200, W=6, N=50, Q=100, S=60, R=200, they all equal 666. Every Jewish reader, of course, saw that the beast was a symbol of Nero and both Jews and Christians regarded Nero as having close affinities with the serpent or the dragon.

The apostle writing as a Hebrew, was evidently thinking as a Hebrew. Accordingly, the Jewish Christian would have tried the name as he thought of a name that is in Hebrew letters, and the moment that he did this, the secret stood revealed. No Jew ever thought of Nero except as Neron Kaiser. Those who read John's account of the beast probably had come to this conclusion before they had made their calculation.

Now in a study of the first centuries after the apostolic church, we're always told, "Well, the church, the prophets always said it was the pope, it was the papacy." But what did the apostolic church say, the post-apostolic church in the first centuries after the apostles died? What did they think? They certainly didn't believe it was the papacy, the papacy didn't exist yet. What did they think? Well, Farrer in his book on the early, the ancient church, the post-apostolic church, he says, "All the earliest Christian writers on the apocalypse from Irenaeus down to Victorinus, Pettau and Commodian in the fourth

century and Andreas in the fifth and St. Beatus in the eighth century connect Nero or some Roman Emperor with the apocalyptic beast." That was the view. That was the view.

This made sense to the historicist position of the papacy and the future antichrist of dispensational but it would have been impossible for the original audience to understand, even though John assumes that his audience would have been able to figure this out and understand who the beast was. Do you understand? Now we read it and we go, "666, what a weird number." They read it and go, "Oh, we understand." They understood.

John gives a number of other specific indicators that identify the beast all of which point to someone 2,000 years in the future but to an Emperor still living in John's day, Nero. Let's look at these real briefly. I just want to solidify this.

First, note that Revelation 17:10 says there are also seven kings, five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must continue a short time. So John specifically says that the sixth king is presently ruling. Well, who is the sixth king? Well, none other than Nero, the first great persecutor of Christians. Here's a list of the Roman Caesars, the agreed upon list by all competent scholars of the period. 1. Julius, 49-44 BC. 2. Augustus, 31 BC to AD 14. 3. Tiberius, AD 14-37. 4. Gaius or Caligula, AD 37-41. 5. Claudius, AD 41-54. 6. Nero, AD 54-68. Then he is followed by number 7, Galba, AD 68.

Now John said that the sixth king was ruling when he wrote and this king would be followed by a seventh who would rule for a short time, Revelation 17:10. This was fulfilled down to the letter, perfectly fulfilled. Nero was followed by Galba who ruled for only three months before he was assassinated. The sixth now is, he will be followed by another who will rule a short time. It happened perfectly. It fits the history of the period perfectly. You can't do that with historicism and you can't do that with pre-tribulation dispensationalism.

Second, another interesting fact. The number 666 in some ancient manuscripts of Scripture is changed for some reason to 616. The difference, surely, is no accident made by the early copyist. The number 666 and 616 are not similar in appearance in the original Greek at all. Whether spelled out in words or written out as numerals, they don't look alike at all. Textual scholars agree, it must be intentional. Although we cannot be absolutely certain, a strong and most reasonable case may be made from the following conjecture. John, a Jew, used the Hebrew spelling of Nero's name in order to arrive at the figure 666, but when Revelation began circulating among those who were less acquainted with Hebrew, a well-meaning copyist who knew the meaning of 666 might have intended to make its deciphering easier by altering it to 616, and it is surely no mere coincidence that 616 is the numerical value of Nero Caesar when spelled in Hebrew by transliterating it to its more common Latin spelling. Isn't that interesting? So the ancient copyists wanted to make it easier for their audience.

Third, another indicator is the beastly image itself. Truly Nero possessed a wicked bestial nature. He was even referred to, by the way, as a beast by his contemporaries. He was

called a beast literally. Nero who murdered numerous members of his own family, including his pregnant wife whom he kicked to death, was a homosexual which the Bible says, of course, is a final stage in degeneracy, Romans 1:24-32. By the way, it's that culture that accepts homosexuality shows that it's nearing its end and is ripe for judgment. His favorite aphrodisiac consisted of watching people suffer the most horrifying and disgusting torture so he would set up poles, people were tied to poles and tortured in front of him while he ate dinner. He enjoyed that. He would dress up as a wild beast in order to attack and rape male and female prisoners. He used the bodies of Christians burning at the stake as the original Roman candles to light up his filthy garden parties. They were covered with pitch and lit aflame all around a table. People screaming in pain dying and that would be the flame of the party. He launched the first imperial persecution of Christians at the instigation of the Jews in order to destroy the church. This animalistic pervert was the ruler of the most powerful Empire on earth so he does fit the image of the beast quite perfectly. The pagan writer, Apollonius of Tyana, a contemporary of Nero, specifically mentions that Nero was called a beast. Nero may have acquired the nickname the beast from some of his perverse activities.

Nero was a sadistic pervert who was hated and feared even by the pagan Romans, and there's a lot of stuff about Nero I can't even say here, it's just so disgusting, it's just unimaginable. The guy was totally a pervert and a sadomasochist and everything else you could imagine. He did want to have a giant statue of himself built in the temple in Jerusalem and he was talked out of it because it would have caused a major war and, of course, war came anyway.

4. John said that the beast would make war upon God's saints, Revelation 13:7, the beast is to make war with the saints and to overcome them. In fact, he is said to conduct such blasphemous work for a specific period of time, 42 months we're told in Revelation 13:5. The Neronian persecution which is initiated by Nero in AD 64 was the first ever Roman assault upon Christians. As you read the book of Acts, you find very minor local problems at the instigation of the Jews, this was a major, more of a major persecution. As noted by church fathers, Eusebius, Tertullina, Paulus, ?? and ??, as well as by the Roman historians who ?? is ?. Nero's assassination by the sword on June 8, AD 68, ended the bloody persecution of believers. Note that Nero's persecution of Christians lasted exactly 42 months, exactly as prophesied by the Apostle John in Revelation 13:5.

So people who are critical of, you know, "Well, a partial preterism." And they criticize it because it's not historicism. Well, the reason I'm attracted to partial preterism is it just fits the book so well. It just fits beautifully. Historicism is more of a presupposition, it's more of a Protestant tradition than good solid exegesis. Basically what they do is they take, especially modern ones, is they take an interpretation of the man of sin from Thessalonians, they interpret that, interpret it wrong, and then they use that as their paradigm to look at the book of Revelation. We'll have to maybe get into that sometime to look at that but I just think it fits the book so beautifully and our view, what we're supposed to do is go with what the Scripture teaches and use traditional methods of exegesis taking into account the original audience. We're not supposed to just go, "Well, John Knox believed this, I have to believe it." That's not good. That definitely leads to

Romanism, a form of Romanism. We need to do our own exegesis, our own interpretation. Now we should respect historicism because it was the Protestant view and the pope obviously with his power looked as the great antichrist, but it doesn't fit the pope like it fits Nero.

Well, application. Some application here. Well, whether amillennialist or a dispensationalist or partial preterist or a historicist, the lessons of the text are really the same. That's one thing great about Revelation, whatever view you take you ought to get the same thing out of it because the application is quite simple. Pagan magistrates, first of all, will sooner or later become a beast in that they will seek lordship or total jurisdiction over the lives of their citizens and by doing that, they're going to end up persecuting Christians because their claims of supreme lordship will end up conflicting with the claims of Christ. They have to. Look at Obama. Look at Obama. When you try to rule every aspect of man's life and you have no standard of absolute ethics and the civil magistrates say, "Well, I determine law. I determine whether homos are bad or good. I determine whether murdering babies is bad or good. I make law. I create law by fiat." He's going to conflict with Christ in history.

In our nation today, the civil magistrate obviously is turning into the beast or a beast. In the area of ethics, we are told that ethics evolve and now homosexuality is accepted and therefore our laws must change. Our nation's laws on abortion, homosexuality, divorce, taxation, property, more and more reflect the state acting as God declaring for itself what is good and what is evil and Bible believing Christians are increasingly viewed as outcasts, as fools who belong to a different time. They don't belong in the modern age. They're fools. They're dangerous. They're idiots. They're not compromising.

President Obama in an interview, I listened to this on public radio when he was first running for office, it was either when he first ran or right before he ran, compared fundamentalist Christians to the Ayatollahs of Iran. I heard it with my own ears. To Muslim extremists who seek to kill their enemies. And books from the left, there have been a whole plethora of them in the past few years, frequently portray conservative Christians as dangerous as another form of terrorists waiting in the wings. A number of books have been like that. That is the view of the far left of Christians and Obama, beloved, is a far left radical. Americans haven't woken up yet apparently, because Americans are idiots, generally speaking. They don't know history. They don't know a whole lot of stuff so they've been duped.

Those believers who fully accept the Kingship of Christ and reject pluralism as unscriptural in a Christian nation, as a nation with a majority of people who have converted to Christ and have adopted a national covenant to obey Jesus Christ and his law, such people are viewed as crazy by both the left and the right. I was actually listening, I was painting or something one time and I was listening to Michael Medvedev, he's a conservative Jew, and somebody actually called and brought up R. J. Rushdoony and Rushdoony's views on the nation that has to submit to biblical law and the nation should bow the knee to Jesus Christ, nothing controversial really. Well, it is controversial today because Christians don't believe in the Lordship of Christ anymore, and of course,

Medvedev is a conservative and said, "Well, Rushdoony's a nut. Nobody believes that. That's nonsense." So the biblical view is criticized on the right and the left but right now the left has power and the right is morphing into the left slowly.

Even 99.9% of Christians are against the total Kingship of Christ over our nation. The Constitution and enlightened principles of pluralism ruled over by a secular state are viewed more in accordance with truth than the Bible's own teaching on the Kingship of Christ. That always amazes me when you hear people preach and even Reformed people who ought to know better, even seminary professors who assume that pluralism is the biblical position. All pluralism is, or should be, is a compromised position until Christians become the majority and make Christ the head of the Constitution and the head of the country.

"Oh, that's terrible. That's not religious freedom." Well, there is no such thing as pure religious freedom anywhere. Do we tolerate human sacrifice in our nation? Do we allow the American Indians to torture people like they used to in their old religion? Do we allow the Mayan religion and the Aztec religion of human sacrifice and skinning people alive and beheading them and ripping out their heart while they're still alive? We don't allow that. There is no... Do we allow the American Indians in the West to take peyote and drugs as part of their rituals? No. There is no such thing as complete freedom of religion, the question is are we going to draw the line where Scripture draws the line or are we going to draw the line where the secular humanists draw the line? I mean, it's ridiculous. We allow Muslims in our country who kill our own troops before they get overseas because Islam is a religion of Jihad and a religion of death and it's a religion where it is good, it is proclaimed to be good to murder Christians and Jews.

You see, pluralism is insane. The sad truth is that an effeminate compromised church will not stand up to the beast and be persecuted as the ancient church was. Instead, churches will compromise with the beast in the name of peace, national pride and pluralism. Obama, for example, is one of the most evil, socialist, anti-freedom, anti-Christian, President in our history and he's a racist and yet he received a large percentage of the so-called evangelical vote. You say, "What do you mean he's a racist?" Well, maybe he personally doesn't believe but he attended a radical racist church for over 20 years, a church where week after week whites are portrayed as the devil.

We must not compromise with any beast whether the pope, the papal church or mother state who seeks to control every aspect of our lives. This will take a good deal of biblical wisdom and a willingness in the long run to suffer persecution. If you don't compromise, some day you're going to be persecuted. Now, there is already persecution now, it's just more subtle. In Europe and in Canada and Australia, it's a lot worse where there were laws, I don't know, some of them I think are being overturned but there were laws where if you said anything against homosexuals you'd be locked up and be fined. We don't have that yet because the politicians would know if they did that, a lot would like to do that, but if they did that they wouldn't get elected. But that's going to come. You watch. That's going to come.

The other thing we want to take away from this, it's really going to be more of the next chapter, you sit tight Christians, you be obedient, you don't compromise, you stick by your guns, you stick by the Lord Jesus Christ, you stick by the law of God, you don't compromise with the beast and, yes, Christ is going to crush the beast, he's going to destroy the beast and his followers, you're going to be rewarded. The bottom line is you have to have an eternal perspective, a future perspective on the way you live in the present. You have to live as though you're going to die tomorrow and stand before God. What you do for Christ will last. Serving self and being selfish and gaining material things and all those things, there's nothing wrong with having nice houses and so forth, I'm not condemning that but the point is that Christ is the focus of your life totally. You obey Christ. You don't compromise. You will be rewarded.

You have to be ready to suffer persecution. If things don't change and the way the world is going now, if things don't change, within one generation I think we're going to see persecution in this country where people, I think what will happen is men who are preaching the truth, they're going to be arrested or they're going to be told, "You stop saying this or you're going to be arrested, you're going to be fined." And it will probably come in the form of some sort of anti-hate legislation, hate speech legislation. But I'm not going to compromise and Christians should not compromise. Sodomites are a bunch of disgusting perverts that God places on the same level as people who have sex with sheep and goats and pedophiles. They are disgusting perverts. They should be executed. That's what the Bible says. That's what God says and that's what nature teaches.

Anyway, let's learn the lessons of the book of Revelation. It is a wonderful book. Yes, it's difficult but it's got wonderful teaching. But it's great.

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the wisdom of your word. Fill us with your Spirit, Lord. Cause us to understand the importance of the Lordship of Christ and not compromising with this world, not compromising with the civil magistrate who seeks to be a god and have total jurisdiction. Bring reformation to your church, Lord, which is in a terrible state, that it would once again love your law; that it would once again love your word; that it would once again recognize the total Kingship and authority of Christ over the nations and that they would stop compromising with the beast and instead preach the whole counsel of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.