

“Mark of the Beast”

Revelation 1:1-3

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Have you ever _____ what the Bible says about the mark of the beast? Today we’re going to _____ the book of Revelation and what it says about the mark of the beast. The Bible teaches us everything that we _____ to know about God; and it does it through law, narratives, poetry, epistles, and prophecy. The Bible is a wonderful library of books with many _____ of literature. The book of Revelation is _____, but it’s written in a style called apocalyptic literature. Understanding the _____ of the book helps answer many questions about its symbols.

Apocalyptic literature grew out of a need for Jews to _____ one another during very difficult times. It usually tells the _____ of how things will go from bad to worse for the people of God, but how God intervenes to _____ his people. These are messages of _____ for hard times that included a prophecy of persecution and sometimes death. On the surface they appear innocent and sometimes fanciful, but underneath they contain a valuable and meaningful _____ of hope.

The book of Revelation also tells of God’s ultimate _____ over the enemies of the church. Revelation 17:14 says, “They will make war on the Lamb (that is, Jesus), and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” As we _____ the book of Revelation, we find references to a dragon and to beasts that are symbolic references to the enemies of Jesus.

Our reading comes from Revelation 1:1-3; the revelation of Jesus Christ to John.

The use of apocalyptic literature was actually _____ among Jews in the centuries prior to the writing of the book of Revelation. Some believe there is some deep, dark secret behind every _____. Frankly, those who hold the futurist interpretation of Revelation have fostered this _____ by associating hard-to-understand passages with twenty-first century events. Using the book to _____ the events of this century shows little attention to what the book has to say for itself. Many who hold to the futurist view of Revelation have never investigated the _____ of the book itself. Study of the background will _____ great encouragement from this book.

Apocalyptic literature uses _____. The beginning of Revelation says that the Lord Jesus “communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who bore _____ to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he _____.” The Greek word for “communicated” means to make a message _____ by some sort of sign or figure, and that shows the symbolic character of the book. This should warn the reader not to expect a _____ presentation of future history but a symbolic portrayal of that which “must _____ take place.” Verse 4 says the book of Revelation addressed and spoke specifically to the _____ of the seven churches of Asia in the first century. He told them what they _____, things which “must soon take place” (verse 1); “for the time is at hand” (verse 3). This helps us to understand what the book would have _____ to them at that time. To interpret the book futuristically, saying it is addressing

twenty-first century America, _____ us of being able to understand the book as the Lord delivered it. Unfortunately, much of what futurists today are saying the book of Revelation _____ is simply their fanciful speculations.

Why is the book of Revelation symbolic? Apocalyptic literature uses “_____” language. In difficult times of war or persecution, the Jews used figurative codes to communicate things that they understood among themselves but the _____ or persecutors couldn’t understand. John, as a Jewish Christian, used this _____ to communicate to his brethren in the seven churches of Asia. If the persecutors found the apocalyptic message, they wouldn’t be _____ to understand it. This would help ensure _____ for the people of God.

Objects and numbers in apocalyptic literature are _____ symbolic, not literal. Revelation itself gives us a _____ to many of these symbols: stars are angels; lamps are spirits; the dragon is Satan; horns are kings or powers; heads are mountains, and the Woman is the Great City. One is the number of unity, two of strength, three of deity, four of the world, five of perfection (five fingers and toes), six of sin, seven of perfection, ten of completeness, and twelve of the organized people of God. Multiples indicate intensity, and since ten refers to completeness, the number thousand encompasses all. A myriad was an unlimited number. These symbols help us to see how the book should be understood figuratively, and not always literally.

In chapter twelve Revelation, introduces us to the _____ who hates the people of God and wants to destroy them. In chapter thirteen, we’re introduced to the beast who has _____ from the dragon (the devil) to make _____ on Christians. **Read Revelation 13:4-8.** It opened its _____ to utter blasphemies against God. Also, it was allowed to make _____ on the saints and to conquer them. Authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and _____ who dwell on earth will _____ it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

What is this about? Rome was not only the _____ of government and wealth in its day, it was also a headquarters for _____. Most of the people _____ in the existence of pagan gods; but their confidence was shaken when their gods _____ to help them, so paganism was breaking down. Christianity, on the other hand, at the latter part of the first century was _____. This was a challenge to Rome because Roman law said the emperor was _____. Domitian, who reigned from 81 to 96 AD, was the Roman emperor when the book of Revelation was _____. He demanded to be worshipped and to be called “Lord and God.” He was very _____ hungry to control the Senate, and the people, and the army.

For Christians, worshipping a man was idolatrous and a denial of their _____ in Christ Jesus. To the Romans, the refusal to worship the emperor was an act of _____. Emperor worship was forced on Christians as a _____ of their loyalty to the State. Christians were called on to _____ the ceremonies of loyal service and worship to the emperor—the placing of a pinch of incense upon the altar. To refuse was treason; to agree was to _____ that one was not a Christian. Some Christians saw this act as meaningless, so they performed it to _____ punishment; but they were denying their faith. As the demand for emperor worship _____, Christians became guilty as criminals.

The emperor appointed an official _____ known as the praefectus urbi to enforce worship in each town. These were responsible for _____ people in various cities over a province. The group with the greatest authority was the concilia, whose duty was to build _____ of the emperor and sponsor the state religion. They forced the people to _____ the emperor. When people refused to worship the emperor, they were identified and _____ in various ways. Revelation chapter 13 speaks of _____ beasts. The purpose of the second beast was to empower the first beast. **Read Revelation 13:15-18.**

Many Christians _____ to worship the emperor and were beheaded, exiled, or lost all their property. Some were _____ until they confessed “Lord Caesar.” One of the reasons this punishment fell heavy in Asia Minor is because this was a major _____ of Christianity after 70 AD All this _____ us to better understand and appreciate the encouragement the book of Revelation gives to the seven churches of Asia.

Revelation shows that even so great a power as Rome was _____ to be overthrown. In the end, the _____ of God would triumph, and Christ will reign supreme. Revelation presents a ringing call to maintain loyalty to the _____ at all costs, even in the face of martyrdom. The Lord Jesus told the church at Smyrna, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

What then, is the _____ of the beast? The book of Revelation describes a time when _____, including Christians, were commanded to worship the Roman emperor, who claimed to be a god. Offering a sacrifice to the emperor and calling him “Lord” were considered _____ gestures as well as religious ones; and those who refused were suspect, considered disloyal, or even traitors. Undoubtedly, the Romans _____ those who had complied with the order. They probably gave those who made the required sacrifice a certificate, and _____ those who could show the certificate were allowed to buy or sell or conduct business.

The mark is said to be placed “on their right _____ and on their _____.” Perhaps that only signifies “in a conspicuous _____.” Or it may reflect a comparison with the Jewish custom of wearing phylacteries (Deuteronomy 6:8; Matthew 23:5). So it was fairly common at least for Jews to wear a “mark” that indicated their relationship to _____. The “mark of the beast” would stand in _____ to that.

Revelation 13:18 says, “Here is _____. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six” (666). Many students of Revelation believe this beast is _____. Nero was the first of the Roman emperors _____ to be involved in persecuting the church. Nero’s persecution seems to have been confined to _____ itself and it is difficult to find evidence that it was extended vigorously into the provinces, such as Asia, to whom Revelation is addressed. Due to its ferocity and violence, however, it continues to be remembered with _____, and the man himself was “bestly” enough for the figure to fit.

There was also a popular _____ that Nero would be revived, and that at least another emperor would have his same vindictive _____. Others believed that he didn’t really die and would later

on _____ with an army to reestablish his reign. Many see a reference to these popular ideas in the fact that the beast from the sea received a “deadly _____” which “was _____” (Revelation 13:3). They assume, then, that Domitian was the _____ Nero, who died many years before. This is a possibility, but by no means _____.

Some interpret the number 666 by counting _____ as numbers. They find a person that the letters of their _____ add up to 666. Greek, like other classical languages, has _____ symbols for numbers, so letters serve that purpose. Some find that the name Nero, and others find that the name of Caesar would _____ to 666. Interpreters through the years have suggested _____ of names that people interpreted as the beast whose number was 666. We must realize that identifying this number with _____ individual is highly speculative.

A better approach for understanding 666 lies in the symbolism of the numbers themselves. As we mentioned earlier, _____ in Revelation has the symbolic significance of perfection, completeness, or even, deity. Our text says 666 is the number of the persecuting _____, and it’s “the number of a _____.” Seven is the number of perfection; six the number of that which falls _____ of perfection. Six-hundred-sixty-six may suggest, then, that this beast is not _____ and will not successfully complete the task of the destruction of the church. He is not “holy, holy, holy,” as is our God. He is not seven or divine, but six and _____. He falls short of being the “god” that he _____ to be. He is not _____ of worship and will not _____.

Later chapters in the book of Revelation reveal the _____ of Rome and the _____ of the Lord Jesus and His saints. Just as the dragon of Revelation 12 was defeated, so _____ and all that follow him will be defeated. The Lord Jesus will _____ because He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Is he your Lord? Whose side are you standing on?

We all face _____. While we do not face persecution as the early Christians did, we do _____ whether to follow the powers in this world or to follow the Lord Jesus Christ; that’s a big decision. We don’t have pagan idols or emperor worship, but we still have the challenges of the _____. The world still _____ you and me for loving God. **Read 1 John 2:15-17.**

Satan’s ultimate agenda is not just to get you to _____, but to keep you from worshiping and devoting your _____ to God. Satan will use anything to accomplish his _____. Those who follow Satan will _____ him and they’ll be enslaved by him. God _____ those who belong to Him and those who belong to the world. Second Timothy 2:19 says, “But God’s firm foundation _____, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord _____ those who are his,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.’”

The promise of the book of Revelation is that those who _____ to the Lord Jesus will overcome in the end and be _____. Are you standing with the Lord or with the world? You are deciding where you will spend _____. To become a Christian, _____ your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, _____ of every sin and turn to righteousness, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, you leave the domain of this world and you come into the kingdom of God.