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The Mark of the Beast

By Bryan Hodge

“Here is wisdom. Let him who understands calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (Rev. 13:18).

This is not the number of man in general. No, this beast is a persecutor of faithful men.

The name is to be “calculated”. This same word is translated “count” in Luke 14:28. One should understand that the Hindu-Arabic numeral system, which originated in India c. 500 A.D., was not used in the first century by the Romans, Greeks, Hebrews or anyone else. Letters from the languages were commonly given an assigned value.

Which languages assigned numerical value should be used to calculate this name? (1) English? No, it did not exist. (2) Hebrew? This book was not written in Hebrew. (3) Latin? This book was not written in Latin. (4) Greek? This is the language in which this book was written. Moreover, the Greek alphabet is mentioned four times (Rev. 1:8; 1:11; 21:6; 22:13). This seems the most reasonable system to use.

In the Greek the number 666 is written out (ekakosioi ekekonta ek). However, what names would equate to this number? Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) suggested Lateinos (the Greek spelling of the Roman Latinus, the reputed founder of the Latin race). David Vaughn Elliot writes, “Latin is a designation of a people, a kingdom, individuals in the Kingdom, a language, and a church... For over fifteen hundred years, Latin has been a distinguishing mark of the Catholic Church. Roman and Latin are two ways of identifying the same thing. Roman identifies the location; Latin the language” (Nobody Left Behind, p. 216 – 218).

Remember, the beast from the earth is a false or corrupt religious system (Rev. 13:11-12 cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Moreover, it appears to be connected with Rome.

“He caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:16-17).

Some understand this figuratively. David Vaughn Elliot writes, “Behind the forehead is the brain, the mind; the hand is the action member of the body. The symbolism seems to contemplate the ability to think and the ability to do. It is a matter of belief and action. The mark is a representation of those who yield their minds and bodies into service of the beast, of those who accept the teaching and obey the commands of the beast” (p. 220). The Israelites were to have the law on their hand and between their eyes (Deut. 6:6, 8; 11:18; cf. Prov. 3:1, 3; 6:20-21; 7:2-3).

Others have understood this to be a literal mark. (1) Some think this had to do with emperor worship and the trade guilds in Asia associated with such. (2) Others have tied this to the Catholic sign of the cross made on the forehead by the right hand.

Whatever the mark, do not miss the greater point. There would be great pressure to submit to the beast (Rev. 13:15-17). The warning is don't. “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wrath of God... and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have not

rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9, 11). In contrast – “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus... Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... they may rest from their labors and their works follow them” (Rev. 14:12-13). Never compromise the truth. Never serve error.