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Roman army vanquishing the city of Jerusalem in the first century. Indeed, the first reference to *“the beast”* mentions this figure making war and leaving bodies on the streets of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:7-8).

The beast is said to have been ridden by a woman dressed in scarlet who is the mother of harlots and who was drunk with the blood of the martyrs (17:1-6). *“The beast that carries her... has the seven heads”* (7). *“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits”* (9). Classically, Rome has been known as *“the City of Seven Hills,”* which are: Aventine Hill, Caelian Hill, Capitoline Hill, Esquiline Hill, Palatine Hill, Quirinal Hill, and Viminal Hill. Thus, the great whore sat upon Rome; the beast is Rome.

“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come” (10). The republic was transformed to an empire by Julius, who was assassinated, making him the *“head... mortally wounded”* (13:3). Following Julius, the kings who ruled the Roman Empire were: second Augustus, third Tiberius, fourth Caligula, fifth Claudius, sixth Nero, seventh Vespasian. For a year and a half between Nero and Vespasian there were a few emperors who each only lasted a few months, so they never effectively ruled the empire and definitely did not participate in persecuting the saints, and are, therefore, uncounted. It was in A.D. 70, during the reign of Vespasian, the seventh emperor, the *“one not yet come,”* that his general Titus would complete the destruction of Jerusalem. The sixth one, who was reigning when John received the Revelation, the *“one”* who *“is,”* was Nero Caesar.

“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (13:18). Unlike other nice round numbers expressed in the Revelation, which clearly convey symbolic meaning – 7, 12, 1000, this particular sum was intended to be calculated. The calculation would point to a man who was the personification, at that time, of the beast, now identified as Rome.

Ancient cultures often assigned numerical value to their alphabets. Whereas modern cyphers might assign the letters A through Z the numbers 1 through 26, in Hebrew gematria the first nine letters are represented by the numbers 1 through 9, the next nine are 10 through 90 – counting by tens, and the last four are 100 through 400 – counting by hundreds.

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Although the Revelation was written, as was the majority of the New Testament, in Greek, it was addressed to a people extremely familiar with Old Testament prophecies, which were first written in Hebrew, and concerned itself with the destruction of the Jewish Temple in the Jewish capital Jerusalem. It is no surprise, then, that the Hebrew language is twice mentioned in the book (9:11; 16:26). Thus, it is the assignment of numerical values to letters in the Hebrew alphabet which must be applied to the calculation of the number of the beast. In Hebrew, Nero Caesar is spelled, reading from right to left: *“גרון קסר.”* The value of those letters are: 50+200+6+50+100+60+200=666. The number of the beast, which is a man’s number, spells out Nero Caesar. Jewish Christians of the first century would reach this conclusion swiftly, but if the book was intercepted by Roman authorities, they would never have perceived its contents referred to the brutality they would soon undertake against Jerusalem.

“He causes 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” (Revelation 13:16-17). Evidently, Nero forbade anyone without imperial approval from transacting in the marketplace. Those with imperial approval were those who *“worshiped the beast”* (13:4). Since the death of Julius Caesar, Romans had been worshiping their emperors. Nero made the imperial cult a requirement to participate in market exchange.

In contrast to those bearing *“the mark of the beast”* (13:16-17; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), this book also makes numerous references to *“the servants of God”* who *“have the seal of God on their foreheads”* (7:3; 9:4), that is *“His Father’s name written on their foreheads”* (14:1; 22:4). Christians did not literally have God’s name sealed on their foreheads. Rather, Christians *“have the mind of Christ”* (1st Corinthians 2:16) because they *“set [their] minds on things above”* (Colossians 3:2), having *“renewed”* the *“mind”* (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23). In that way, the head is sealed with the name of God. It is a metaphor.

Accordingly, it is unlikely the beast’s *“mark”* was literally applied to the hands or heads of emperor worshipers. There is no historical evidence to suggest this practice existed. It was simpler than that. Those who bought and sold knew who worshiped God and who worshiped the emperor and they refused service to any who did not bow down to Rome.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"The world wants us Christians to affirm every religious belief except our own."

– Burk Parsons

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 38

SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2024

"THE MARK OF THE BEAST"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Curious minds would like to know what *"the mark of the beast"* is. The Revelation is a very complex book filled with symbols and is often deeply misunderstood. Care must be given to provide a simple response.

To decode content from the middle of the Revelation, it is imperative to first comprehend the basic context of the book. Despite the predilection of millennial theorists to set the Revelation as prophecy foretelling so-called "end times" events, in reality, it is a prophecy foretelling a specific judgment that would occur shortly after it was written in the first century. It was to *"shortly take place"* (Revelation 1:1; 22:6); *"the time is near"* (1:3); and the Lord kept saying, *"I am coming quickly"* (22:7, 12, 20). From the first chapter to the last, God made clear the prophecy was not some event that two thousand years later remains unfulfilled. *"The mark of the beast"* belongs to the past.

Specifically, the Revelation prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, *"the holy city"* (11:1-2), *"where also our Lord was crucified"* (8). The reason Jerusalem was targeted is that God intended to avenge the blood of His martyrs (6:9-11; 16:4-7; 18:21-24), and Jesus had already said the outpouring of God's wrath regarding the martyrs would occur on Jerusalem in that generation (Matthew 23:29-38). Thus, whatever *"the mark of the beast"* means, it must fit into a narrative about the
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