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In this passage of Revelation 13:16-18, the Lord was giving John the apostle a peek into the workings of the modern commercial system, revealing to him certain aspects of it - the “mark” and “number”. These are like tips of the iceberg of the vast commercial system that runs on computer technology to better monitor and expedite the buying and selling operations of our modern day.

To understand the whole “iceberg” would have been impossible for John. But it’s not difficult for us. With the benefit of some hindsight in this technological age, we can understand the complex machinery that works behind these outwardly visible manifestations of “mark” and “number”. We can understand what these key features in modern buying and selling activity will be, and already are to some extent.

Furthermore, they are aspects that people will experience personally in everyday life. Thus, they stand out well as “signs of the times” - obvious markers that people are faced with and can easily recognize. And that may be why the Lord revealed these particular features of the modern system to John the apostle - both as guidepost/forewarning and as an inspiration to our faith to know that God knows what’s going on and has a plan for the future of humankind.

**A question that may arise: Could the 666-number show up somehow in the “mark”? Perhaps. But it doesn’t have to, to fulfill the prediction. That is, we don’t have to look for a “mark” with the number 666 in it. There is no need to conflate these two aspects of commercial exchange, except to understand that they are both needed. Otherwise though, it appears that they are separate operations. The wording in Revelation 13:17 seems to make a clear distinction between buying or selling, Mark or Number.**

**So, the bare bones of what we need to see is a “mark” that can be used for buying and the 666-number for selling. It looks like we’ve already got the “number”, that part of the prediction. The 666-Number has already come into worldwide use, and even now it is almost impossible to sell without it.**

**However, the Number is not a sign of one’s worship of the Antichrist. It is the next step of fulfillment that is a matter of concern. When the Mark comes into general use, both as the sign of Antichrist-worship and the means to buy material goods, then the world will be forced to choose between love for God or love for this world and what it has to offer.**

**Important conclusion: The description given in these Scriptures fits nicely the modern reality. The degree of importance attached to “mark” and “number”, their respective usages, these aspects given in the Scriptures jibe with the actual reality of what is already happening in the world of commercial exchange. And furthermore, because we are seeing these signs coming to pass, it provides us with some forewarning of things to come: the rise of the final empire and the False Prophet’s “mark” initiation-rite worship service to the other Beast (the Antichrist).**

**And how might one prepare for these future events? First of all, by making Christ the center of one’s life. Through Him, we are better connected to the spiritual realm and gain a certain amount of helpful guidance and protection that can be useful in this life, along with the assurance of joy and peace in the Afterlife to come. Secondly, regarding practical considerations, one may prepare by aiming to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on the commercial system.**

**It’s astounding to think the future could be so clearly foreseen 2,000 years ago. Like some kind of all-purpose camera, this revelation about the**

**“mark” and the “number” gives us a wide-angle view of an enormous, cashless, computerized, commercial system; or an in-depth view of a materialistic religion sweeping the world during an age of scientific skepticism; or a microscopic view that brings to light such hidden details as the number 666.**

**Who could possibly make this kind of long-range forecast of things to come? Only a loving, all-knowing Creator could possess such insight. Verified by down-to-earth evidence, this intriguing revelation offers solid proof that we can trust God as the One ultimately in control of history and the world’s destiny, and of course, of our own lives as well, for which He has a beautiful future in store.**

**Through this remarkable message at the end of chapter 13 in the Book of Revelation, we can see ever so clearly that some of those End of the Age events are already upon us, while others are soon to come. It thrills us to see these things coming to pass, and we realize the awesome reality, even privilege, of being able to witness this climactic period in human history. We look forward with eager anticipation to the grand transition of our earthly domain from a world dominated by the forces of Darkness into the soon-coming Age of Peace, the Kingdom of God on Earth.**

**~ THE END ~**