

June, 2006

Pause Ponder Profit

Six Hundred Sixty Six

by James A. Brown

At this writing, the day is June 6, 2006 or 06-06-06. According to some television news stations, I've heard today, some have associated this date with Satan, symbolized by the number 666. This number of course has nothing to do with Satan nor today's date. It is taken from the book of Revelation.

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. (Revelation 13:18, NKJV)

The book of Revelation has been the favorite book of many a false teacher. The language of the book is filled with signs and symbols. And because of this, many being lazy and not wanting to put in time and effort to understand the language, have distorted the figures in order to support that which is false and imaginary. The number 666, in this passage, is one such example. But with just a little effort, you can find the truth.

Looking at the verse you will notice that the one with understanding is called upon to "count" (KJV) or "calculate the number". To "calculate" simply means to reckon mathematically, that is to work out or compute a figure (e.g., the number "666") using mathematics. When one has calculated the number 666 he has simply figured out the name of "a man". The ancients had a practice of computing the number of one's name by adding up the specific values attached to each letter of his name. This procedure is known as "gematria". So when the sum total of the letters in a man's name were computed it would reveal the number of his name.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Vol. IV, pg. 2162) has this to say about our subject. "A peculiar application of numbers which was in great favor with the later Jews and some of the early Christians and is not absolutely unknown to the Bible, is *Gematria*, that is the use of the letters of a word so as by means of their combined numerical value to express a name, . . . There is only one clear example in Scripture, the number of the beast which is the number of a man, six hundred sixty and six (Rev. 13:18). If, as most scholars are inclined to believe, a name is intended, the numerical value of the letters composing which adds up to 666, and if it is assumed that the writer thought in Hebrew or Aramaic, *Nero Caesar* . . ., seems to be the best solution."

"Calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man". That man was **Nero Caesar**, (666) the sixth emperor of Rome. He ruled from 54-68 AD. Nero had a lot of characteristics of Satan. But he was not Satan. And his number had nothing to do with the date June 6, 2006.



The Church Of The Thessalonians

by James A. Brown

In the New Testament we find two short epistles addressed to “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). Here, “the church” is the local congregation of God’s people or the called out body of people belonging to Christ, in the city of Thessalonica. Let’s consider a few things about these brethren and the labors of Paul, Silas, and Timothy among them.

When the letters to the church at Thessalonica were written, the city was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. The city was located in the northern part of ancient Greece. Today Thessalonica’s modern name is Salonica. It has a population of approximately 800,000 inhabitants and is the capital city of the Greek Macedonia. The city is located on the Gulf of Salonica, which opens into the Aegean Sea.

The church had its beginning in Thessalonica during the apostle Paul’s second evangelistic journey. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit directed Paul to Troas where a vision appeared to him in the night. After having seen the vision, it was concluded that the Lord had called Paul and those traveling with him to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-12). After Paul and Silas had been beaten and jailed in the city of Philippi (Acts 16:19-40) and then released they and Timothy traveled about 100 miles to the city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).

When Paul and his party arrived in the city of Thessalonica, they went into the synagogue of the Jews, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-3). They were bold in their preaching of the gospel even after having been persecuted for preaching it in the city of Philippi (1 Thess. 2:1-2).

Exactly how long Paul and his companions preached the gospel in Thessalonica we do not know. They could have stayed as little as three weeks or three to four months. Others might say they stayed seven or eight months. While there Paul received financial support from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:15-16). But evidently this support was not enough to completely meet his needs. For he and those who labored with him, in the preaching of the word, engaged in manual labor, in the day as well as in the night, in order to provide for themselves (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). While in Thessalonica they were housed by an individual named Jason (Acts 17:7).

After he left the synagogue (Acts 17:1-2), Paul may have preached the gospel from Jason’s home. As the gospel was preached it was received by the hearers and obeyed as the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). It was a message delivered by or through the authority of the Lord Jesus (1 Thess. 4:2). Many Gentile proselytes of the Jewish religion were persuaded by the gospel message (Acts 17:4). But only some of the Jews believed for most were not persuaded (Acts 17:4-5). Those who were not persuaded had rejected God and His word inspired of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8). Some of the one’s who did not believe the gospel message became envious and stirred up a riot against Paul. They seized Jason, but Paul escaped (Acts 17:4-10). The unbelieving Jews accused Paul and his companions of doing things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, and saying that there was another king, Jesus (Acts 17:7). No doubt Paul and his fellow laborers had preached about the kingdom of God (1 Thess. 2:12). But the unbelieving Jews had perverted their teaching so as to have an accusation against them. Paul and Silas had to flee from the city of Thessalonica to the city of Berea. For their safety, they did this under the cover of darkness (Acts 17:10). Timothy later joined up with Paul and Silas in Berea. (Acts 17:14).

(Continued on page 3)

(The Church Of The Thessalonians — Continued from page 2)

After Paul left Thessalonica, the Church that he left behind became evangelistic and sounded forth the word of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:8). They had received the word in much affliction and had become examples to all believers, by bearing up under the persecution (1 Thess. 1:6-7). For the unbelieving Jews who had at first sought to persecute Paul and his companions now directed their hostility toward the Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:14). While Paul was with them, he told them this would happen (1 Thess. 3:4). Paul, fearing that their young faith could not hold out against the persecution, wanted to return to them more than once but was hindered by Satan (1 Thess. 2:17-18).

Paul preached the gospel to a more receptive Jewish audience in Berea. But he soon had to flee from there because of the unbelieving Jews who came from Thessalonica. When Paul left Berea, he left Silas and Timothy there (Acts 17:10-14). Some brethren from Berea accompanied Paul as he sailed from Berea to Athens. When they arrived in Athens he send word by them back to Silas and Timothy telling them to join him in Athens as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). We do not know how soon they came to Athens. But we do know that they came (1 Thess. 3:1-2). Not being able to return to Thessalonica himself (1 Thess. 2:18), Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens to see how the persecution was having an effect on the faith of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 3:1-5). Paul also sent Silas back to Macedonia but where in Macedonia we do not know (Acts 18:5). After Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica, Paul departed Athens and traveled to the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1).

While Paul was in Corinth, Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). This is the last we hear of Silas in the book of Acts. He is later mentioned as being with the apostle Peter

in the city of Babylon (1 Pet. 5:12-13). When Timothy came from Macedonia he brought good news from Thessalonica concerning the faith and love of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 3:6). Paul was comforted and encouraged by this good report (1 Thess. 3:6-10).

From the epistle of First Thessalonians it seems as though Timothy's report mentioned a few other things. As we read the epistle, we get the impression that the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica had made some accusations against Paul and his companions. In the second chapter of the epistle, Paul addresses these charges and defends himself and his fellow workers (1 Thess. 2:3-10). Other subjects discussed in the book include: sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:1-8), social conduct (1 Thess. 4:9-12), uncertainty about Christians who had died and the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18), the certainty of Christ coming (1 Thess. 5:1-11), and some general exhortations (1 Thess. 5:12-22). Paul wrote (52 AD) and sent this first letter to the Thessalonians immediately upon the arrival of Timothy to Corinth and after receiving his report (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6). Paul would write his second epistle to the Thessalonians only a few months later (53 AD).

Paul's contact with the Thessalonian Christians did not end with his second epistle. Paul no doubt visited with them during his third evangelistic journey (Acts 20:1-2). And he probably visited them again when he came through Macedonia after his first imprisonment in Rome and in connection with his hope to visit the church at Philippi (1 Tim. 1:3; Phil. 2:24).

**Turn your radio to KDRS 1490 AM
each Sunday morning
at 9:00 to hear
The Power Of God
Broadcast**



The Great Commission Applied

by Larry Ray Hafley

“**A**nd Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

In Acts 11:19-26, we find the above charge in working order. In the city of Antioch, by the preaching of the Lord Jesus, “a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they send forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord . . . and much people was added unto the Lord.” Thus the disciples made disciples.

With the coming of Barnabas, more souls were sanctified; all were edified. Then Barnabas sought Saul, the tireless tentmaker of Tarsus, “And when he found him he brought him into Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.” “So,” as the Spirit’s pen wrote elsewhere, “mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20).

These early disciples not only preached their Lord commission, but they also practiced and applied it. Yes, we need much talk of Matthew 28:18-20. But we also need the exercise of Acts 11.



Non-profit Org.
U. S. Postage Paid
Permit # 356
Paragould, AR

**Second and Walnut
Church Of Christ**
400 N. 2nd St.
P. O. Box 356
Paragould, AR 72451

Pause — Ponder — Profit is a monthly publication of the Second and Walnut Church Of Christ, Paragould, Arkansas.

Sunday
Radio 1490 AM 9:00 A.M.
Bible Study 9:45 A.M.
Worship 10:45 A.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

Preacher: James A. Brown
Phone: 870-236-3371
paragouldchurchofchrist.com