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THE MARK OF THE BEAST

What do you know about "the mark of the Beast"?

Back in the 1960's and 70's people in the Church of God would fairly commonly talk about "the mark of the Beast". That was when the Church expected Jesus Christ's second coming to be in the near future. But then Mr. Armstrong died, and after that the Church splintered into many different groups. And since then we haven't really talked very much about the mark of the Beast. But this mark is something that is mentioned in the Book of Revelation. And so we should take another look at it.

Now **what exactly is that mark of the Beast?** What purpose is that mark supposed to serve? How does it fit into the time that still lies ahead of us? Who will have that mark? Let's try to find some answers to these questions.

THE BASIC SCRIPTURE

And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, **to receive a mark** in their right hand, **or** in their foreheads: And that **no man might buy or sell**, save he that had the mark, **or** the name of the beast, **or** the number of his name. (Revelation 13:16-17)

This is the basic Scripture about this mark. And this Scripture presents a number of different possibilities. Verse 17 spells out the purpose for this mark.

The purpose of this mark is **to control who can engage in commerce**, who can buy and who can sell. This mark is focused on a consumer society, a rich society. In our world today almost **all of us have to buy stuff** just to survive. Most of us buy our food. We buy our clothes. We regularly have to buy gasoline for our cars. We have to buy our utilities, like electricity and water. And we buy the services of people, so they will work for us in our houses and gardens and farms and offices and factories. In other words, we want to employ people to work for us ... and so we have to buy their services.

And in order to buy all the things we need and want, we must have money. And in order to have money, we have to have **a paying job**. We have to have employment so we can have a regular income.

But the mark isn't just aimed at controlling who may buy something. It is also aimed at **all those who wish to sell something**. We may want to sell the food we produce on our farms, and the goods we produce in our homes and in our factories. We may want to sell our services to prospective buyers; i.e. we seek employment that will pay us an income. And this mark exerts a major influence on all these activities.

Now whoever is able to control in absolute terms our ability to buy and sell is in effect exercising full control over our lives. And that is the real purpose for this mark.

The real purpose for this mark of the Beast is to exert full control over the lives of all people!

In our world today we have already experienced systems of government that have exactly the same

purpose as the mark of the Beast will have. Both **communism** and **absolute dictatorships** establish societies that function in the same way as the end-time society with the mark of the Beast will function.

To be clear:

I am not saying that communism is the mark of the Beast. But I am saying that communism creates the identical society that the mark of the Beast will establish! So if we want to know what life in a society controlled by the mark of the Beast will look like, then we today only need to look at life in nations like Communist China and North Korea, and at life in various absolute dictatorships in the past.

The purpose of the mark of the Beast will be to establish **absolute control over the lives of all people**, determining what they can buy, where they can live, where they must work, how much they will be paid (that's what unions do, establish how much people must be paid), what medical treatments they will get, how they will be educated, how many children they may have, what news sources they may have access to, where they can travel, what community services they will be expected to perform, etc.

This type of control is much easier to implement when we switch from buying with cash to becoming a cashless society. Using credit cards instead of cash means that everything we do in commercial terms (i.e. everything we pay for) can be traced.

Credit cards reveal what we bought, where and when we bought it. **Cell phones** reveal our locations and also where we have been. And with **social media** (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) we ourselves voluntarily reveal a lot of information about our personal lives. Using our personal computers on **the internet** reveals personal information about us even without our consent, because every search we perform and every website we visit is recorded against our internet identity.

These four things (social media + cell phones + credit cards + the internet) are all very attractive to us. And at this stage they are not necessarily a problem. But **in the hands of an absolute dictatorship**, like Communist China, these things can provide powerful tools for exerting absolute control over every aspect of the lives of all people.

Completely abolish all cash transactions, and restrict all commerce to credit card transactions, and you control all buying and selling. And that is what the mark of the beast aims to achieve ... full control over all buying and selling.

There is no need to implant electronic microchips under the skin of all people (as has sometimes been postulated), when all people already voluntarily carry those microchips on their persons; i.e. when we already voluntarily carry our cell phones and our credit cards and our computer tablets on our persons wherever we go, and when we use the internet. When people feel that they can't live without constant access to social media, and when they must have their cell phones and their credit cards, then they are already carrying "their own personal microchip" around with them wherever they go. And they and their movements and their financial transactions can easily be traced. That is already happening today.

All these things should be considered when we look at the statement "that no man might buy or sell".

Basically "the Beast" of Revelation 13 will be saying: I want the same absolute control over the lives of all people, as the power that in the past "Dictator X" and "Communist Country Y" exercised over their people.

Revelation 13:16 tells us that there are two distinct places where people will receive that mark. Those two places are: **first** of all, **in their right hand**. And if that isn't enough, then **secondly in their foreheads**.

"The right hand" represents **working**. So this mark will be demonstrated by either **how** people work, or **where** people work, or **when** people can work.

But there will also be **people who don't work** for any number of reasons. And if they don't work, then they might not display outward visible submission to the system that determines who will work when and where. "The Beast" will require that such people must also be shown to fully support the system established by the Beast power.

Therefore such people will be required to receive this mark **in their foreheads**. The forehead represents the mind. So this represents that such people will be **required to agree with their minds** with the Beast power's system of government. They will be required to make **public statements** that endorse this system of controlled work for all working people.

Again, we can look at various communist societies to see what this will look like in practical terms. The idea of wanting to control all aspects of people's lives is **not a new idea** at all. That is basically how **slavery** functioned. And in the course of history various leaders of various countries have practiced their versions for achieving this goal. So with the mark of the Beast it will not be a new idea; it will only be a new system for achieving the age-old desire to control everything and everybody. And that is just another way of saying: **the age-old desire to be God**.

Right, we have seen the **two places** where all people will be required to receive this mark: either in regard to working (i.e. in the right hand), or in regard to how people will use their minds to support this system (i.e. in their foreheads).

THREE OPTIONS

Now as far as receiving this mark in the right hand is concerned, there are going to be three potential options. Those three options are:

- 1) People accept "the mark".
- 2) Or people have "the name" of the Beast.
- 3) Or people have "the number of the name" of the Beast.

Having just one of these three options will be enough. So the people who have "the mark" don't necessarily also have "the number of the name". And those who have either "the name" or "the number of the name" don't need to also have "the mark". But everybody must have one of these three options.

I take those statements to mean that the people who have "**the name**" of the Beast will be **exempted** from needing to also have "the mark" in their right hand or in their forehead. Likewise, I take this to mean that those people who have "**the number of the name**" of the Beast will likewise be **exempted** from needing to also have "the mark".

How will that work?

I obviously don't know for sure, but I suspect that those who only have "the mark" represent **the bottom segment of society**, the common people, the proletariat.

Then the people who have either "the name of the Beast" or else they have "the number of the name" represent two levels of society that will have a higher status in the order of things. They will be kind of like **the two ruling classes** in the Beast power's society.

Perhaps one ruling class will be secular, and the other will be a religious ruling class? Who knows? But to me these last two groups seem to be in a higher position, when compared to the common working class who only have "the mark".

Now regarding the number of the name, the next verse tells us:

Here is wisdom. Let **him that has understanding** count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and **his number is 666**. (Revelation 13:18)

THE NUMBER 666

Now you may have heard various explanations for this number. In some way or other this number has been applied to the Roman Empire and/or to various popes or to various secular leaders.

And the explanations have always been really cute, right? Or would you say that they were "clever"?

I mean, take the words "**Nero Caesar**" for example. Revelation was written in Greek. But with the Greek numbering system, for old Nero you're not going to get anywhere. No problem, let's just translate the word "Nero" into Hebrew. Still nothing? Okay, let's give old Nero the title "Caesar" and then also convert that into Hebrew. And now let's add up the value of this Hebrew name plus title. Well, what do you know ... now we get 666. That's pretty neat, isn't it?

So you now ask a harmless question: why do you have to turn the name of a Roman Emperor into **Hebrew** numbers? The answer then is: because that's the only way you can make it work, dummy! Then you ask: I notice that you are using a rather questionable way for transliterating this into the Hebrew characters; why do you do that? The answer is: we've got to be a little flexible with the spelling, otherwise it won't fit.

Or let's take another word, and that is "**Lateinos**". When you ask what that means, you're told: it means "Latin man". Okay, you then ask: are you saying that "the Beast" will be a Latin man? What is supposed to be significant about "Latin man"? The answer is: it's got nothing to do with the personal national roots of "the Beast". It is just a good word for which we can get the value 666. Apart from that "Latin man" has no value at all. You ask: do you also translate this into Hebrew so you can attach Hebrew numeric values to the letters? The answer is: no way, this one only works when we use the values of Greek letters.

And then there are probably a dozen or more other words or titles that give you the number 666. So which ones are right? Or are all of them right? What is the answer?

The answer is that **they all**, without exception, **are a bunch of garbage!** That includes the ones you may have heard.

And they have all come from people who were a part of this world's false churches! None of those

explanations for 666 originated with any servant of God. None of them were first presented by someone in God's Church. No, all of the ideas about 666 represent **the world's explanation for the number 666**. It is the world that has told us that this number applies to leaders of the Roman Empire. It is the world that has told us that it applies to the Roman popes and to various secular leaders.

So is God going to inspire the unconverted world to tell His people what the number 666 means, or to whom that number should be applied?

What other biblical truths is God going to give to people in the world, so that they can then explain something to the called-out people in God's Church? Well, when you put it like that, then I suppose we have to say that God will not use the carnal people in the world to teach the converted people in His Church what the Scriptures really mean, and what they really reveal. And that is right. God never gives true understanding to the false churches, so that they can then (supposedly) make this understanding known to the people of God.

We need to recognize that all of the applications for the number 666 that you can find out there have been put forward by Satan, the god of this present age. No exceptions thus far!

God said to the Apostle John "let **him that has understanding** count (or calculate) the number ...". But none of the people who have thus far put forward names for 666 really had understanding. And rather than being wisdom, the explanations they have put forward are foolishness. Or, to put this into modern terms, **all the explanations they have put forward are gimmicky**.

Let's understand what people have typically done to get this number 666. This is how it goes:

- 1) They all **start out with the answer!** They think they know who this number is supposed to apply to. They start out with a name. This obviously shows **a huge bias!**
- 2) Having started with the answer, they then look for **ways to arrive at that answer**.
- 3) It may take some time and some ingenuity and a lot of imagination, but sooner or later **most "666 zealots" find a way to get the name they started out with to achieve the number 666**. Of course, they have to fiddle here a little and there a little, but eventually they get there.
- 4) They don't tell you that if you employ the same methods they have used, then you could also find the number 666 in the old movie "Gone With The Wind" and in some "Donald Duck comic books".
- 5) Here are the most common methods that are used to get to 666. You need to be aware of these methods.
- 6) People start out with the name they have selected. If that name alone doesn't do it, then add some of the first names to see if you can get close to 666. Select freely amongst all the names that could possibly apply to the individual of your choice. You can use any or none of such names, whatever may be useful.
- 7) If you still don't have it, then consider adding a title (like "Caesar", etc.) to the mix. Perhaps you can add some "valid" abbreviation?
- 8) Since Revelation was written in Greek, start out with the numeric values for the Greek alphabet.
- 9) If that doesn't work, try using the Hebrew or even the Roman numeric values. Select the ones that take you closest to 666.

10) If you are close but still struggling, consider changing the spelling (call it Greek or Hebrew spelling) for the name you selected, to make things fit. Don't be too critical by insisting on the correct spelling. Realize that the NT scrolls contain tons of spelling mistakes ... so why not introduce a few of your own, if that will help you get to 666? There's no point in being too picky with a simple thing like spelling, is there?

11) If that still doesn't quite get you there, then consider looking for some "valid" reasons to add or subtract a certain number, so that then you can get to 666. If you hunt around long enough, you'll find a way to add or subtract a certain number so that you will arrive at 666.

12) And then you can glory in your sheer brilliance in sorting out this puzzle.

I hope this gives you some understanding regarding how people have come up with 666 for the names they have put forward.

By using this system you can come up with quite a number of candidates for 666. The choice is wide open. But you will not be seeking God's explanation. You will only be looking for ways to make your personal selection fit the bill.

So now let's examine this question for ourselves, without being tied down by previous ideas and explanations. Let's just read these verses at face value.

THE "BEAST" IN REVELATION 13

Since we are dealing with the mark "of the Beast", we should take a closer look at the "Beast" itself. That will help with understanding its "mark".

Revelation 13:1 speaks about a Beast with 7 heads and 10 horns. Verse 2 tells us: "... and **the dragon gave him his power**, and his seat, and great authority". Now Revelation 12:9 identifies the dragon with Satan.

And **the great dragon** was cast out, that old serpent, **called the Devil, and Satan**, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:9)

So the Beast with 7 heads and 10 horns receives power and rulership from Satan. In return, the Beast will serve Satan and do Satan's will. Coming down to the last "**42 months**" (see Revelation 13:5), this Beast power will be ruling for the same period as the ministry of the two witnesses. This will be the Beast that will oppose first the two witnesses, and then the returning Jesus Christ.

So here is a key:

As long as the ministry of the two witnesses has not yet started, this last revival of the Beast will also not be visible on the world scene. Those two periods of 42 months will run concurrently.

Another key presented in verse 5 is that this Beast will speak "great things and blasphemies". **This Beast will speak enormous blasphemies!** It will only be the people of God who will correctly identify those blasphemies for what they are. The rest of the world will very likely look upon the Beast as representing the power of God.

The next verse repeats this point, because those perverse blasphemies will be the most visible

identifying mark for the Beast.

And **he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God**, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. (Revelation 13:6)

The Beast is going to be **a depraved, perverse and totally demon-possessed man**. This individual will claim that God gave him his power and position. That too will be a blasphemy, because verse 2 made clear that it is in fact Satan, who will give to the Beast his, i.e. Satan's, power.

The Beast, after being rebuffed by the two witnesses, seeks to destroy the true Church of God, much like Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews (see Esther 3:6). In this regard Haman was a type of the Beast.

And it was given unto him **to make war with the saints, and to overcome them**: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. (Revelation 13:7)

So the Beast persecutes true Christians. That is when the Philadelphians flee to the place of safety, and the Laodiceans are left behind to face the full wrath of the Beast. Because that will also be the time when the two witnesses are calling down plague after plague on rebellious humanity, therefore **the whole world will agree with the Beast** in persecuting the people who are from **the same Church as those two witnesses**.

At that stage the whole world will look upon the Beast as some kind of "man of God", and he will be worshiped or highly respected by most people.

And **all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him**, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the throwing down of human society. (Revelation 13:8)

Since Satan is the one who gave the Beast his power and position, therefore all people will really be worshipping Satan. This man will be a secular ruler with control over a powerful military force.

And then another "Beast" appears on the world scene.

And I beheld **another beast** coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns **like a lamb**, and he spoke **as a dragon**. (Revelation 13:11)

A lamb is a symbol for Jesus Christ, and a dragon is a symbol for Satan. So this second Beast looks like a spiritual religious leader, claiming to represent Jesus Christ. But this leader actually speaks just like Satan; i.e. the views he expresses are all satanic. So it is not what this religious leader looks like that counts. It is what he says and the views he holds that identify him as a representative for Satan. He will speak the same way as the first Beast.

With the status this second Beast claims, it will obviously amount to a confrontation between this Beast and the two witnesses, much like Pharaoh calling his own magicians to challenge Moses and Aaron (see Exodus 7:11,22; etc.). While this Beast is not able to harm the two witnesses in any way at that point in time, it seems like that in the eyes of the world he can at least "hold his own", much like Pharaoh's magicians initially replicated some of the miracles Moses performed. This Beast does that effectively enough to not lose face in the eyes of the world. In this way **he "deceives them that dwell on the earth"** (Revelation 13:14).

The purpose for which Satan has raised up this second Beast is to endorse and strengthen the power of the first Beast. These two will work together like a team. **They represent Satan's "two witnesses"**, if you will, raised up by Satan to challenge and to fight against Jesus Christ's two witnesses.

Understand something:

Anyone who is called by God to do a job is never referred to as "a Beast". When the Book of Revelation speaks about "Beasts rising up", then this is **always a reference to individuals or powers who are raised up by Satan**. Yes, it is with God's permission; but it is Satan who inspires the "raising up" of certain individuals to perform Satan's perverse intentions.

This brings us down to the verses regarding the mark of the Beast. Now we have the correct context for the discussion about this mark. So let's look more closely at this mark.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

And **he causes all**, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, **to receive a mark** in their right hand, or in their foreheads: (Revelation 13:16)

So it is this second Beast that actually enforces this mark on all people. It is the religious leader that enforces this mark. This means that **this mark must have some religious significance**, since it is being enforced by a religious leader.

Now we find some clear parallels to what God told the people of Israel in Old Testament times. Here are those parallels.

Speak you also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily **My sabbaths** you shall keep: for **it is a sign** between Me and you throughout your generations; that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD that does sanctify you. (Exodus 31:13)

So the Sabbath specifically is "a sign". And by extension, the keeping of all of God's laws is a sign that we are God's people.

And **these words, which I command you this day**, shall be in your heart: And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, 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. And you shall bind them for **a sign upon your hand**, and they shall be as **frontlets between your eyes**. (Deuteronomy 6:6-8)

In many cases a sign and a mark can be the same thing. The difference between them is how they are applied. "A sign" is something that is accepted **voluntarily**, whereas "a mark" represents something that is **imposed** on us, whether we want it or not.

God's laws are a sign "in our hand", and also in our forehead (i.e. between our eyes). This gives us the clue that **the mark of the Beast is something that opposes the Sabbath specifically, and all of God's laws in general**.

Now does Revelation 13:16 actually tell us **whether this mark belongs to the first Beast or to the second Beast**? Well, actually, this verse doesn't specifically identify this mark as belonging more to the one or the other of these two Beasts. We have to go to Revelation 14:11 for a reference of some kind of ownership for a mark. This verse speaks about "whosoever receives **the mark of his name**". This statement is a reference to the first Beast.

It seems to me that "the mark" that applies to the hand and the forehead is not the same as "the mark of his name" in Revelation 14:11. I say this because "the mark" that applies to the hand seems to be

enforced Sunday-observance, as I will indicate below. But it is unlikely that the man's name will in some way be a reference to Sunday-keeping. So people will either have "the mark" on their hands, or else they will have "the mark" because His name or the number of his name is on them. In that way all people will have one "mark" or the other on them.

Now clearly both Beasts enforce this mark in Revelation 13:16. Verse 16 simply tells us that this second Beast enforces "**a mark**", without indicating the origin of that mark. And ultimately it is immaterial whether that "mark" originated with the first Beast or with the second Beast. Either way it is an anti-God "mark".

Back in the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church launched **the Inquisition** on Christians who went back to keeping the Saturday Sabbath, amongst many other "offenses", which were also investigated during the Inquisition. Keeping the Sabbath was deemed to be going back to Jewish beliefs. At that time the Catholic Church enforced Sunday-keeping. Sabbath-keeping by Christians received very severe penalties during the Inquisition.

It seems quite likely that "**the mark**" which the second Beast will force upon all people for those last 42 months before Christ's second coming will once again be **Sunday-keeping**. And that mark will very likely also include **enforced working on the Sabbath**. That measure will be implemented to flush out all those people who may want to discretely keep the Sabbath on their own, without anyone else knowing.

Force people to work on the Sabbath, and then force people to religiously observe Sunday. That will most likely be "the mark of the Beast".

Is this understanding new? No, not at all. But it has nothing to do with juggling numbers in the Hebrew, Greek or Latin systems.

The process of enforcing this system will require total control over the lives of all people. It will ipso facto amount to slavery, but supposedly for the good of those slaves.

Now there isn't necessarily any direct connection between "**the mark** of the Beast" and "**the name** of the Beast". Those are two different things. The mark is really for all those people who do not have either "the name of the Beast" or "the number of his name".

Let's look again at verse 17.

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, **or** the name of the beast, **or** the number of his name. (Revelation 13:17)

Now the individual who will be "the Beast" is not going to do his own shopping at any time. He doesn't need permission to buy or sell from anyone. He doesn't need that mark. What this verse implies is that there will be many people who will have "the name" of the Beast on them; and there will also be many people who will have "the number of his name" on them.

In other words, there will **then** be many people who will have the number 666 on them. And they will be distinctly identified as not needing to have the mark upon their hands. Having the name or the number will be seen as **higher credentials** than those people who have only the mark on their hands.

Let's continue in chapter 13.

Here is wisdom. Let him that has understanding count the number of the beast: for **it is the number of a man**; and his number *is* 666. (Revelation 13:18)

This verse tells us quite plainly that 666 is the number of "a man", i.e. **one man**. It is "**his**" number. Read it!

Does God imply that we will find this number 666 throughout history? No, that is not implied.

Does God imply that this number is also attached to something that is not a man? That is, does God imply that this number is also attached to the empire, kingdom or nation that this one man will rule over? No, that is not implied either.

But that is precisely what **all these stupid ideas about 666** do ... they look for ways to attach this number to any number of people who have lived in the past, and to the citizens of kingdoms or empires, and to such past kingdoms or empires themselves.

Yes, that number will **later** also be found to apply to many other people, as I have pointed out already. But that will only happen **after** this "one man" has been identified on the world stage. And he will not be identified until those last 42 months begin. And **only after that** will both his name and the number of his name be found to apply to many other people as well.

But his name and the number of his name are not applied to any people before this man is revealed on the world stage. "Let him that has understanding" think this whole situation through.

Let's understand that in verse 18 God is identifying **one man**, who will oppose the returning Jesus Christ. This verse identifies the **one man** who will be taken by the scruff of the neck by an angel, to then be "cast alive into a lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20). God gave the number 666 to identify **that one man**, not some empire or kingdom or citizenry or past emperors or past dictators, etc. (Comment: The False Prophet will receive the same treatment, see Revelation 19:20.)

The number 666 applies to someone at the time of the end who will fight against Jesus Christ. It applies to the man who will be the instrument through whom Satan will express his "great wrath" on mankind (see Revelation 12:12). And there is no indication that God intended this number 666 to apply to any other man before the time when this specific one man appears on the world scene.

And while we are at it, let's also get our priorities right. The very first thing the number 666 has to do is identify one specific man. After that we will see if this number also has other applications. But it is false and misleading to start out with **some other application for 666**, and from there then try to lead this number back to one specific man. The one man must come first, and then other applications may perhaps follow. It is first and foremost "**his**" number. He will own 666. And therefore finding the number 666 in "Caesar Nero" and in "Lateinos" is of no more value than finding that number in the writings of Shakespeare.

Now let's look at some references in chapter 14.

A WARNING

After talking about Jesus Christ establishing His rule on Mount Zion, together with the 144,000 in the first resurrection, the "third angel" then presents a very serious warning.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and **receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand**, the same shall drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with

fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and **whosoever receives the mark of his name**. (Revelation 14:9-11)

This is lake of fire language! This is an extremely serious warning.

Note that here we first have "the mark" in the hand and in the forehead. And after that we have "the mark of his name". What this means is that having the name of the Beast upon one's person is in itself an identifying mark.

These verses are speaking about that last generation that is alive at the second coming of Jesus Christ. At that time the undiluted wrath of God will be poured out on a rebellious humanity. And it will be focused specifically on those people who have accepted the mark of the Beast in their forehead or in their hand. And that will also include those people who have the name of the Beast or the number of the Beast's name.

God will clearly punish very severely those people who accept that mark. Implied is that **this is specifically a warning to the Laodiceans**, who will face extreme persecution at that point. Can we see that?

Look again at these verses (i.e. Revelation 14:9-11). What do they tell us? Can you think of another way to say what these verses tell us? They speak about a very severe form of punishment. So how would you say the same thing in different words?

How about **"I will spew you out of My mouth"**?

Verses 9-11 are not addressed to people who will end up in the second resurrection. These verses don't hold out any hope. They only spell out severe punishments. These verses are addressed to the Laodiceans. This becomes even more clear in verse 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* **the dead which die** in the Lord **from henceforth**: Yes, says the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. (Revelation 14:13)

Notice the words "from henceforth". This is not talking about God's people who died in the past. This is speaking about those who die in the short period **just before Jesus Christ's second coming**. This is a reference to the Laodiceans, and it pronounces a blessing for those amongst them who **"die in the Lord"**.

This is speaking about an event that still lies ahead of us. It doesn't say whether any people at that time actually do die "in the Lord". Maybe there will be some people? Or maybe there will be many people who at that point will "die in the Lord"? We surely all hope that there will be many amongst those Laodicean people who will "die in the Lord", because then they will still be in the first resurrection. But the Bible does not tell us how many people will "die in the Lord" in that short period of time.

If there are indeed some individuals who "die in the Lord" at that point in time, then they will be the last ones needed to fill up the number of 144,000 for the first resurrection.

The key here is that all of the people who make up the Laodiceans are completely free moral agents. And that means that they themselves must decide to actually repent and to submit their lives to God. God cannot force anyone to really repent ... we human beings ourselves have to make that decision.

So let me give you a **totally hypothetical example** with figures that are certainly wrong and completely theoretical. The numbers involved are not important. What is important is the concept which these numbers illustrate.

Let's suppose that after the Philadelphians have entered the place of safety, God is still looking for 2,000 more people for filling up the number of 144,000. And God is looking for those 2,000 people amongst the Laodiceans. In other words, at that point in time God is looking for 2,000 more people from amongst perhaps 100,000 or more people, who are prepared to "die in the Lord". But all the people involved are free moral agents, and God can neither force these people to repent, nor can God stop people from repenting. (And that is something that God would never do anyway, stop anyone from repenting.)

So while God is looking for 2,000 more people for the first resurrection, it turns out that in fact 2,650 men and women come to a real and committed repentance during that period of time, and so **2,650 people "die in the Lord"** in the period identified as "from henceforth" in Revelation 14:13. That will be **650 more than are needed** for the first resurrection.

So will God then have 144,650 in the first resurrection? No, I don't believe that is an option. At this point in time Jesus Christ is "preparing" 144,000 places for all those who will be in the first resurrection (see John 14:2-3). He is not preparing 144,001 or 144,215 or 144,650 places, or any other number of places.

As I said, the numbers I have presented above are obviously completely wrong. And those numbers are immaterial. But **the principle** they present is this: when the chips are down, and when eternal life is on the line for that vast number of Laodiceans, then there must also be the possibility that perhaps 1 or 2 or 100 or 1000 **more people actually repent than God has budgeted for**, for this phase of His plan. After all, all of them are free moral agents who, with the knowledge they already have, can choose to do what they should have done years or even decades earlier ... repent and submit unconditionally to God, by then being prepared to "die in the Lord".

God will not accept any number less than 144,000 for the first resurrection. But God has surely also made provision for **the theoretical possibility** that "in the homestretch" a few more (or many more?) people come to repentance and "die in the Lord" than God had planned for.

How will God handle that potential situation? That is a question that is not directly connected to "the mark of the Beast". And so I plan to examine this question in another article, which article is already mostly prepared. The current working title for that article is "**The Time of the Laodicean Era**". I hope to publish that article within the next few weeks. Until then I will just leave this question unanswered.

But I believe that the good news here is that it seems that there will indeed be some Laodiceans who will commit fully to God, and they will be prepared to "die in the Lord", which means that they will still receive eternal salvation.

Now let's summarize what we have discussed in regard to the mark of the Beast and the number of his name.

SUMMARY

1) References to "the Beast" in these verses in Revelation refer to **one specific individual** who will rule at the same time as the two witnesses conduct their ministry. This individual has not yet been revealed.

2) The expression "the number of his name" applies very specifically to this one perverse man. Finding the number 666 in other places is a serious distraction, as well as being the expression of a clear bias. **The number 666 was not intended to be applied to anyone else in history**, i.e. to anyone in the past. This number is for the time when Jesus Christ will return, to identify the individual who will fight against Jesus Christ.

3) There is no point in looking for someone to whom we can apply the number 666 before this one perverse individual has appeared on the world scene. God did not provide this number so that we would look for it somewhere in the past. And before we even start to look for ways to apply the number 666 to some individual, we must first see the perverse blasphemies which that individual will present to the world. They will help us to identify this "Beast". **As long as we can't see those blasphemies, there is no point in looking for this individual.**

4) We must also be watching for **another perverse individual** to appear on the world scene (i.e. the second Beast, the False Prophet). He too will be identified by the staggering blasphemies he will spread. This means that **we really will be looking for two perverse individuals**, who support one another. If there isn't a major second perverse individual around, then the one alone can't be the man with the number 666. There must be a powerful second individual.

So we should ask: if the number 666 supposedly applied to "Caesar Nero" and to "Lateinos", etc. then who was "the second Beast" at that time, who was the sidekick for "666"? Nero needed to have "a second Beast" to help him; "Lateinos" needed "a second Beast" to help him; every other supposed 666 man needed "a second Beast" to help them. You follow?

Unless you have "a second Beast" that is contemporaneous with the 666 individual, you don't have the correct man for the number 666. Revelation tells us to be on the lookout for **two men**, one of whom will have the number 666. Both of them will be "Beasts", though one of them pretends to be "a Lamb". Finding one man on his own is not enough to make a correct identification for 666.

5) Now here is a point I haven't mentioned thus far: it will be God's two witnesses who will identify these two Beasts to us and to the world. **None of us are going to know the identities of those two Beasts before the two witnesses will know their identities.** And the two witnesses will then certainly identify these two men to God's people.

6) Once the two witnesses have identified these two men for God's people, then we will understand exactly how the number 666 will fit the first Beast. And then everything else will also fall into place.

7) The two witnesses aren't called "witnesses" for nothing. (The Greek word also means "martyr", and that refers to them being killed at the end of their ministry.) They will be the ones to whom God will give understanding and instructions for His people, much like God used Moses to communicate His instructions to Israel. So I myself don't see any point in even trying to look for some man to whom the number 666 might apply, not before the two witnesses appear.

Because the two witnesses will be pouring out plagues on the people ruled over by the first Beast, therefore God's people are very likely to quickly accept "the credentials" of the two witnesses as God's true servants. It didn't take long for Moses, who had been away for 40 years, to be accepted by the Israelites as their leader. I anticipate a similar speedy process for the two witnesses being accepted by all the people who will have God's spirit at that point in time.

So in conclusion: don't try to look for someone with the number 666 in the past, because the correct individual for that number will only appear **at some point in the future**. And when that individual appears, a lot of other things will also be going on at the same time, chief amongst them being that the

two witnesses will be actively starting their ministry.

Right now there is no reason why any of us should even attempt to put some name to the number 666.

Frank W Nelte