

Who Is The Beast Of Revelation? (#5)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 13:18

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In recent sermons, we have been focusing our attention upon the identity of the first Beast that arises from the sea and is revealed in Revelation 13:1-3 (as the great enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses).

In the previous sermon, we began a consideration of the number of the Beast (Revelation 13:18), which is the number of his name (Revelation 13:17). And we read that the Holy Spirit cautions us not to think we can simply approach this matter with a mere worldly wisdom, but rather the Holy Spirit exhorts us to apply our hearts to that wisdom that comes from heaven above: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast" (Revelation 13:18). As we look to Christ in faith as our Great Prophet and seek His illumination of prophetic Word, we will be applying this heavenly wisdom as we consider all that the Holy Spirit has already revealed about the Roman Beast of Revelation. In other words, the number and name of the Beast will not contradict what has already been learned about the Beast (in previous sermons), but will only confirm what has already been learned about the Beast.

The main points for the sermon this Lord's Day from our text in Revelation 13:18 are the following: (1) How Are We To Count The Number Of The Beast Of Revelation (continued from the previous sermon)? (2) What Is A Reasonable And Faithful Interpretation Of The Number Of The Beast Of Revelation?

I. How Are We To Count The Number Of The Beast Of Revelation?

A. I would like to elaborate a little upon this main point from the previous sermon (which dealt with the actual method to be used in counting the number of the Beast Revelation).

1. First, I submit that the Holy Spirit intended for us to understand that the specific Beast, whose number we are commanded to count here in Revelation 13:18, is the first Beast that arises from the sea in Revelation 13:1-8, and NOT the second Beast that comes from the earth in Revelation 13:11. The first Beast that arises from the sea is the revived civil/political Roman kingdom centered in Europe, whereas the second Beast that comes from the earth is the religious/ecclesiastical Roman kingdom of the Roman Catholic Church (which has the appearance of a lamb and yet speaks like a dragon, and which is also identified in other places in the Book of Revelation as the False Prophet and the Harlot of Rome—both names representing the same deceptive, corrupt, and tyrannical Church of Rome that is administered by her priests, bishops, and cardinals).

a. The two Beasts in Revelation 13 are clearly distinguishable one from the another, even though they both conspire together against Christ and His faithful witnesses. In fact, after the second Beast that comes from the earth and resembles a lamb is revealed to us in Revelation 13:11 (using the name “another Beast”), I submit that this great enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses is never again specifically referred to as “a Beast” or “the Beast” in the Book of Revelation (but is rather specifically referred to as the False Prophet, the Whore, or the Harlot).

b. Thus, I submit that all references to the Beast in the Book of Revelation (except here in Revelation 13:11, where this second enemy is first introduced), all other references to the Beast in the Book of Revelation refer to the first civil/political Beast of Rome with seven heads and ten horns that arises from the sea, which is the Beast whose name

we are to number (compare the references to the first Beast in Revelation 13:1,2,3,4 and the references to the Beast in Revelation 13:11-18, also compare Revelation 15:2; 16:13; 17:3; 19:19-20).

2. The second point upon which I want to elaborate briefly before continuing with the next main point in this present sermon is a matter of clarification from the previous sermon.

a. You may recall from the previous sermon that we considered how it was the practice within various ancient languages to count by using their alphabet, since they did not have a separate numeral system. Among those languages using their alphabet for such a dual purpose was the ancient Greek language—the very language in which the New Testament (including the Book of Revelation) was originally written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as we noted, the Greek letter *alpha* was not only a letter that was used to form words, it also functioned as the numeral 1; just as the second Greek letter *beta* in their alphabet functioned as the numeral 2 etc.

b. We also noted that this information about the Greek alphabet functioning as the numeral system was significant for our understanding the number of the Beast, because in Revelation 13:18 the Holy Spirit has given to us the number of the Beast using three Greek letters to represent a numerical value. If you recall from the previous sermon, I said the three letters were *chi*=600, *xi*=60, and a final *sigma*=6, which added together comes to the sum of 666. I need to clarify that the letter that looks like a final *sigma* is actually called a *stigma* (not a *sigma* when used as a numeral to count). It would appear that over the course of time in ancient history as the Greek letters were used for numerals, that the obsolete Greek letter *digamma* (or *stigma*) began to be used as the letter representing the numeral 6, and that the written form of the *stigma* came to be written in the shape of the final *sigma* (especially after Greek editions of the New Testament began to be standardized and printed by the printing press around 1440). Not wanting to get

complicated here, the important point to keep in mind is that the numerical value of the *stigma* was 6, but the numerical value of the *sigma* was 200. This is a necessary distinction to be made in order to accurately count the number of the Beast, which according to Revelation 13:8 is *chi*-600 + *xi*-60 + *stigma*-6, or 666.

c. You may be thinking that if the *stigma* (which is the letter that represents the numeral 6) looks like a final *sigma* (a letter in the Greek alphabet used continuously to spell words), even as they sound very similar, how did the Greeks distinguish between the *stigma* (as a letter representing a numeral) and the final *sigma* (as a letter to form words), so as not to confuse a numeral with a letter?

(1) One way was that in the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament a line was drawn over the top of Greek letters that were to be understood as numerals, or a short diagonal line was drawn after the Greek letters that were being used as numerals. Likewise, it would be evident from the context of a sentence that letters representing numerals were being used because the letters used as numerals did not form a word (like in Revelation 13:18). Likewise, the letters forming numerals ordinarily began with letters with a higher numerical value and moved to letters with a lower numerical value (*chi*-600 to *xi*-60 to *stigma*-6).

(2) And we can demonstrate from our text in Revelation 13:18 how the context and words used just before the three Greek letters (*chi*, *xi*, *stigma*) give us a clear indication that these three letters are functioning as numerals (*chi*=600, *xi*=60, *stigma*=6, or 666): “Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.”

(a) First, the Greek verb for “let him count” is a command, and specifically calls the one who has understanding to take specific action in computing the numbers that are yet to be revealed in the same verse. The noun from which this verb (to count) is derived refers to pebbles that were used to count votes in an election. Thus, the

verb (“let him count”) is the first contextual indication that the three Greek letters (*chi, xi, stigma*) represent numerals to be added together to form a number (namely, the number 666).

(b) Second, the Greek noun (i.e. the direct object in this case) that follows the verb is *arithmon* (i.e. “number”): “Let him that hath understanding count THE NUMBER”. Our English word, arithmetic, is derived from this Greek word, *arithmon*. Arithmetic has to do with computing numerical value. Here again the Holy Spirit gives a clear indication within the very context of this verse (in Revelation 13:18) that the three Greek letters that follow (*chi, xi, stigma*) represent numerals to be added together to form 666. Now we are ready to move on to the next main point: the name behind the number of the first Beast that arises from the sea.

II. What Is A Reasonable And Faithful Interpretation Of The Number Of The Beast Of Revelation (“for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six”)?

A. The phrase, “for it is the number of a man”, would seem to indicate that the number of the Beast (666) represents a familiar or common human name for the first Beast that arises from the sea and has seven heads and ten crowned horns in Revelation 13:1.

B. Before considering the most likely historical interpretation to this number of the Beast (666), let us prepare ourselves by a quick summary of what we have thus far learned about the first Beast that arises from the sea.

1. First, let us be clear that the number of this Beast is 666 and not 6-6-6. If the number of the Beast was 6-6-6, the corresponding Greek letters would be *stigma-stigma-stigma*, rather than *chi-xi-stigma*. In other words, we are not looking for a name that has or represents

three 6s, but rather a name whose numerical letters total 666. Some interpreters have failed at this point by taking the sum of the letters and dividing them by three (e.g. Barack Hussein Obama has 18 letters, which when divided by 3 = 6-6-6), or others have understood this number of a man to represent a fallen man because man was created on the sixth day, and the Beast must be an especially fallen and corrupt man, because the 6 is repeated three times (6-6-6). But dear ones, the number of the Beast is not 6-6-6, but is rather 666.

2. Second, as we indicated in the previous sermon, there is historical evidence that representatives of Jews, of Christians, and of pagans used this system of computing a numerical value from the letters of a name, or vice versa, taking a numerical value (like 666) and working backward to find a name, whose numerical value of all the letters then add up to a numeral (like 666). This system of hiding and revealing names in numerals and hiding and revealing numerals in names was called by the Hebrew term, gematria. And this is what the Holy Spirit has inspired John to write here in Revelation 13:18—a number (666) that reveals the name of the first Beast of Revelation. We have the total value of the Beast's name (666) in Revelation 13:18, now we must seek in history to find a familiar, common name used among mankind for this first Beast, whose letters in that name add up to a value of 666. That's the task before us.

3. Third, before we seek that Greek name in history that most likely answers to the characteristics of the first Beast that arises from the sea (Revelation 13:1) and whose letters in his name add up to 666, let us briefly review once again, what we have learned about this first Beast that arises from the sea.

a. First, we observed that this first Beast of Revelation that arises from the sea (in Revelation 13:1-3) is identified with the Roman Empire (Daniel's vision of the four successive civil/political empires includes: Babylon, then Medo-Persia, then Greece, and then

Rome in Daniel 7 and Daniel 2).

b. Second, this first Beast of Revelation (Revelation 13:1-3) has seven heads (which represent seven distinct forms of civil government that ruled over the Roman Empire—Kings, Consuls, the Council of Ten, Military Tribunes, Dictators, Emperors, and Patricians).

c. Third, we saw that one of the heads of this first Beast (namely, the sixth head—that of Emperors) was wounded so that it appeared to be dead. This wounding of the sixth head (Emperors) occurred when Romulus Augustus was deposed from the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 476 a.d.

d. Fourth, this period in which the sixth head of the Roman Beast (that of Emperors in the Western Roman Empire) appeared mortally wounded continued for about 275 years until Pepin, and his son Charlemagne, were appointed by the Papacy to be Patricians of Rome (or fatherly protectors of Rome) in 753 a.d. The Patricians of Rome was the seventh head of the Beast (which lasted a short space of time, less than 50 years).

e. Fifth, then to the amazement and wonder of the world, the wound of the sixth head of the Roman Beast (that of Emperors) was healed and revived in the eighth head when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne to be the Emperor of the revived Roman Empire in 800 a.d. This revived eighth head (that of Emperors) was one of the seven (namely, a continuation of the sixth head of Emperors) according to Revelation 17:11. It is this expression of this first Beast (whose sixth head is healed in the eighth head) that wars against Christ and His faithful witnesses for 1,260 years (together with the Papal False Prophet, as we shall see in a subsequent sermon).

f. And sixth, we noted that this first Roman Beast of Revelation has ten horns that are crowned (Revelation 13:1) and that represent ten kingdoms that did not rule at the time that John penned the Revelation (Revelation 17:12), but who came to power in the form of

ten barbarian tribes that divided the Western Roman Empire in Europe, especially in the fifth and sixth centuries (just as was prophesied in Daniel 2 by the ten toes of the fourth empire that divided the united Roman Empire of iron, causing a mixture of iron and clay that do not adhere well together). These 10 kingdoms began, spread, and settled throughout what is now identified as Europe. Thus, this revived Roman Empire (i.e. the first Beast with seven heads and ten crowned horns, whose head was wounded and healed) is the Beast who wars against Christ and against His witnesses, blasphemes God by usurping God's authority in establishing his own laws (rather than God's laws), is worshipped by the people over whom he rules as they give unto him an unconditional obedience that belongs only to the Lord (Revelation 13:1-8), and that joins hands with the Roman Catholic Beast and the image of the Beast (the Papacy) to persecute, mislead, and deceive the people of the Revived Western Roman Empire in Europe (Revelation 13:11-17).

C. I come now to submit the most reasonable and most likely name that best answers to the number 666 and that best answers to all of the characteristics just previously summarized in regard to this first Beast that arises out of the sea. I submit that name is the Greek name, LATEINOS. It is spelled Lambda (L), Alpha (A), Tau (T), Epsilon (E), Iota (I), Nu (N), Omicron (O), Sigma (S). LATEINOS in Greek means "Latin", as is used in the name, "the Latin nation/kingdom" (LATEINOS *ETHNOS*), or as is used in the name, "the Latin people" (LATEINOS *LAOS*). Why is LATEINOS most likely the name of the Beast? Let me give you five reasons.

1. First, it is a name written in Greek, not a name written in Hebrew, Latin, or English. Since John is writing in Greek to Greek speaking Christians in Asia Minor, and uses three Greek numerical letters (*chi, xi, stigma*) in Revelation 13:18 to represent 666, we should likewise expect a name corresponding to 666, written in the Greek language.

2. Second, the letters of the name, LATEINOS, when added together do in fact equal 666: Lambda(L)=30; Alpha(A)=1; Tau(T)=300; Epsilon(E)=5; Iota(I)=10; Nu(N)=50; Omicron(O)=70; Sigma(S)=200. The total of which is 666.

3. Third, LATEINOS is a very fitting name because it identifies the first Beast of the Roman Empire that arises from the sea as the Latin nation/kingdom or as the Latin people that comprise the first Beast of the Western Roman Empire. And it is also fitting because it also identifies so very well the Latin Roman Catholic Church that conspires with the revived Latin Roman Empire in warring against Christ and His faithful witnesses.

a. It is a matter of historical record that the Western Roman Empire (in its revival under Charlemagne, which consisted of a greater part of Europe), was identified as the Latin Roman Empire in order to distinguish it from the Eastern Roman Empire, which was identified as the Greek Roman Empire (the capital of which was in Constantinople). This distinction between the Latin Roman Empire and the Greek Roman Empire was based upon the religion of the Latin Roman Empire (a Latin-speaking Roman Catholic Church) and the religion of the Greek Roman Empire (a Greek-speaking Eastern Orthodox Church), and was also based upon the legal and academic language that was predominantly used in the Western Roman Empire (Latin) as opposed to the legal and academic language that was predominantly used in the Eastern Roman Empire (Greek).

b. Thus, in identifying the name of the first Beast of the Roman Empire as LATEINOS, we see an identification that is amazingly and historically accurate. The first Beast, whose sixth head (that of Roman Emperors) was revived in the eighth head after the Western Roman Empire was divided by the ten crowned horns or kingdoms and was united with the Roman Catholic Church to war against Christ and His faithful witnesses, was the Latin nation/kingdom and the Latin people

(with a Latin Church) as distinguished from the Greek nation/kingdom and the Greek people (with a Greek Church).

4. Fourthly, LATEINOS comes into Greek from the Latin, LATINUS. The Latin word, LATINUS, was the specific name of the founding king of the Roman kingdom in Italy, and LATINUS is also the corporate name of the kingdom itself—it is a Latin (or LATINUS) kingdom. Thus, the Greek term LATEINOS aptly translates the Latin equivalent, LATINUS.

5. And fifthly, this Greek name of the Beast, LATEINOS, which corresponds to 666, has early historical testimony, as well as continued historical testimony (especially during and after the Protestant Reformation).

a. Irenaeus (185 a.d.) was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John (who penned Revelation 13:18 by the Holy Spirit, in which he commands Christians to count the number of the Beast's name, which number is 666). Although Irenaeus does not unequivocally identify LATEINOS with 666, he is the first to offer it as a "very probable" solution.

Then also LATEINOS has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution—GLP], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four kingdoms seen by Daniel—GLP]. For the LATINS are they who at present bear rule . . . (*Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapter 29, Section 3).

b. Hippolytus (200 a.d.) was the successor of Irenaeus as bishop at Lyons, in Gaul.

The plague of the first beast," says he, "was healed, and he shall cause the Image to speak, that is, to be powerful: and it is manifest to all, that the rulers are now Latins, Lateinoi: transmuted therefore into the name of one man, it becomes Lateinos (*On the Apocalypse*, 13:18).

c. From that point forward in history, there are numerous representatives of this view, which list of representatives expands greatly from the time of the Protestant Reformation forward. Many of the Church's best interpreters and teachers have espoused the view that LATEINOS is most likely the name of the first Beat, that when

counted equals 666. In the next sermon, we shall consider and respond to two objections to this view: the first objection is that the first Beast that arises from the sea is the Papacy; and the second objection is that the first Beast that arises from the sea is Nero.

D. Dear ones, I know of no other name that brings together all of the biblical and historical evidence as clearly as the name LATEINOS, which corroborates all that has been observed in regard to the first Beast of Revelation that arises from the sea (Revelation 13:1). When we see prophetic Scripture come together in such a conspicuous and amazing way, it ought to fill us with such great awe and wonder (not a human pride and conceit), and yet with such joy that Christ (our Great Prophet) continues His ministry in revealing the will of God for our salvation and sanctification, in opening our minds to understand prophetic Scripture.

We dwell often upon Christ as Priest (who by His redemption and intercession has justified and forgiven us) and upon Christ as King (who has legally and will in history conquer all of His and our enemies), but where, dear ones, would we be without Christ as our Prophet? We would be lost; we would be without knowledge of Christ, the Gospel, His revealed will for our lives, and His revealed plan unfolded for us in prophetic Scripture. There would be no Bible, if Christ was not our Prophet, and there would be no understanding what is revealed in it if Christ was not our Prophet. We would all be like the man born blind (in John 9), whose eyes were healed by Christ so that He might glorify Christ, which He did even though persecuted for the healing of his eyes. Let us not be exalted in pride, or glory in man at the understanding Christ our Prophet has given to us. Dear ones, let us realize that to whom much is given, much is required. Let the prophetic truths Christ has revealed to you (in opening your spiritual eyes) burn in your hearts and change your lives in giving all glory to Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King.

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