

THE MARK OF THE BEAST AS SIGNIFIED BY 666

John's Patmos vision, as recorded in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, is without doubt one of the most fascinating books of the Bible. Its descriptive imagery has caught the imagination of many and has generated much debate and controversy.

In particular, speculation continues to swirl around the identity of the beasts, the meaning and application of the mark of the beast, and the number 666.

Revelation 13 begins with John seeing a **beast coming up out of the sea** and the dragon giving this beast of the sea its power and its throne and great authority. This beast (first beast) receives a fatal head wound that is healed, leading the whole earth to worship the beast. Also, it was given to it to make war with the saints and to conquer them. Then, in verse 11, it is recorded that John saw **another beast coming up out of the earth** that makes the earth worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. This beast of the earth (second beast) performs great signs in the presence of the first beast, including making fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. It (second beast) tells those who dwell on earth to make **an image to the first beast**, and then, it gives the image breath or spirit (animation) so that it speaks and causes many that do not worship this image to be killed. The second beast causes all the rest who are not killed to receive the mark of the beast (i.e., its name or number). No one will be able to buy or sell without the mark. The chapter concludes with the number of the beast, which is 666.

One of the most popular speculations about this chapter is that a day will come when an antichrist will demand the implantation of an RFID chip [i.e., the mark] into everyone's hand or forehead, without which they will not be able to buy or sell. Some speculate that it is a national identity card with an imbedded RFID chip. Some speculate it has to do with the UPC bars that appear on everything purchased today so that they can be scanned at the register. Others are not so high-tech, in that they see the mark as some sort of emblem or insignia that everyone will be required to wear.

These and other speculations might capture the imagination and make for interesting discussion; but is this how we are to approach *The Revelation*? Did the spirit of God simply give John a glimpse of some high-tech future so we could all speculate about it and many live in fear and uncertainty of it? Or, is there a spiritual meaning to this imagery; that is, does it signify something more than some diabolical scheme created by the flesh of men? Does it signify something about the heart of man at the end of this age?

After all, John began his book by stating that he was shown by the Lord's messengers what must come to pass and what these things signify.

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A revelation of Jesus Christ, that God gave to him, to shew to his servants what things it behoveth to come to pass quickly; and he did signify it, having sent through his messenger to his servant John (Revelation 1:1 YLT).

We need the mind of Christ on the matter, not the mind of the natural man that sees everything through the lens of the physical world. As Paul wrote, we need to be taught by the Spirit, combining or comparing spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words* [NASB], or as one translation states, using the Spirit's *words* to explain spiritual *truths*, or as another translation states, communicating spiritual *things* by spiritual *means* [DNT] (1 Corinthians 2:13).

With this in mind, the purpose of this article is to offer some thoughts about the mark of the beast in light of what the number 666 signifies. No attempt is made in this article to relate the mark or the number to historic or current events.

I realize that taking this approach may leave a lot of unanswered questions. I cannot say that I have all the answers. Lord willing, I might try to resolve some of them in future writings. If nothing else, I will at least offer some food for thought for the reader to consider in the light of Scripture and under the leading of the spirit of God.

Now, by way of introduction, there are three points that need to be made.

Interpretation of the book of Revelation.

First, down through the years, commentators and theologians have not been in agreement over how to interpret John's Patmos vision. Generally, the various views are labeled in one of six ways, understanding that there may be some overlaps and similarities among the views, as well as some variations within the views. The six categories are generally labeled as: 1) Critical, 2) Allegorical, 3) Preteristic, 4) Historical, 5) Topical, and 6) Futuristic.

The *critical* view denies the inspiration of the book and sees it as purely a human writing based on the period in which it was written. This one deserves no further comment.

The *allegorical* view sees it as a collection of allegories, parables, and metaphors with a spiritual message, and denies that it is a historical record.

The *preteristic* view sees it as factual history; however, all the events were fulfilled in John's day, with, perhaps, the exception of Revelation 20-22.

The *historical* view sees it as factual history that has been and continues to be fulfilled; that is, it is a record of world and church history from John's day to the second coming of Christ and beyond. John's vision is seen as a series of literal

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events, some of which have been fulfilled, some of which overlap or continue on as other events unfold, some of which are being played out in our day, and some of which have yet to come.

The *topical* view sees it in a historical context but, unlike the historical view, does not see it as depicting specific events but rather historical trends or groups of events that repeat themselves in cycles.

Finally, the *futuristic* view sees most of Revelation as depicting what will occur in the future in what is called the great tribulation. This view is held by many evangelicals today, which has been reinforced by the popular *Left Behind* book and movie series; however, there are several interpretations within this view regarding the timing of the so-called *rapture* (i.e., pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, post-tribulation, and pre-wrath tribulation).

In addition to these six views, there is also the question of whether to interpret the events and descriptive images literally or significantly (i.e., what they signify). For example, is Mystery Babylon a literal city in the midst of modern-day Iraq, or does it signify a worldwide kingdom (system) that is a counterfeit to the kingdom of God or, specifically, New Jerusalem? Will blood literally rise to the bridles of the horses for 1600 furlongs, or does it signify God's harvest of love? See *The Upward Call*, issue #03-0910, January 26, 2009, *1600 Furlongs of Love*.

Significative historic view.

I propose that there is a seventh way to interpret Revelation that is based on history (i.e., historical view) and signification. The word *signification* may sound awkward and unusual, so allow me to explain with a few definitions.

As stated already, we need to discern what John's vision signifies. *Signify* (verb) means "to be a sign or indication of," or "to show or make known, as by a sign, words, etc."; *signification* (noun) means "the act of signifying," or "significance; meaning"; and *significative* (adjective) means "of a sign, mark; symbolic."

The word *significative* conveys more than the thought of something being significant, as in important. Truly, John's vision is comprised of important historic events stretched out over 3,000 years from his day; however, the Lord did not give him the vision simply to write a history book. The Patmos vision signifies great spiritual truths as worked out in history.

It is important to see world and church history as represented by the many images; but it is far more important to spiritually discern what the images signify in the context of God's judgments and deliverance of mankind into the Kingdom of His Son. We need to see John's vision, not just as an unfolding of historic events but as a sign or mark of unfolding spiritual truth that is leading to God's ultimate purpose in His Son. This is the meaning of **the significative historic view**.

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It, not he.

Second, in relation to the details of chapter 13, most translations refer to the beasts in the masculine gender, as if each were a literal man, but this is not accurate. In the Greek, the word for *beast* is in the neuter gender form, which means the beasts should not be referred to using the masculine words *he*, *his*, or *him*. Each of the beasts is an *it*, which means they do not refer to men, as interpreted by many. They could be a nation, a kingdom, a system, a thing, a spirit, or a host of other things. Consider the way the Concordant Version presents the beast.

(1) And it was standing on the sand of the sea. And I perceived a wild beast [the first beast] ascending out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous names. ... (3) And I perceived one of its [the first beast] heads as if it had been slain to death, and its [the first beast] death blow was cured, and the whole earth marvels after the wild beast. ... (5) And to it [the first beast] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. And to it [the first beast] was given authority to do what it wills forty-two months. ... (7) And to it [the first beast] was given to do battle with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given to it [the first beast] over every tribe and people and language and nation. ... (15) And it was given to it [the second beast] to give spirit [breath] to the image of the wild beast [the first beast], that the image of the wild beast [the first beast] should be speaking also, and should be causing that whosoever should not be worshiping the image of the wild beast [the first beast] may be killed. (16) And it [the second beast] is causing all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that they may be giving them an emblem [mark] on their right hand, or on their forehead, (17) and that no one may be able to buy or sell except the one having the emblem [mark] of the wild beast, or its name, or the number of its name. (18) Here is wisdom. Let him who has a mind calculate the number of the wild beast, for it is the number of mankind, and its number is six hundred sixty-six [666]. (Revelation 13:1, 3, 5, 7, 15-18 CV [added by writer])

Unfortunately, most translations reveal their *interpretative bias* by using the pronoun *he* instead of *it*, which leads some people to look at the beasts described in the above verses as men, often described as the antichrist and the false prophet.

[*Interpretative bias* means that in translating Scripture from the original languages into another language, the translators used words based on tradition and interpretation of what they believe to be the meaning behind the words. The term is not meant to question the integrity or honesty of any translators. It seems that a certain amount of interpretation is inevitable. Unfortunately, some of the bias has resulted in incorrect understanding of Scripture and has fed what Paul called “the systematizing of the deception” (Ephesians 4.14 CV).]

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The bias is particularly obvious when verse 18 is translated as “the number of a man,” or “a man’s number,” or “the number of a person.”

The Greek word for *man* is *anthropos*. It can refer to (a) generically, human beings; (b) indefinite someone; or (c) an adult male, man.

In other words, depending on the context, it could refer to an individual or to man in general, that is, mankind, which is the way the CV has chosen to translate it. Since the context of chapter 13 centers on beasts in the *it* sense, it logically follows that the number of the *it* should be viewed in the same manner.

This raises the question: Then why is mankind’s number also the beast’s number? Why doesn’t verse 18 use the phrase *the name of the beast and its number*? The answer is rather simple. The beast comes up out of the sea of nations, and nations are comprised of people. Consequently, the beast (it) is related to mankind in some diabolical way. In fact, as represented by the number 666, the name signifies the character of mankind as represented by the beasts, which is why it is the number of the beast and mankind and not the number of an individual man. Another way to look at it is that the beasts are formed in the image of man and are part of man’s kingdom, that is, the kingdom of the world (Revelation 11:15); therefore, they are explained by the number of mankind.

We need to keep in mind that the imagery of Revelation speaks of two different kingdoms that are totally opposite in character: the kingdom of this world represented by Mystery Babylon, which is a counterfeit kingdom-city, and the Kingdom of God represented by the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and New Jerusalem, which is the real kingdom-city and the only one that will remain standing when all is said and done.

In a sense, the number of mankind represents all that man has tried to build apart from God that is in a state of confusion in our day and must be brought down and replaced, just as Nimrod and his people tried to build the Tower of Babel (confusion) into the heavens, and it was brought down by God by confusing their language so that they could no longer build as one united people.

Now, back to the matter of the beast being an *it*. The book of Daniel is a prophetic companion to the book of Revelation, and Daniel tells us that a beast refers to a kingdom.

Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. (3) And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. (Daniel 7:2-3 NASB)

“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.’” (Daniel 7:23 NASB)

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The word *beast* refers to an animal, and, in his vision, Daniel saw animals that symbolized the character or nature of kingdoms that would rise up out of the sea.

In Scripture, the sea is often used to signify nations, hence the expression “sea of nations.” Obviously, the natural sea is a body of water, but symbolically, Scripture uses water (i.e., *sea*) to refer to peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, that is, to mankind in general or to mankind in some specific way. Two examples make the point.

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. (Isaiah 57:20 NASB)

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” (Revelation 17:15 NASB)

The point that needs to be taken away from all this is that the pronoun for the word *beast* is the indefinite *it* and not the personal *he*. It refers to something built in the image of mankind and obviously falls short of God’s mark. Consequently, we should not be looking for a man, such as an antichrist whose name has the gematria of 666; rather, we should be looking for a kingdom or perhaps a nation or a global system that comes up out of the sea of nations that is signified in some manner by the number 666. But even beyond this, we should be looking for the spirit of the number. It speaks of mankind’s doing and, as such, signifies mankind’s building project, not God’s, as well as the character or spirit that is driving man. It symbolizes the heart of man.

Mark, name, and number.

Third, some translations seem to imply that the buying and selling is based on possessing one of three things: the mark or emblem of the beast, its name, or the number of its name, as if they are three unique identities. However, other translations portray the mark as standing for the name and/or the number of the name.

For example, the Weymouth New Testament (WNT) translates Revelation 13:17: **No one should be allowed to buy or sell unless he had the mark—either the name of the Wild Beast or the number which his [i.e., its] name represents**, and the Contemporary English Version (CEV) translates it: **This mark stood for the name of the beast and for the number of its name.**

Perhaps the CEV best captures the relationship of the mark to the name and the number. The mark is identified by the name and the number. However, in Revelation 13, we are not given the name of the beast or of mankind, but we are given the number.

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If we believe that Scripture interprets itself, then we must look to Scripture for understanding. The books of Daniel and Revelation give much data to work with, but of it all, the built-in interpretation comes down to the last word or, if you will, the last number in chapter 13. It comes down to the number 666, for this explains the mark and the name of the beast and of mankind, as well as the nature of the beast or, we could say, the heart of the beast and where this heart resides.

So, let us begin with 666.

666 – “the perfection of imperfection.”

The number **6** is generally accepted as **the number of man and the number of man’s wisdom and labor**. It is called **the number of secular or human perfection**, which means it represents the full extent of man’s achievements. Left on his own, man can go no further than what the number 6 symbolizes.

Adam was created on the sixth day, and God has set 6 days (1,000-year days) for man that some translations call *Man’s Day* or *the day of mankind* (1 Corinthians 4:3 CV/WAET/YLT).

The number **66** is associated with **idol worship**. Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, placed it in the plain of Dura, and commanded that all the people worship his golden image (Daniel 3:1). Its height was 60 cubits and its breadth 6 cubits, yielding the number 66.

The number **666** is considered a **more concentrated expression of the number 6**. We see the same concept through gematria with the numbers 4 (world) and 444 (Damascus), the numbers 8 (new beginning) and 888 (Jesus); and the numbers 9 (judgment) and 999 (Sodom).

Further, the number **3** signifies **completion or perfection**; therefore, three sixes must signify a type of completion associated with man. But what kind of completion or perfection are we talking about?

E.W. Bullinger states: **666 is therefore the trinity of human perfection; the perfection of imperfection; the culmination of human pride in independence of God and opposition to His Christ** (*Number in Scripture*, Kregel Publications, 1967, page 282).

Gematria is an acceptable and often necessary means by which to interpret Scripture; however, there is another way that, in many respects, is better, for it offers a more direct interpretation. This way is called **the law of first mention**, which simply means that the first time something is mentioned in Scripture establishes its meaning throughout Scripture. The corollary to this law is the law of last mention.

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First mention of 666 – talents of gold.

Interestingly, the number 666 is mentioned only two times in Scripture, which makes it easier to interpret according to the law of first mention, since there is only a first and a last.

The first mention of 666 is in reference to King Solomon who was given much wisdom from God.

Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.... (1 Kings 10:14; 2 Chronicles 9:13 NASB)

The word *talent* refers to a measure of weight or money.

Solomon received 666 talents of gold, which aligns the number with something of value, or more specifically, it aligns it with money, since gold has served and continues to serve as a type of money and is a symbol of wealth.

From this point forward in this article, when gold is referenced, please keep in mind that it symbolizes money or wealth.

It is no coincidence that Revelation 13:18 states: **Here is wisdom. Let him who has a mind calculate the number of the wild beast, for it is the number of mankind, and its number is six hundred sixty-six.** King Solomon had great wisdom, and he possessed 666 talents of gold, which is a clear indication that the spirit of God wants us to make the connection to this first mention of the number 666.

So, it appears that the mark standing for the name of the beast and its number has something to do with gold. For some, this might seem to be too obvious a conclusion. After all, Revelation 13:17 clearly states that the mark is required in order to buy and sell, and money, again, symbolized by gold, is generally what is exchanged to make that happen. Except in this case, in order to buy and sell, one must first have the mark and then one must have the means to complete the transaction. Later, we will see that there is a much greater meaning to this.

As obvious as this appears, there is more to the matter of 666. It is not simply about gold, but about the heart attitude toward gold. Men can turn gold into something evil, by making it an object of worship, an idol of the heart, and can carry this idolatry to the point of forming gold into a literal idol (e.g., statue).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that gold is inherently evil. After all, the first mention of gold says that it is good.

(11) The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. (12) The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. (Genesis 2:11-12 NASB)

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Even in our day, gold has many beneficial and practical uses; too many to list.

Further, gold was a major and spiritually significant component of the tabernacle and the temple, and it is the very essence of the holy city of God, New Jerusalem, which is pure gold, spiritually speaking.

The golden calf.

However, there is one use of gold that is an abomination in the sight of God. The first and second of the Ten Commandments specifically warn of the danger of turning from God to make idols of gold.

“You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.” (Exodus 20:23 NASB)

Unfortunately, as the record shows, when Moses was on the mountain meeting with the Lord, the sons of Israel sought another god to worship, and they got a golden calf, an idol of gold.

(1) Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” (2) Aaron said to them, “Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” (3) Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. (4) He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” (5) Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.” (6) So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. (Exodus 32:1-6 NASB)

“For they said to me, ‘Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ “I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” (Exodus 32:23-24 NASB)

The Israelites were familiar with the Egyptian gods, the chief of which was associated with a calf, so, in a sense, it was a sign that it was like returning to their former bondage under the Egyptians and not going on with the one true God who delivered them. Their logic told them that since Moses was late in returning from meeting with God, he must have died up on the mountain. After all, they said to

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Moses: **“Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die”** (Exodus 20:19 NASB).

In their unbelief and stubbornness of heart, they demanded that Aaron make them a god, that is, an idol like the Egyptians had.

There are some interesting interpretations of why Aaron went along with their sin. There are even more questions about Aaron making their gold into a molten calf and then telling Moses that he threw the collected gold into the fire and it came out as a calf. This is beyond the scope of this article.

However, what is important to our discussion is that they held a feast and sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. We could say that they were religious idolaters. They held a religious feast to their new god and indulged the lust of their flesh. “To play” means that they danced lasciviously, which is part of idolatrous worship (source: footnote from E.W. Bullinger’s *The Companion Bible*).

This account was not lost on Paul as he wrote to the carnal Christians in Corinth. He reminded them that the Israelites displeased God while they wandered in the wilderness, and 23,000 died in one day as a result of their immorality.

(6) But these things became examples for us, so that we may not be lusters after evil, even as those indeed lusted. (7) Neither be idolaters, even as some of them, as it has been written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” Ex. 32:6 (1 Corinthians 10:6-7 LITV)

Paul’s exhortation to them and to all carnal Christians is to **flee from idolatry** (1 Corinthians 10:14).

The antitype of the type of the golden calf coming out of the fire is the vision of the second beast coming up out of the earth and not out of the sea or out of the nations. Gold is mined from the earth, that is, it comes up out of the earth; therefore, it could be said that the second beast is associated with gold. Historically, this could speak of a monetary system, a beast system.

The second beast gives life to the image of the first beast and performs great signs so that it even makes fire to come down out of heaven to the earth (Revelation 13:13). In a symbolic sense, we could say that its fire produces a golden calf idol in the presence of men, just as the gold Aaron threw into a fire produced a golden calf idol in the presence of the sons of Israel.

The good news is that just as Moses burned the golden calf with fire and ground it into dust (Exodus 32:20), so will the Stone (Christ the Rock and His kingdom) send forth the fiery law of God and crush the kingdom of the world (Revelation 11:15) as personified by the great Babylonian statue with a head of gold (Daniel 2:31-35). Could we not say that the kingdom of the world is like a golden calf? Consider the global financial system of our day that has everyone in its bondage.

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Now, returning to King Solomon, he became greater than all the kings of the earth in wealth and in wisdom. Year by year, he accumulated more and more wealth. The queen of Sheba met Solomon, saw all that he had, and was in awe. But, according to the record, after the account of the encounter with Sheba and a chronicle of all the wealth of the king, Solomon's heart turned from God, for he loved many foreign women and turned to their gods. It should make us wonder what role Sheba played in stealing his heart from God. All his gold, including the 666 talents of gold, did not keep Solomon from breaking God's law. The result was Solomon's kingdom was judged. The Lord purposed to tear it apart after his death, and He did (1 Kings 11:11-12; 12:16-20).

So, given the evidence up to this point, it appears that the number of the beast and of mankind relates to gold and, more generally, to wealth, as signified by gold. Again, gold is not inherently evil; it is when it becomes an idol that it is evil.

Jesus warned of the danger of idolizing wealth.

Serve God or mammon.

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [wealth]. (Matthew 6:24 ASV)

Mammon refers to wealth that is personified as an object of worship. It comes from the word *mammonas*, which refers to "avarice deified."

Men might try to serve two masters, but it is not possible, for the heart will become divided so that one is loved and the other is hated. Men cannot serve God and serve their wealth. When they serve wealth, they spend every waking moment concentrated on how to preserve and increase their wealth.

Undoubtedly, Jesus had one group in mind when He made this statement, for Luke 16:14 records: **And being lovers of money, the Pharisees also heard all these things; and they derided Him.** Not much had changed in the history of Israel; the golden calf was still in their heart.

The issue is the heart and what man loves most. Does he love gold (i.e. money, wealth), or does He love God? Is he after fool's gold, or is he after God's gold?

The love of money—fool's gold.

In his epistles to Timothy, Paul warned that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil and, in the last days, which is our day, men will be lovers of money.

(9) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and

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some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (11) But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:9-11 NASB)

In verse 10, the word *love* is not translated from God's *agape* but from another Greek word that means "avarice," which means "too much desire to get and keep money; greed for riches." Notice the similarity to the word *mammonas*. Lovers of money cannot and will not serve God.

(1) But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NASB)

Take note that Paul identified the lovers of money as ones who also hold to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power. We should not be deluded or deceived into thinking that there are no lovers of money, no mammon seekers and servers in the church today, or that no one from among those who call themselves Christians love money, for some most assuredly do.

Our local cable company carries one of the well-known Christian cable networks, and every time I tune to it, almost without exception, there is a man grinning and intentionally winking into the camera telling his listeners how much he loves \$100 bills. Didn't Solomon warn that a person who winks has perversity in his heart and continually devises evil (Proverbs 6:13-14)? He doesn't hide the fact that he loves money, for he states so directly and unequivocally. Of course, his whole pitch is to get others to part with their \$100 bills, or more, so that he and the network can keep their pockets full. He is only one example of many. Lord, have mercy!

Without doubt, the driving force behind much of the evil in the world today is the love of money. With all the emphasis on the global financial crisis, and the huge mountains of debt the leaders of the nations and the central banks are racking up, and the near obsession with the direction the world financial markets are heading each day, and the emphasis on buying and hoarding material gold, and the stratospheric salaries and bonuses paid to corporate leaders, even when they lose other people's money, and a lot of it at that, and the church devising and marketing ways to get people to part with their money in order to prop up a man's ministry and his lavish lifestyle, it is clear that there is a real love of money in our day.

It is as if the world is obsessed with building up and preserving their treasures that can and have and will yet again grow wings and fly away. The world wearies itself to be rich or to gain wealth (Proverbs 23:4, 5). Jesus gave us His word on the matter. It is a matter of the heart.

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(20) “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (21) for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:20-21 NASB)

Beast in man’s heart.

Bringing this back to the beast and the number 666, we could conclude that this number signifies the heart of man that loves money and seeks to store up for himself treasures on earth. It signifies hearts set on the earth and against the God of the heavens and the earth.

The reason the number of the beast is also the number of mankind is because the heart of mankind loves money and loves not God, the very source of all the heavenly riches. Money has become man’s god.

Heinrich Heine, a banker’s son and poet-philosopher, once said: “Money is the god of our time.”

In other words, the real beast is in the heart of man that is seeking for what could be called fool’s gold. Why not? After all, **the fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”** (Psalm 14:1 NASB), and all the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves are marked by the beast of their own heart, which rejects God and accepts, even worships, a false or counterfeit god.

Many have been taught that the mark of the beast is forced upon all; but is this true if they have idolatrous hearts? Rather than the mark being forced on them, perhaps they are deceived into taking it willingly and freely.

Stating it another way, the golden calf is in the heart of man. This is far more insidious and dangerous than a physical golden idol, for an idol in one’s heart can be much harder to discern and to cast out. Besides, God is after hearts, and there is no room for a golden calf in the heart of His people or, for that matter, in all mankind.

John put it another way.

(15) Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (17) The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17 NASB)

The number of mankind signifies the love of the world and a rejection of the one who loves the world (1 John 3:16). Like Solomon, the many have chosen to seek

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after the god of this world that is manifested through **the spirit of antichrist** (1 John 4:3) and **the spirit of the world** (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Further, the buying and selling is not so much about material goods as it is about the soul. The small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves are buying and selling their souls to follow the ways of the world, even to gain the world.

Jesus makes the point very clearly.

He who is finding his soul will be destroying it, and he who destroys his soul on My account will be finding it. (Matthew 10:39 CV)

(25) For whosoever may be wanting to save his soul shall be destroying it. Yet whoever should be destroying his soul on My account shall be finding it. (26) For what will a man be benefited, if he should ever be gaining the whole world, yet be forfeiting his soul? Or what will a man be giving in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:25-26 CV)

Those who take the mark of the beast do not fear God; rather, they fear man and what man can do to them. But Jesus warns that mankind needs to fear God who is able to destroy one's life in *gehenna* (not man's pagan view of hell). See *The Upward Call*, issues #04-1037, April 8, 2010, *Gehenna, Not Hell*; and #04-1038, April 9, 2010, *Gehenna, Divine Judgment*.

'And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy in gehenna.' (Matthew 10:28 YLT)

This is why an angel will sound forth the good news of the kingdom at the end of the age.

"Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Revelation 14:7 NASB)

Well, this is the negative side of the meaning of gold. However, there is also a positive side that signifies God's gold.

The divine nature—God's gold.

There are ten references to gold in the book of Revelation, with the first and last mentions establishing its spiritual significance.

I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich.... (Revelation 3:18a NASB)

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(18b) the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ... (21b) And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. (Revelation 21:18, 21 NASB)

Gold signifies the divine nature, or more specifically, the very essence of God who is love, life, light, and spirit. Peter wrote that partakers of the divine nature have escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Peter 1:4), which is similar to what John wrote about not loving the world that is passing away, along with its lusts.

We must buy the Lord's gold or divine nature so that we may enter into the celestial riches of the city of gold, which is **New Jerusalem, the dwelling of God in spirit** (Ephesians 2:22 CV). New Jerusalem is the divine nature lived out in the people of God, starting with the conquerors, and then proceeding to the rest of the ecclesia, until, at the consummation of the eons, all mankind enters into this holy state as the city of God.

Now, let us leave gold, mammon, and the love of money for a moment and consider what Scripture reveals about marking out men. Again, let us consider the law of first mention in relation to the word *mark*.

Set a mark upon Cain.

The first mention of the word *mark* in Scripture appears in reference to God marking or putting a sign on Cain so that he would not be killed.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark [sign] upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. (Genesis 4:15 KJV)

We are not told what this mark or sign was. It could have been a literal mark but, most likely, was more like a spiritual hedge or protection placed around him by God. At any rate, God used it to protect Cain from others that might have killed him, thus setting the precedent that a mark or sign is for protection and identification.

Bind a mark on your hand and on your forehead.

The next significant reference to a mark or sign is discovered with Moses and the sons of Israel.

The first mention of a sign being placed on both the hand and the forehead is discovered when the sons of Israel came out of Egypt and were told to remember how God miraculously delivered them from slavery. But notice that the sign on the hand and the forehead had to do with the law of the Lord and the power of the Lord. Hold this thought for later.

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“And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:9 NASB; also Exodus 13:16)

The next significant mention of a mark or a sign is discovered when Moses gave his final instructions to the sons of Israel.

(5) “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign [mark] on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (Deuteronomy 6:5-8 NASB)

The Hebrew word for *sign* used in both sets of verses is the same word used in the account of Cain; thus, the words *mark* and *sign* are interchangeable, even though most translations use the word *sign* in the above verses.

Moses was the prophet of God, and he taught the sons of Israel the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments of the Lord. **Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face** (Deuteronomy 34:10 NASB). He commanded them to love the Lord and keep His commandments, much like Jesus the Prophet later told His disciples: **“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”** (John 14:15 NASB).

As a sign of their commitment to the Lord and His ways, some literally bound little boxes to their wrists or foreheads with the Lord’s commands in them. Of course, this was meaningless if their hearts had not changed to love the Lord and one another, which are the two commandments upon which all the Law and the Prophets hang (Matthew 22:37-40).

In other words, it was all about the heart, and the binding on the hand and the forehead signified that they were in love with the Lord and obedient to His word. It was about ownership and identification. To whom did they belong, and with whom did they identify? The correct answer is the Lord!

Another way of stating this is that they were faithful to the Lord alone, and their hearts were set on Him and His will (law).

Notice how the Lord Jesus joined love with His commandments (i.e., law).

Love and God’s law are inseparable.

Love and the law of God (i.e. the commandments) go hand-in-hand. One who is lawful before God is in love, and one who is in love lives according to God’s law.

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The two are inseparable. This has not changed and is an important principle in understanding the mark of the beast.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus Himself not only joined love and the law (i.e., commands) in the positive but also in the negative, especially in reference to the condition of hearts in the last of the last days. Two translations are presented to make the point.

And because there will be more and more lawlessness, most people's love will grow cold. (Matthew 24:12 GW)

And because of the prevalent disregard of God's law the love of the great majority will grow cold.... (Matthew 24:12 WNT)

The Weymouth translation makes it very clear that, at the end of the eon [age], the norm among the vast majority of people will be a prevalent or widespread disregard of God's law, resulting in cold hearts. In other words, lawlessness leads to lovelessness. Where there is a disregard of God's law, there is no love, especially love for God. The corollary to this is that where there is no love, there is no regard for God's law.

Again, as Jesus said: **"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"** (John 14:15 NASB). The corollary to this is: "If you do not keep My commandments, it is a sign you do not love Me."

A sign of a heart condition.

Figuratively speaking, the question is whether a heart is diseased or healthy. The difference between the two types of heart conditions is explained by the Old and New Covenants.

The Old Covenant required action on the part of the individual. The sons of Israel had to obey the commands and statutes, and this required discipline of the flesh, which, obviously, had limited results, as evidenced by Israel's history of repeated failure. We could say that Israel started their journey by worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:4), and this idolatry never got out of their system.

Through Jeremiah the prophet, the Lord indicted the heart of Israel, as well as the heart of all mankind.

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NASB)

Mankind has a sick, diseased heart. We could say that all men (generic for all mankind) have a heart condition, and the Old Covenant simply proved how sick mankind is even when God proves Himself to man over and over again. Left on his own, man will never absolutely love God or obey His will (i.e., law).

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By contrast, the New Covenant is not dependent on the individual but on God who writes His laws on circumcised hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29).

(10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (11) and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them. (12) For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. (13) In that he saith, a new covenant he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away. (Hebrews 8:10-13 ASV)

Under the Old Covenant, Israel was commanded to teach one another (Deuteronomy 6:7), but under the New Covenant, God alone does it so that all shall know Him (Hebrews 8:11). If left to man, it will never happen, but the good news is that God has taken the responsibility on Himself, and we know that He does not fail.

See *The Upward Call*, issue #04-1055, May 20, 2010, *All Shall Know Me*.

A day is coming when those who have the law of God fully written on their hearts will no longer have to read the law (or the word) to know what to do, for they will be a perfected or completed letter of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:3) who is the Word (John 1:1), and all their actions and thoughts will be righteous (1 John 3:7). They will be in the image of the Son of God who only does what His Father does. The Word will become flesh in the Body of Christ.

This was the Lord's heart for the ancient sons of Israel and, as discussed previously, the reason He commanded them to place a sign on their hand and on their forehead as a reminder that the law of the Lord may be in their mouth (Exodus 13:9). In other words, the sign was an indication that God was going to put the law in the mind and on the heart of His people.

As I have written many times in other material, those who are counted worthy of the first resurrection and transfiguration will receive immortal, celestial (spiritual), glorified bodies in the image of the Son of God. They will be the first fruits to God and to the Lambkin, for they conquered while they lived in bodies of death and corruption. They are the called, chosen, and faithful. God will write His laws on their hearts and put them in their minds so that they will be a written letter and testimony and living manifestation of His will.

The conquerors will truly be the first fruits of the New Covenant, and the first absolutely law-abiding citizens of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. They will know the Lord, for they will be like Him (1 John 3:2). They will be absolutely

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obedient to the will (law) of God. They will do nothing but obey and be a living expression of the love of God. They will love the Lord with their whole heart. We could say that their heart will be healthy and strong.

Let us carry this thought one step further and consider the right hand.

The fiery law in His right hand.

The right hand signifies power and authority, again, as seen in Exodus 13:9 and elsewhere. For example, the Son of Man is seated at the right hand of power (Matthew 26:64). The right hand also signifies the fiery law of God, as well as God's love for and protection of His people and the work that He has for them to do in the oncoming eons. Again, we discover this through Moses.

(2) And he said: The Lord came from Sinai, and from Seir he rose up to us: he hath appeared from mount Pharan, and with him thousands of saints. In his right hand a fiery law. (3) He hath loved the people, all the saints are in his hand: and they that approach to his feet, shall receive of his doctrine. (Deuteronomy 33:2-3 DRB)

Notice that the fiery law is in the hand of the Lord and that the saints are in His hand as well. This signifies that the saints themselves signify the law, for the law will go forth through them in the eons to come as the rest of mankind is taught and brought into the righteousness of God (Isaiah 26:9), which is the meaning of the lake of fire. The saints are much like the Son of Man at the right hand of power.

Please understand that the law is not some harsh set of rules that people cannot follow. The law simply refers to the will of God. It is what God is doing and what He desires us to do. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing; He only spoke what His Father was speaking. This is the law in the broadest sense of the word.

The fiery law is beyond the scope of this article, so please see my book, *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, volume 2, chapter 5, *Our God is a Consuming Fire*. For a brief explanation of the lake of fire, please see *The Upward Call*, issue #04-1039, April 10, 2010, *Lake of Fire*.

Obviously, there is a big difference between the saints being in the right hand of God and going forth as His fiery law, and the mark of the beast being applied to the right hand, which leads us back to Revelation.

Three groups in Revelation.

There are two groups that are marked or sealed in some fashion, and one that is not. Using the analogy of a heart condition, one group has a healthy strong heart and the others have a diseased heart.

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The first group is sealed by the angels for God Himself, and the second group is marked by the image of the beast for the first beast. The third group is not under the protection of God or the beast. It could be said that they are fair game for God or the beast. They are the ones who suffer persecution or martyrdom or *gehenna*.

However, to be accurate, there is one other entity in Revelation that is marked on the forehead, the woman sitting on the scarlet beast.

And on her forehead was a name having been written: Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth. (Revelation 17:5 LITV)

And the woman whom you saw is the great city, having a kingdom over the kings of the earth. (Revelation 17:18 LITV)

Here we are given the name on her forehead and her identity. An in-depth discussion of this mystery is beyond the scope of this article, so please see article #9, May 2008, *A Mystery, The Great City Babylon*.

144,000 sealed on their foreheads.

Now, the first group is the 144,000 sealed from the tribes of the sons of Israel. See *The Upward Call*, issue #02-08150, December 23, 2008, *The True Israel of God*.

“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” (4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.... (Revelation 7:3-4 NASB)

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1 NASB)

In these verses, the Greek word for *sealed* is *sphragizo*, which means “to *stamp* (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation (literally or figuratively); by implication to *keep secret*, to *attest*” (Strong’s Concordance).

Down through the centuries, securing private or official documents was often done by sealing them with hot wax and stamping the wax with a signet, such as an initial, a family coat of arms, or some other symbol or mark. Kings often did this with a signet ring, which served as proof that the document came from their hand. In other words, the signet signified ownership.

Zerubbabel is a type.

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‘On that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you.’” declares the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2:23 NASB)

James M. Boice, in his book *The Minor Prophets* (Kregel Publications, 1986, page 152), explains:

“The signet ring was a stone carved with a symbol of the person in power. It was used by pressing it into clay tablets to authenticate what was written on them. That is, it was much like a signature today. The signet was a precious object. So it was kept on the ruler’s finger or on a cord around his neck. It was guarded with his person. God was telling Zerubbabel that he was going to be like that to God. God was going to place the governor on His finger or hang him around His neck so, that though the nations and even heaven and earth should be shaken, Zerubbabel would remain safe. He would be kept secure until God had done all the things spoken about in this prophecy.”

The signet or the seal of God means that ones who are sealed not only belong to God but are chosen and protected by God.

This is the meaning of the 144,000 sealed on their foreheads who are **called and chosen and faithful** (Revelation 17:14). They are sealed to signify that they follow the Lord wherever He goes, for they have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lambkin (14:4). They belong to Him and He alone protects and keeps them, even keeps them hidden or in secret.

For further discussion about the identity of the 144,000, please see *The Upward Call*, issues #03-09144 through #03-09147, August 2009, *The 144,000 First Fruits to God*.

All marked on their right hand and forehead.

The second group is described as from all strata of life.

And it [image of the beast] is causing all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that they may be giving them an emblem [mark] on their right hand, or on their forehead... (Revelation 13:16 CV [added by writer])

In this verse, the Greek word translated as *mark* is *charagma*, which refers to “a *scratch* or *etching*, that is, *stamp* (as a *badge* of servitude), or *sculptured* figure (*statue*)” (Strong’s Concordance). A statue gives the impression that the mark is related to an idol like the golden calf. Also, notice that the concept of protection or ownership is absent from this word, unlike the sealing of the 144,000.

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Whether the mark is literal or not is really not the issue, just as the little boxes were not the issue for the sons of Israel. What matters is the heart. What does the heart love the most? What is written on the heart?

Those with the mark signify ones who love the world. We could say that they have fallen into the trap of the world that John warned about. They love the world (*kosmos*, orderly arrangement) that is passing away (1 John 2:15-17).

Also, the conclusion could be made that the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves are the lawless of the kingdom of this world. They are without the law of God and, as such, are lawless, even though they might be under the law of man, which, more and more, is nothing but lawlessness. They are lawless, as signified by the mark on their right hand and on their forehead. Their love is cold toward God and others. Using the analogy of a heart condition, they have a diseased heart that is loveless and lawless.

Further, their power emanates from themselves, much like the ancient Chaldeans **“whose strength is their god”** (Habakkuk 1:11).

Interestingly, in his first epistle, John cited the importance of knowing God, which is proven by keeping His commandments, which, in turn, can only be done if God has written His laws on one's heart.

Based on John's word, if any from among the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves say they know the Lord and are lawful, they are liars (1 John 2:4-6). All liars will have their part in the second death and will be kept out of New Jerusalem, for their names are not written in the Lambkin's book of life (Revelation 21:8, 27).

Again, we could say that they have a severe heart condition that can only be healed by the righteous law of God, as signified by the lake of fire, which is the fiery law of God going forth through the immortal sons of God who will teach them righteousness as they make restitution for their deeds done while in bodies of sin and death. This is the glory of the gospel of the kingdom!

Before wrapping up this article, there is one more matter to be discussed, and it is the mystery of lawlessness.

The mystery of lawlessness.

The brethren in Thessalonica who were waiting for the Son to come from heaven were concerned that the day of the Lord had come, and Paul had to remind them what he had already taught them on the subject. The mystery of lawlessness was already at work, but there was more of this mystery to come and Paul explained it in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-14.

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At the outset, I realize that many interpret these verses in a very outward way; that is, they see the man of lawlessness as the antichrist and associate it with the first beast. Whether there is one man that is identified as the antichrist and the man of lawlessness remains to be seen; but, in keeping with the purpose of this article, I must ask: Is there another way to interpret Paul's message? Is there a greater spiritual meaning or truth regarding the mystery of lawlessness? What does it signify? Does it signify the same things as we have seen in Revelation 13?

To answer these questions, let us look at the verses.

(3) Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Today, where is the temple of God? Again, our source for the answer is Paul who told the Corinthians: **Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NASB). Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19 NASB)?**

Take special note that this does not refer to a single man but to all who are *in* Christ and have the spirit of God dwelling in them. They could be called the man of law (i.e., the one new man [Ephesians 2:15; 4:24]), for God's law is being written on their hearts and put into their minds.

Simply, according to Paul, there are many temples of God among men. The temple of God is no longer made of bricks and mortar and wood overlaid with gold and silver. It is a corporate body of flesh and blood temples with an earnest of the spirit residing within and overlaid with God's divine nature of gold, metaphorically speaking. Each person who is a temple of God has changed ownership. Before they were in Christ, they owned themselves and were driven by their soul. But in Christ, they are owned by God and driven by the spirit of God, and, in a spiritual sense, they are sealed on their foreheads with the name of God. They do not have the number 666 imprinted on them. If there is a number, it is the number 888, which belongs to Jesus. They belong to the Lambkin and follow Him wherever He goes.

The contrast to the man of law, the temple of the true living God, is the man of lawlessness, the temple in which man declares himself as being God. In other words, everyone not in Christ is a man of lawlessness, marked with the number 666, "the trinity of human perfection, which is "the perfection of imperfection." After all, such a man thinks that he alone controls his own destiny, for he belongs to no one but himself. His strength is his god. He believes that he can perfect himself and has no need for God, for he (the man) alone is god.

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(5) Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? (6) And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7)

Paul called it the mystery of lawlessness, much like John saw the harlot sitting on the beast and called it a mystery, Babylon the Great City that reigns over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:5, 18). The reason these things are mysteries is because they are hidden from the undiscerning. It requires spiritual sight to see and to discern these mysteries, even in our day. But the many do not discern, so the mysteries remain so to them, and they are blinded to their own condition and the condition of the world around them. The blind lead the blind.

But, who restrains the mystery of lawlessness? Paul states it is already at work but that it has not been fully released. What releases it? I suggest that the 144,000 must be sealed on their foreheads, for they are the ones protected by God; they are taken away, not in the sense of being removed from earth but in the sense of being hidden or kept from the hour of testing (Revelation 3:10) and the lawlessness that rages all about. The seventh seal is broken only after they are sealed. The release of lawlessness comes when the beasts come up out of the sea and the earth and all that are not sealed by God or killed by the beast are marked by the beast. Spiritually speaking, this means that man's sin has reached its pinnacle, its climax. Man has declared that he is his own god.

(8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:18-21)

This aptly describes the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves. The reason they are marked is because they do not love the truth, which is comparable to saying they are lawless and loveless, as shown previously. God sends a deluding influence on them because they do not believe the truth and they take pleasure in wickedness. Is this any different from the sons of Israel dancing before the golden calf? **The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play** (Exodus 32:6). How many Christians fall into this category in our day?

This question leads to one more matter before concluding.

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Called, chosen, faithful.

The challenge in writing on a topic such as this is that Christians have a tendency to divide people into either saved or unsaved, found or lost, and heaven-bound or hell-bound. As for this heaven-hell thing, if you have read much of my material, you know that I reject it as pagan theology. But the point is that when many Christians read of things like the man of law or the man of lawlessness, they immediately see themselves as the man of law, just as they see every Christian as going to heaven and reigning with Christ in the next age.

However, the fact of the matter is that many Christians of our day reject the law of God and see it as outdated, and yet, many of the same ones practice a Christianity based on the Old Covenant, not the New Covenant. It is a strange but true dichotomy that makes little sense until we realize that this is part of the **systematizing of the deception** and the **holding to a form of godliness while denying its power** that Paul warned would come about in the last days.

One who believes on Jesus and receives the spirit of God is saved and, one day, will receive the promise of immortality. But the question remains whether the believer will come into immortality in the first resurrection or in the second resurrection.

Again, I have written much on this in other material. If unfamiliar with the subject, you could start with article #17, January 2009, *Snatched Away [The Rapture]*.

Those who are counted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thessalonians 1:5) to reign with Christ in His kingdom in the oncoming eon will come into immortality in the first resurrection and transfiguration (including those that are alive and remain). These are the conquerors or overcomers.

However, not all Christians will be counted among this group. In fact, I believe that most **will be saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15) at the **Great White Throne** judgment (Revelation 20:11).

Yes; all who believe on Jesus are promised immortality, but “the when” is not theirs to choose. God has elected the conquerors to precede the bulk of the church of God. They are the **called and chosen and faithful** (Revelation 17:14), not because of what they have done or who they are but because of God and what He has done in them to train them to reign with His Son as His complement destined to sum up all things in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1:10, 23).

I believe Paul knew that the Thessalonian brethren were called and chosen and faithful, and for this reason, as he moved beyond his reminder of the man of lawlessness, he encouraged their hearts with thanksgiving.

(13) But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14)

THE MARK OF THE BEAST AS SIGNIFIED BY 666

It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14 NASB)

Ultimately, all will gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The question is when. God alone answers this question for each and every one of us.

Conclusion.

The book of Revelation contrasts two kingdoms and two cities. One is the counterfeit, and the other is the reality. One is of man, and the other is of God and His Son. One is a mystery, and one is revealed. One is driven by beasts, and the other is driven by a glorified, spiritual Man. One is of the flesh, and the other is of the spirit. One is marked with the name of mankind, and the other is sealed with the name of God. One is identified by the number 666 (mankind), and the other is identified by the number 888 (Jesus).

The mark of the beast is signified by the number 666, which is the best that man can do apart from God. It signifies **the culmination of human pride in independence of God and opposition to His Christ.**

Dear brethren, regardless of how one interprets the beasts of John's Patmos vision as recorded in the book of Revelation, there is one thing for sure: The beast is within the heart of all of us, but especially in the heart of the man who lives apart from God.

Paul knew that there was no good in him (Romans 7:18) or anyone else (Romans 3:23; 11:32), for that matter, and he exhorts all of us to flee immorality and idolatry.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18 NASB)

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:14 NASB)

But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:11 NASB)

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 NASB)

Let us not worship the golden calf of our day. Let us crush it and be ready to come out of Babylon when the voices in heaven say: **"Come out of her, my people!"** (Revelation 18:4).

THE MARK OF THE BEAST AS SIGNIFIED BY 666

But let us be clear that the golden calf is not just about the love of money. I started this article relating 666 to gold and the love of money; however, this is only part of the equation, so to speak. The whole of the matter is about what man's heart desires and loves the most. There are many things in the world to love, and the number 666 signifies those many things. The love of money or wealth is only one indication of the condition of the heart. Perhaps it plays a large part at the very end of **this present evil age** (Galatians 1:4), but it is still only a part. We need to discern the whole!

The issue is whether we love the Lord with our whole heart.

Let us worship the Lord and go for the gold, the divine nature of our God.

I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. (Revelation 3:18 NASB)

This is the antidote for the beast, its name, and its number. The gold refined by fire is the antidote for the beast of mankind, its golden calf, and the number 666.

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| ASV | American Standard Version (1901) |
| CEV | Contemporary English Version |
| CV | Concordant Version |
| DNT | Darby New Translation |
| DRB | Douay-Rheims Bible (1899) |
| GW | God's Word |
| KJV | King James Version |
| LITV | Literal Translation of the Holy Bible |
| NASB | New American Standard Bible |
| WAET | Wuest's An Expanded Translation |
| WNT | Weymouth's New Testament |
| YLT | Young's Literal Translation |

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