

What Does 666 Mean – Revelation Study

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MAIN VERSES

[Revelation 13:16](#) • [Revelation 13:17](#) • [Revelation 13:18](#) • [Revelation 22:19](#) • [Mark 12](#) • [Daniel 7](#) • [1 Kings 10](#) • [1 Kings 10:14](#) • [Deuteronomy 17](#) • [1 Kings 5:13](#) • [1 Kings 9:15](#) • [1 Kings 9:20-22](#) • [1 Kings 11:3](#) • [Psalm 10:17](#) • [What Does 666 Mean](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Shabbat Shalom. Guys, we are so excited you are here today. And if this is your first time visiting our church or if you're watching online for the first time, guys, we are a community of diverse families and individuals from all different backgrounds who love the Sabbath, find joy in the entirety of the Bible. But most of all, we're a community that seeks to orbit the person of Jesus that we call Yeshua. So welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship.

So we took a little break there. It wasn't supposed to be so long. But yeah, last time we met, if you guys remember, we explored the unholy trinity of Revelation. That is the dragon, the beast that comes from the sea, and the beast that arises on the land, also known as the false prophet. And hopefully that was good or interesting at least. I'm really hoping this series is not so dense as it is inviting and attractive for you to value and dive into the Word of God.

Exploring 666: The Most Controversial Verse

And so today, we are going to touch on likely the most controversial verse in the Apocalypse of John, possibly the Bible. I don't know. And we're going to explore 666. Doesn't that sound fun? It might be underwhelming. I don't know. So yeah.

So, short recap: what is the theme of Revelation? Exactly, hope. There is hope in King Jesus in the face of human empires. Empires seek to gain through exploitation of the weak, the robbing of the poor, and they show power through violence and weapons. And that is how they grow, and that is also how they maintain their strength.

And the primary audience for John's letter, when they were reading this, for them, that was seen as the Roman Empire, of course. But it's definitely not limited to just Rome. The beast of the sea, as we discussed in [Revelation 13](#), is the personification of the culmination of all human empires, just as it is depicted in [Daniel 7](#). To put it simply, in a very underwhelming but blunt manner, this is what humans do when they choose to abandon their calling as God's images and become beasts. This is what we do.

And our urge—Paul refers to it as flesh—our urge tends to be to get whatever we think we need or want any way possible, no matter what the cost, whether it be exploiting others, maybe to lie, maybe to steal, maybe to put down others to lift ourselves up on a more internal level, to gain by taking in any form from others.

The Collective Becoming Empire

And when that collective effort in humanity grows and that motive grows, it becomes the beast, both in Daniel and Revelation. It becomes the way of the empire. And that's where it shifts in [Revelation 13](#) because the first half is speaking about this beast that represents empire and the power and this beastly urge to do whatever it takes, whatever sacrifice to get what you want and maintain that power.

But the latter part of the chapter deals with another beast, the beast of the land. And what makes it so difficult is we see that the beast of the sea embodies a religious endorsement from this other beast on the land. It's the religious influence that points people to worship the system of the empire. John warns of this deception. He says the beast of the land proclaims: When you worship the empire, it's a part of your faith. It's how you worship the gods of Rome.

Religious Deception: Empire as Faith

What an amazing strategy. Can you imagine a nation or an empire that to get the loyalty of its people, they make political loyalty a part of their faith—a form of worshiping their gods or God? How evil and genius at the same time.

And this is what we see happen in [Revelation 13](#) with the beast of the land, the false prophet. It does miracles and points people to the beast of the sea to worship it. It makes it a part of their service to their gods, to their faith. Rome did this through many means. They incorporated their foundational story of how Rome became Rome by including that it was divine, right? The gods had their hands in it. It was founded on the gods' will. They did this through propaganda, their coinage and money. They would put the face of Caesar on there or other leaders, and they would put either deities on the back or religious inscriptions around their face saying that they were divine and such.

This is what we'll discuss in a few minutes. This is how they influenced the Roman Empire to be sold out and to never, never turn their back or rebel. This is why religious-based nationalism is nothing short of idolatry, no matter what nation it occurs in.

Warning to America

And here in the U.S., my biggest fear is that we bow to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar while crying praises to Yahweh. We do it while we call Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego traitors. John asserts this is where the imperial beast gets its power. This is the true power behind it—religious deception in the Roman Empire.

In the first century, this was the imperial cult of Rome. Again, today, all over the world, it's any religious influence used to justify violence, war, exploitation, and injustice in whatever country or nation that you belong to. Whenever you see your country or your nation doing something that is completely against the kingdom of God, but justify it by saying, "Our country is on God's side," it's a dangerous place to be.

When you cause the outcry of minorities, like in the Exodus, oppress the foreigners and the immigrants, again like the Exodus account, go to war to take land or endorse the exact opposite of what the mission was that Yeshua proclaimed us to go do, that is when we yield to the deception of the beast of the land, the false prophet.

The Number 666

And so, last week, we unpacked all of that. The message is online. But this week, I wanted to continue because we didn't get to really dive into 666, which I know everyone wanted to dive into. And so you guys ready to dive into that? Yeah? Okay. Great.

Quiet. I know. [Revelation 13](#), and we're going to start in verse 16. I got so many messages and people pulling me aside. Pam pulled me aside. It was a big deal. A lot of messages throughout the week. "Hey, you talked about the mark of the beast, but what about not buying and selling?" Okay. That, I intentionally left that out because that's something to unpack and I ran out of time. So we're going to address that now.

[Revelation 13](#), starting in verses 16, 17, and 18:

"It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands and on their foreheads so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom, understanding. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man or man, the number of humanity. The number is six."

So this is speaking about the mark of the beast, and it is the latter beast, the beast of the land, this religious false prophet, the religious influence. This is the one that is causing people to take the mark.

The Mark as Economic Control

And so we discussed what the mark of the beast was in the last message. Not really going to review that here. But first, let's dive into verse 16. We see that taking the mark of the beast, when John was writing this, if you take the mark of the beast, it had economic effects. It affected you. It allowed those who would freely take the mark to participate in the economy of the beast. But those who refused to take the mark were restricted on how they could engage with the economy of the empire.

Remember, the mark of the beast is as literal as the seal of God on the forehead and the hands of those in [Revelation 14](#), as well as [Exodus 13:16](#). It's symbolic, just like every other number and every other symbol in Revelation. It's synonymous with your allegiance and your loyalty. Whose loyalty, whose kingdom are you pledging your allegiance to?

If it's God, you get a seal, just like in Jeremiah. If it's the beast, you have a seal. If you refuse to take the mark, you're unable to buy or sell. This is a reference back to chapters 2:9 and 6:5-6, where it seems to indicate that economic measures are directed against Christians. In chapters 2:9, Christians are said to be materially poor in contrast to those believers who have compromised in their mission to the world and giving their loyalty to empire.

The Imperial Cult and Religious Control

In the Roman Empire, submission and honor to the gods of Rome was required by everyone. That's just how it worked, right? Everyone had to do it, but there was one specific people group who had a hall pass when it came to outwardly worshiping the gods of Rome and honoring them. Guess who that people group was at the time of Yeshua? The Jews, the Judeans, yeah. They had a pass. They got to have their own temple. They got to have their own worship services. It was a good deal for them as long as they made daily sacrifices in the name of Caesar in the temple, right? They were good, right?

And when the first believers came into being, first Christians, they were indistinguishable from the Judeans. The Romans didn't know that they weren't quite—they had this son of man, this new karyos, this new king, right? But as the time grew closer to 70 AD and the destruction of the temple and the first Jewish war, guess what?

That contrast became big very quickly. Not only from the Jews saying they're not one of us, but also from the Christians saying they're not one of us. Some animosity grew quickly between them. And guess what happened when Rome found that out? Now you guys need to worship our gods. If you're not, at that point it didn't matter—the Jewish war, but that's when persecution of Christians really began to spike.

Rome operated through religious influence, not only for politics but also for its economy. Trade guilds were the main workflow to do business abroad as well as sell locally. And guess what? They required honoring the gods through various means at their mandatory meetings or mandatory festivals, usually operating through a shared meal among the members at a temple where you had to eat food offered to idols, maybe even expected to partake of the temple prostitutes. Or even if it wasn't at a temple, it was still a time of honoring the deities of the trade guild. It was a form of worship.

The Cost of Refusing Imperial Worship

Revelation 2:9 through 11, verse 14 and 20 through 21 seem to set this as a possible context for when John is writing about all the different fellowships and all of the ones who are compromising specifically with eating food offered to idols. Either you give honor to the beast and gain the benefits of the economy of the beast or you stand as a witness of God's immovable sovereignty—a martyr. Refusal to pay homage to the trade guild deities as well as Caesar's image meant refusal to take its mark. This means you would not be able to be a merchant anymore. You couldn't do business throughout the empire, and you likely would not be able to

get a well-paying job in this social structure because this wasn't capitalism. You don't go and get a nine-to-five job at Wendy's, right?

Disciples fished, and he sold fish. This time period, you likely had to engage in imperial worship to do anything as such. You'd be in poverty. You'd be slave status very quickly.

We talked about this last time we met. Sometimes we have a tendency to use Revelation as a crystal ball which tells of a future generation, which is—and eschatology is a way to view Revelation. But I used to conveniently place myself as the last generation, and so everything kind of was about me, right? And when I viewed this first, it was always like I'd picture myself going to the grocery store, right, buying some bananas or something, and because I didn't have a microchip in my hand, I couldn't check out. Right? Yeah, not really. Still do Amazon, right? This was more of the context of the merchant-style operation that was going on in Rome. This is most likely what was going on when John was referencing it. No selling fish, not allowed to probably even go fishing. Poor Paul, can't buy tent supplies in bulk for his tent-making business. Can't sell tents. Restricted, restricted.

So if you guys want more information about the trade guild deities, in the video description there's a link that's called Revelation Resources. It has all of the recommended books that I love on there, but there's also two PDF files, two articles. One is called "The Social Setting in Revelation" by David DaSilva, and there's another one that has to do with King Solomon and the Mark of the Beast. So you guys are free to check those out if you wanted to dive deeper into the details. But yeah, another possibility, an impossible addition. You guys want to explore the Bible in a silent thing more? You're bored now. Okay. Three people said yes. Okay.

Roman Coins and Imperial Propaganda

The other possibility is, remember the very first message we spoke about Roman propaganda and how they used coins, right? You have Caesar on the front, some type of religious icon on the back. You have a symbol of, usually it was Pax. It was a goddess that represented the peace of Rome because Rome was always so peaceful, right? Yeah, Rome was always so peaceful and not having people try to rebel and start wars. And they would be peacekeepers to anyone who would rebel against the empire because, no, way to go. So that was their propaganda: we are givers of peace. Try to disrupt it. So Roman coinage was a big deal. The money represented the far sovereignty of the beast.

And in the first century, zealots, specifically, of course, before this time, before Revelation was written, zealots would not utilize any coinage that had Caesar's face on it. They thought of it as

a type of idolatry. You're participating in worship—Caesar worship. And so that's one perspective. We don't know. It's a neat perspective. But one perspective is that believers during this time may have felt similar. We won't accept coins that testify of this man believing he's God or divine or the son of God. Caesar is not our Lord. Caesar is not our Messiah. Caesar is not our God. And this is what the coins were meant to portray.

Remember, Jesus speaks of this in Mark chapter 12, right? When the religious authorities try to test him to see if he would pay taxes or not. And we all read that and we're like, come on, tax-ist. Come on, do it. Tell us! And what does he do? He asks for a coin. And it says it's a denarius. And they specifically say, "Hey, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?" So they hand him a denarius. And let's see, I think I have a picture of one that was probably circulating in the early first century. And on the inscription on the back, there you see Pax, right? Roman propaganda. But on the front, it says "Caesar Augustus Tiberius," right? And included on the back as well, it says, "The son of divine Augustus," right? The son of the deified Caesar. He's the son of God. He's the son of God. This was part of the propaganda. It testified that Caesar was the deity over Rome and that Rome was on the side of the gods. If you trust the gods, you submit to Rome. And what does Yeshua say? Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Make sure you give to God what is God's. The two don't mix.

Now, Ignatius, early church father, in his epistle to the Magnesians, uses coin metaphor. I think we have a slide of it. He actually uses coin metaphor kind of like the way that John uses the mark of the beast. He says that there are two coinages or two coins, the one of God and the other of the world, and each has its proper stamp impressed on it. The unbeliever is the stamp of the world, but the faithful in love, the stamp of God, the Father through Jesus Christ. You either have the name of the beast or the name of the lamb. So I don't know if coins were specifically involved in this. I don't know, but I think it would be kind of neat. I don't know. It's just interesting, right? So we're good? Let's move on to where we really want to land.

The Number of the Beast

Verse 18, 18. This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of man, a man, or the number of humanity. The number is... No one's going to like a snake, 666. This has been the number that has become associated with so many things, right? So many things. This is associated with the Antichrist, associated with the end of the world. If you take it, you're going to hell. Associated with Damien. Anybody? No? No? Old movie. Okay. Okay.

And there's a lot of confusion, more recent than not, a lot of confusion and possibly misuse of John's letter here to sell things such as Hollywood. Because I would put forth, that's not exactly what the context of the text is. But yeah, guys, you ever checked out at the grocery store, gas station, and you got your soda pop and your candy bars, and that register says pulled up to \$6.66? Anybody? Or \$666 or \$66.66. And you go, oh yeah, that's fine. Devin called, bloop, check right out, right? No, I need some bubble gum. I just remembered I need some laundry detergent. I got to change this number. It's like there's a little bit of fear there about this stupid number, right? Do you know there's a word for that? No. Hexakosia, hexakonta, hexaphobia. Hexakosia, hexakonta, hexaphobia. The fear of the number 666. That's a real word. I meant to put a slide on it. It's like that long. Yeah. Fear of the number 666. None of us have that phobia.

So what is 666? Well, to sum up, I'm going to try to—and there's a lot of avenues and a lot of details and side exit ramps that we can go with 666. If you've ever done a study, you know. I'm going to try to just focus on the theme of 666, but while going through a couple of the different ways that people believe it represents or it works. But I'm going to try to show, just like every other number in the book of Revelation, it's not meant to be taken literal, but it has a more symbolic meaning or spiritual meaning behind it. It's a number that represents the culmination of imperfection of humanity. Never achieving the full potential, the full calling of what humans were ordained by God and called by God to be from the beginning. Falling short of God's true purpose of man living out God's image.

Imperfection and Fallen Humanity

Mankind created on the sixth day, six, the number of man. Seven being the number of perfection, the fullness of God's creative purposes. 666 represents fallen humanity, doing what fallen humanity does on a global scale. And you could say the repetitive seven shows the goal that is never obtained by humanity, the divine perfection of 777. 666, I believe, represents the number of corrupt humanity, not that of a specific human being. And we're going to jump into that. Could be a name of a human being, as we'll explore, but it doesn't necessarily mean it's limited to one single human.

And like I said, there's a few ways that we can approach this verse, and we're going to review the most popular explanations. But yeah, we'll jump in. So the first, the most popular explanation, and I believe if you were raised in an evangelical background in the United States, in the West, you are familiar with this type of explanation, and that is that 666 is a secret code of a specific person's name.

And that person is the beast of the land. He is the false prophet, a.k.a. the Antichrist. And man, we love this one. We love it. Throughout history, we have become experts at deciphering this number and equating it to people's names. And not just any people. Usually, they're people we don't like, right? Obama's one of them. Yeah, he's on the list. Gosh. People we don't like—his name, I don't like him. Look, when I look his name in Hebrew equals—oh, that's not 666. Latin, Greek, English, got it. English, he's 666. He must be the Antichrist. I found it.

Abusing the Word of God

During the Reformation, guess who was 666? The Pope. During and after World War II, guess who was 666? Let's see, there were others. Ronald Wilson Reagan, 666. Well, because each one of his names has six letters in it. We just reached and grabbed it. JFK received 666 votes in the 1956 Democratic Convention, and then he suffered a head wound, obviously, right? That's an obvious one. Barack Obama, as well as Bill Clinton, Henry Kissinger, George W. Bush Jr., and even Prince Charles. Every time, specifically in the U.S., right? We love our politics. It's what we do. Every four years, there is a Democrat or Republican that we don't like. Bam, guess what? It is time to abuse the word of God so that we can slander someone's character above and beyond reality. Amazing. It's amazing how we sometimes tend to feel like we have to make stuff up to make someone look bad or to prove a critique we have about them.

And don't get me wrong, guys, I can critique all of the U.S. presidents. Oh, my goodness. Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush Jr. and Sr., Donald Trump, Biden. Guys, the list goes on. But the moment that you have to mix in fantasy to convince other people of your critique, that's the moment when you're bearing false witness.

Now, taking the letters of the alphabet and converting them into numerical values is a practice called Gematria. And it was something that was done in the first century in the Roman Empire. After excavating Pompeii, we found graffiti. Pompeii is such a jewel because it's preserved. We know so much and a lot that we really didn't want to know about Roman culture because of Pompeii and the graffiti and the road signs that were everywhere. It's amazing. But there was some graffiti on a wall that said, "I love the woman whose name is 545." I guess that's a high school equivalent or middle school equivalent. Like, do you like me? Circle the...

So this explanation of 666 is an option. It's a very popular option. Nero Caesar comes out to 666 in Hebrew. And that is where a lot of historians gravitate to. Some early manuscripts actually have 616 in Revelation instead of 666. And we're like, well, that doesn't work. 616, who's Nero now? Well, if you do—I believe it's Nero Caesar in Latin—it comes out to 616. So

there may have been—what's that? Greek? The 616? That's right, sorry, Greek. 616, 666 is Hebrew. Play with numbers, right? So historians tend to gravitate towards this. John may have been suggesting that Nero was the epitome of the beast, the peak of power as well as the mascot for persecution of Christians. Things that make this opinion muddy. Not gonna push it off the table, you need to be aware.

Things That Make This Opinion Muddy

Revelation was not written in Hebrew. No matter how badly you want it to be. He said alpha and omega. That's what he wrote. It was no Olivantav, it was Greek. If John expected his audience to decrypt using another language than what he wrote, he gave no indication of that whatsoever. Why didn't John just use Greek gematria for Nero? And you also have to realize that Caesar Nero, Nero Caesar, is just one of the many word combinations you could associate with Caesar. So many—King Caesar, I mean, there's so many word combinations that you could go to. It's just difficult to know all the details. And it's also difficult to know how Nero... Caesar would be transliterated into Hebrew with all of the vowels to make sure you come up with the right 666. There's a lot of speed bumps in this theory. It's possible.

You could also take the initials of all the emperors from Julius to Vespasian and calculate 666. In other words, Nero Caesar is a great guess if you're trying to calculate a specific name with 666. Yeah, but again, A-666. I don't think that's the full scope of what John is trying to illustrate with this number. And B, if it is a person's name, that person represents something larger than itself. Larger than itself. So... There is another church father, Irenaeus. He writes in his letter against heresies in Book 5, Chapter 30. He talks about 666. So this is really neat because what is this, like second century, I think? Second century document of a Christian talking about 666 and all of the stuff that's going on about it. And here's what it says. I think I edited it. Do we have a slide for that? So this is what he's talking about, right? But as for those who, for the sake of vainglory, lay it down for certain that names containing the spurious number are to be accepted and affirm that this name, hit upon by themselves, is that of him who is to come. Such persons shall not come forth without loss because they have led into error both themselves and those who confided in them. Now in the first place, it is a loss to wander from the truth and to imagine that as being the case which is not, then again, as there shall be no light punishment inflicted upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the scripture. [Revelation 22](#), 19, under that such a person must necessarily fail. What's he saying? Apparently spreading wild conspiracy theories that produce confusion, distraction, and fear was sinful and deserving of the harshest punishment in the eyes of the earliest generations of Yeshua followers. People running

around, making up names that go with these numbers, and telling everyone that this is that, and this is that, and this is that, and spreading fear and conspiracy theories was something that this church father wouldn't put up with. He put that in there. He said, that's your adding to what the text says. You're adding and taking away. That's harsh. No one else humbled by that? Okay.

This Calls for Wisdom

Now, what's interesting about this verse, verse 18, is that John says this calls for wisdom. That's the theme of the whole chapter, [Revelation 13](#), is wisdom. Remember, this chapter is divided into two parts, right? So verses 1 through 8 culminate in verse 9. It's fascinating. Verses 1 through 8 culminate in verse 9, where John says, he that has an ear, let him hear. The purpose of this was to discern the deceptive nature of the satanic beastly institutions as they are attempting to tempt believers to accommodate the empire.

Now, verses 10 through 17 have the same parallel. Remember, it's talking about two different beasts here. Except instead of emphasizing the satanic nature of the empire, it emphasizes the satanic influence of the empire's closest allies, the false religious influence, the false prophet. Instead of John using the metaphor of having an ear that can hear and understand, he says he that has wisdom—you need to have wisdom, you need to understand, calculate. This calls for wisdom. Instead of attempting to decipher a mathematical equation to the sum of a single human being, this could have been discernment to identify the collective beast. This could have been discerning how to recognize what is before you.

Instead of reading the Greek as, for this is the number of a man or a person, some suggest that it would be better read, this is the number of humanity. The word there with this exact tense is actually used in [Revelation 21](#) when it speaks about the measurements of the walls of Jerusalem. In verse 17, same phrase here, it says... Measure the wall, 144 cubits, according to the human measurement, not a specific human, but generic man, as the angel used.

John seems to be attempting to emphasize wisdom and understanding—the same phrase he uses in other chapters as well. He wanted Christians to not be taken in by the beast's deceptions like the rest of the earth dwellers. That's what he calls everyone who's deceived by the beast in chapter 17. Stay alert and see through the mask of divine imposters using God's name and reputation to lead you to worship the political system of empire, to see through the propagandists, and to stand for actual justice, actual progression of humanity in the favor of God's mission and his kingdom because that's your job as God's image bearers. The soldiers of

the kingdom, not of this earth. Not to sit around solving complex mathematics, but doing the work of the kingdom. If John's readers have spiritual perception, then they will remain faithful. And as chapter 15 says, come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name. They will not be sucked in by other things.

The Wicked Culmination

So guys, I believe 666 represents humanity doing what the narrative at the beginning of Torah warns us to do—of what we are capable of. That's why the stories are there. Narratives aren't just there to tell a nice story, they're there to teach us something. Cain kills his brother and then God addresses it by preserving him and sending him to a city of refuge, essentially. Grace. But humanity lusts like a beast. Lamech takes pride in slaughtering other humans at will. Soon violence erupts throughout the whole earth. God responds by doing what? We're just gonna send a flood. God responds to the violence of human beings with divine violence. And guess what still remains after God's divine violence takes place? Violence. It's a lesson in that. So God's divine violence did not fix the earthly violence and injustice.

I believe 666 represents the wicked culmination of man's spirit to rebel against God. And I think we see it daily. And we either choose to call it out, to discern, or to stand up and subvert the way of the world that wants to accept it as the norm.

Or we can justify it. Guys, we need to stop looking for 666 and politicians we don't like, or in monster energy drinks, or in the logos of CERN. We need to start looking for it in the injustice and oppression of actual people. Guys, this is a special month in our nation. February, Black History Month. And so many people have no idea why we celebrate Black History Month. It's because black Americans like Martin Luther King Jr. tried to teach us what 666 really was and how to respond to it. And people cheered as they blasted the water hoses, as women were beaten with batons and dogs were unleashed on protesters, not responding with violence. You guys should check out the letter Tim LaHaye wrote to Wheaton College when the college attempted to put on a community-wide memorial for Dr. King after his assassination. It says a lot. Black history in America teaches us about empire, greed, and exploitation. But that's not all. Of course not. Black history teaches us how black Americans have contributed to this becoming and growing and evolving into an amazing country, as well as how far we still have to go. Will we choose to fight empire in whatever nation we find ourselves, or will we pledge loyalty to it, never speaking up, never standing in the way of evil?

Limiting the Power of Kings

In the Torah, God gave instructions to the Israelites on how, when they appoint a king, the rules that they have to set up. You guys are familiar. [Deuteronomy 17](#), right? [Deuteronomy 17](#). When you want to be like everyone else, all the other nations, when you don't want, you feel embarrassed to be around me. You don't want me dropping you off at school anymore. Essentially kind of like the tone of it. It's like, you're going to want a king. Fine. But here are the rules. [Deuteronomy 17](#). He must not have many horses and he must not send people back to Egypt to get horses. Don't go back and get horses. You're never going back there. Stop it. He must not acquire many wives for himself and he must not acquire very large amounts of silver and gold for himself. Why can't the king have many horses? Why can't the king have many horses? I was like, I mean, God doesn't want him galloping down the beaches every day in this romantic sunset or something. No, horses were war machines. They were tanks. They were drones. They were the machine guns. This is what horses and chariots were. This is how empires exercised their power by war and weaponry. Egypt was the model empire throughout the scriptures. They were the ones who exploited the weak for their gain. They were the ones who mistreated the foreigners and immigrants. They were the ones that used violence to put down a people that would threaten their way of life.

An Ear for the Oppressed

And the people did what? They cried out and God responded. And this is important because the people did not cry out to God in the narrative. The people did not cry out to God. They cried out because of their oppression. They simply cried out and God responded. That should scare the fire of hell into you. They simply cried out and God responded. Well, Israel was his covenant people, Matt. I mean, that's why God responded. God had a covenant with Abraham, yes. I don't believe he responded because of covenant. It says that he heard their cries. He remembered the covenant after he heard their cries. And then he looked. God has an ear for the oppressed and he has wrath for oppressors. And guess what? Later in Exodus, he tells Israel, the people that he has a covenant with, the exact same thing. Exodus chapter 22, starting in verse 21. Here's what he tells his covenant people. Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you are foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless, those who are weak in your society. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows and your children will become the fatherless. Snap. That was excessive, I admit. Golly. But this is how serious God takes oppression in the world. [Psalm 10](#) verse 17. He told this to Israel. Do not be Egypt. Do not support Egypt. Do not buy weapons from Egypt to gain wealth and become like Egypt.

Solomon: The King Who Broke the Rules

Go ahead and turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 10. Fantastic, fantastic narrative flow in this book on how the story of King Solomon is told. So in chapter 10, this is kind of like base camp. We're going to kind of overview the whole story. We know that the Queen of Sheba comes in to King Solomon and she flatters this man to death. If you read it, it gets cringeworthy how flattering she becomes to King Solomon. She approves, like this huge, wealthy, powerful queen from another empire, she approves of Solomon's way of running the nation. God knew what he was doing when he placed you on the throne. You will indeed pursue justice and righteousness. The next section begins to tell the story of the great things that Solomon began to do from that point forward. And what wonderful things he did for Israel. Verse 14, the weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all of the Arabian kings and governors of the territories. 666. Now, lots of debate over whether this verse is even relevant to Revelation. Considering that 98% of everything that John wrote he pulled from the Old Testament, I'd like to think that he at least knew this was on the radar. But why? What does Solomon have to do with anything? Well, in chapter 10, verse 18, it goes on to say that Solomon made this great throne covered in ivory and overlaid with fine gold. It had six steps going up of it with golden lions on either side of each step. It goes on to say that nothing like it had ever been made in any other kingdom. Oh yeah, all of King Solomon's cups, gold. He wouldn't drink of anything. Paper cups? No, beneath them. Verse 23, King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all of the other kings of the earth. Yeah, King Solomon is richer than anyone else in the world. Solomon, verse 26, Solomon accumulated chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones. Did you catch that? Solomon became an arms dealer, going to Egypt, buying the tanks and drones, and then selling them to the nations of the north, profiting off of war. Chapter 11, verse 3. He had 700 wives. So he accumulated wealth, great wealth. He had accumulated horses. Not only that, he went to Egypt to get them and then became an arms dealer and profits off of all of this. And he had many wives. Are they trying to tell us something about Solomon? Connecting it back to [Deuteronomy 17](#). But the question is, did he start Amazon? How did he get this rich?

Well, for that, we go back to [1 Kings 5](#), verse 13. Then King Solomon drafted forced laborers from all of Israel. The king commanded them to quarry large, costly stones to lay as the foundation of the temple with dressed stones. If we go over to chapter 9, it gives it more bluntly. Chapter 9, verse 15. Here is the account of the forced labor King Solomon conscripted to build the Lord's temple and his own palace and the terraces and wall of Jerusalem. So the

word here for forced labor is forced. There is no connection between the terrorist organization Hamas and this word. Stop it. Stop it. That's Hamas. Hamas is like the labor. And it's the same word that's used in [Exodus 1.11](#) to describe the slave masters, the taskmasters. Interesting. In [1 Kings 4](#), 7 through 19, there's a hint even that Solomon changed the tribal allotments into a more favorable position. Districts for tax. Everyone who was governing these areas had close relations. They were his good old boys. And what it indicates is that his lavish table, personal table in Jerusalem, was stocked by ordinary Israelites underneath him. [1 Kings 9](#), 20-22 says that Solomon enslaved the weaker minority populations of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Debussites, and others. These were the people that Israel was supposed to exterminate, but he enslaves them instead, the weaker nations. He then says of the Israelites, you know what? I'm going to make you guys my, basically his mercenaries, his soldiers. You guys will be the commanders over the chariots and my chariot tiers, my tank drivers, my drone pilots. He built the temple to Yahweh, the God that frees slaves with forced labor. And he spent twice as long building his own palace than he did the temple. It was a lot.

Will He Remain Faithful?

[1 Kings 11](#), got to the point where he's worshiping other gods now. You're wicked. You're wicked. You know what? I'm going to strip the kingdom away from your son. We know that Rehoboam grabs the kingdom. He's in it. And then what happens? The people come to him and they make what request in [1 Kings 12](#)? They say, hey, listen, your dad was a jerk. He had harsh labor on us. It was horrible. Our taxes were super high because he wanted to build all this infrastructure. He used to whip us. Can you make that less? And Rehoboam, of course, said, no, I'm going to make it worse. And the whole united kingdom of Israel just crumbles. Where does all this start? It starts in [1 Kings 3](#). God comes to Solomon. He's like, listen, what do you want? What do you want? Solomon says, you know what? I want wisdom and understanding, discernment and wisdom, similar to [Revelation 13](#), 8, right? I want discernment and wisdom. I want this over and above riches and gold and a long life. I don't even care about that. I want to know the wisdom. What does God give him on top of the wisdom? Wealth, long life, riches, power. It's almost as if God wanted to see how he was going to use his wisdom if he had riches and power. And boy, did we find out. Will Solomon remain faithful if he has all of these things on top of wisdom?

Will the Beast Define You?

Will he continue to walk in the statutes of God? Something that God reminds him of in [1 Kings 6](#) and 9. Keep walking the path; just stay out of it. Obey my statutes, or will he become the beast? 666, the number of empire, the number of humanity, the number of the beast. Guys, maybe 666 does equal Nero Caesar, just like 616. The Greek word for beast, I believe, equals 6662. Maybe it represents a triangle number representing evil, just as Dr. Richard Bauckham asserts. Maybe it represents failed humanity evolving into what humans always evolve into. Maybe it does represent the sign of empire that exploits the weak, profits off of war and violence, and builds its own strength by taking it from others. Or maybe it's all of it. Pointing to one singular declaration. Do not be deceived. Do not be deceived. Do not pledge your allegiance and loyalty to that. Do not think the beast is the way of God. Be bold, be courageous, be fearless, and stand in the way of evil. Be a witness and know Yahweh our God is with you, protecting you from the deception of the dragon so that you can stand, the theme in Revelation—stand as witnesses, the Greek word martyr. Just as Solomon was given wisdom and understanding to test him, John calls you as believers to have wisdom and understanding.

The Choices of the Wise

Solomon chose to use his wisdom to create the beast and ride on its back as a whore drinking the blood of those he oppressed. What choices will you make with wisdom and discernment? What actions will you take living before the beast? How will you bear witness of Yeshua's kingship in a way that actually does something? Will you sacrifice for earthly gain? Will you shy away from actually doing the work of impacting the world? Will you not join those who cry out for justice because, well, your politics don't allow you to? Maybe your friends will look down on you. Maybe people will think you're crazy not to reap the benefits of the beast. I don't know where you're at today. This message is timeless, just like Revelation.

John's calling is for believers to not just sit in their homes thinking they're righteous because they're separating themselves from the world. John's calling is for believers to stand in the gap and put their hands to the plow. Be the weird ones. Be the oddballs that actually want to be an ambassador of heaven and not contribute to hell on earth. And this can be done starting with acknowledging where your own heart is at. What are the goals that you're pursuing and who are you willing to sacrifice to have them? This could be in the form of greed. It could be jealousy. You guys know when people gossip, it's a big indicator that they have no self-worth, likely being put down themselves. So the only thing they know how to do is to grab hold of someone as a foothold and lift themselves up over them.

Looking for the Opportunity

Greed is a big indicator that you're not content nor fully depending on God. Look for the opportunity that you may have missed, that we all do, even if it disappoints others. When minority groups cry out in your nation or country, wherever that may be, do you shoo them away under the guise of some political agenda, labeling them as maybe not being sincere when they cry out? Maybe they're just trying to get a bunch of free stuff. Maybe you become upset because, you know, haven't we done enough for whoever this is? Maybe that's all true, but God heard the cries of the oppressed people in Egypt. As I said, that scares me. God heard the cries. He looked and then he examined why they were crying out. He didn't make excuses to ignore it. He looked and then in chapter 3 of Exodus, he says, "I see who is oppressing them and I am concerned about their suffering."

The Lens of the Cross

Not being like the beast is viewing all people through the lens of the cross. All of them. Matt, what about our enemies? Easy one, right? We're followers of Yeshua. We know his teachings. Easy one, right? What do we do about our enemies? View them through the lens of the cross. It's great.

There's a quote from a speech Abraham Lincoln delivered during the height of the Civil War. There are a couple different accounts of it, but they're basically the same. In it, he referred to Southerners as fellow human beings who were in error. What do you think his response was? The response was that an elderly lady began to chastise him for not calling them the irreconcilable enemies that they are and who must be destroyed. And he responded, "Well, why madam, do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" That's hard.

The Traits of the Beast

Anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, greed, gossip, lust, exploitation, violence, racism, pride, and superiority are all traits of the beast. All of them. Are you blinded by the calculation of 666? Because it's sitting over your eyes. Will we compromise to the propaganda of the beast or will you lay it all on the altar and stand for justice and stand for righteousness and stand for King Jesus to stand as a warrior of love, forgiveness, grace, and as a brick wall that God has called you to be to stand in the way of evil?

Empires should not like us. And so, guys, the theme of Revelation is knowing who is in charge when the empires are trampling the earth, who is in charge when they threaten to persecute or

do persecute you, who is actually in charge when they show the strength of what they believe to be true power, and you show yours through your faith and witness and boldness in King Jesus. So please stand as we conclude, as our generation has the beast in it, and the beast will continue. Our children's generation will have a beast in it as well. We need to take note of how we respond now so that they know how to respond then. And that's a hard calling.

Bearing Witness for the Next Generation

Adonai Malkenu, our father, our king, we thank you for this time to come together on your Shabbat as a fellowship, as a community, and dive into this apocalypse that was given to John to give to the communities at that time, but also for every community after, that we would see the hope that lies in our faith in you, that we will see the power of what witness does and how it can change the world for your sake. And Father, we ask that only you would continue to give us the strength, the courage, and the boldness to call out evil and stand before it. We thank you, Father. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

I'm Matthew Vanderels, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at foundedintruth.com/give or by texting any amount to 704-275-0752. Don't forget to like and subscribe for new content every single week. And we thank you for your continued support. And we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

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