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13 – 666: A Key Sign of the Times

The existence of the 666-encoded barcodes in the world of commercial exchange presents a startling sign to us. It's a major clue that the long-awaited End of the Age, as foretold in the Book of Revelation, is at our doorstep. In times past, scholars have tried to identify this number with the events of their own day.

And indeed, there are numerous 666-types of numerological configurations to be found in various words, names, and events – especially those that pertain to things of an anti-God nature. But none of these seeming manifestations jibe with the role that Revelation 13:17 assigns to the *"number"* – that it is to be used in the world of commercial exchange.

In ages past, no one could possibly have understood this usage of a 666-number in a worldwide computerized market system. But we, having the benefit of a little hindsight, can see that the *"mark"* and the 666 *"number"* will be linked in a very practical way with the buying and selling operations of the modern world. And to a large extent, that has already come to pass. And this we could acknowledge as the literal, primary fulfillment of the ancient prophecy. Or if not that, it is certainly close to it

and leading towards its fulfillment.

Nowadays, we see 666 splashed around quite a bit; the forces of Darkness seem to have appropriated it, advertising it in a myriad of ways, and making it sound like some infernal creation of the Nether world. In truth, more than likely, it was God's plan/intervention that caused the 666-number to show up in the barcodes used for shopping, and was intended as a "sign of the times". Like a guidepost, the widespread use of this number tells us where we are in the present Age of history – near its completion.

Once, when teaching about conditions prior to His Second Coming, Jesus made a comparison to how it was prior to the Great Flood: *"…they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."* (Matthew 24:39) In spite of the signs, the world has become oblivious to the reality to which the signs are pointing: the soon-coming End of the Age and Return of the Savior to rescue mankind from self-destruction.

The Devil, of course, would prefer to keep the world oblivious to how the present economic system will eventually turn into a giant trap – one that is meant to herd them into his control and worship system. Since he can't deny the existence of the Number, he tries to sow confusion and prevent the world from taking seriously this remarkable warning sign and fulfillment of this ancient prediction.

The spiritual forces of Darkness camouflage the reality of this astounding marker of our times with a maze of decoys, a bewildering array of spectacular and sinister versions of 666; he distorts the picture, sweeps it away under a carpet of confusion. And so, if one is not aware of what the passage in Revelation 13 actually teaches, they will be decoyed into thinking the 666-number is some weird kind of thing, not related to themselves or the real world in any way. Well, that is what often happens with riddles (as brought out in Post 11); they're expressed in terms that make us think the answer must be something extraordinary when in fact it can be something quite ordinary.

Regarding the Enemy's confusion tactics, Jesus gave an example in Matthew 24. Referring to His Coming, He said, *"Wherefore if they shall say*

unto you, 'Behold, He is in the desert;' go not forth; 'behold, He is in the secret chambers;' believe it not." **(24:26, KJV) The Devil knows he can't deny the Second Coming to many Christians, but he does try to confuse them, in order to disarm them by coming to premature conclusions about it. But we have only to read and believe what the Scriptures say. There's nothing mysterious about His Coming; it won't be *"in the secret chambers"*, or out *"in the desert"*. But the Scripture says plainly His Coming shall be as the *"lightning shining from east to west."* (24:27 KJV)**

Likewise, there's nothing so mysterious or hidden about the *"number"*. In spite of the sinister spin one often hears about "666", in reality it's nothing more than a number that is needed for the everyday business of shopping.

Of course, the passage itself has its own spin: describing the Number in the form of an elaborate, 1st century riddle adds an air of mystery; and because of the importance attached in ancient times to numerology and the use of letters for numbers – a custom we're not familiar with – this makes the Number sound even more mysterious.

In any case, the world is becoming inoculated against the shocking realization that 666 has become an indispensable part of their everyday (shopping) life for quite some time now. And of course, the forces of Darkness prefer that the world drift along this way without getting wise to their plans. And strangely enough, God also seems to prefer, to some extent at least, that the world doesn't fully understand.

But He does want, even needs, for His people to know. This is like many of the parables Jesus taught, which were intended for His followers only, probably because they, as future leaders and teachers, would need to know this information. *"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'"* (Luke 8:10) Those who do not hear or understand would probably react in the wrong way if they did – either seeking to fight against the will of God or collapsing into a state of fear. So it is better for the meaning to remain hidden.

So John's description of the number in Revelation 13:18 need not be

taken as a dire warning about an insidious 666-number that we are going to have to beware of and resist. (Even if we wanted to, it's already too late for that.) As mentioned before in Posts 4-6, it is the *"mark"*, not the *"number"*, that anyone with a conscience toward God should beware of and avoid.

The Number is more like an observation or guidepost to say, "This is how you'll know that the final Beast has come, or is soon to come… when the 666-number has become an entrenched feature of shopping activity." But for many people, even knowing this much is more than they can take.

Only in our modern day, could the various factors in the ancient prediction ever fully come together. Following is a review of how barcodes seem to fulfill that mysterious message about the 666-number:

1) The *"mark"* is for *"everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave… so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark… or the number."* The *"number"* is included along with the *"mark"* and, like the *"mark"*, is intended for worldwide use. As its name, Universal Product Code, implies, barcodes are being used all over the world.

And most of the barcodes used in retail stores have 666 encoded in them; they are in general use internationally for most shopping items, even in less technologically advanced nations. In olden days, to have such a universal application of a means of exchange, would have been impossible. Each nation, each district, had its own way of buying and selling things.

2) As John's revelation suggests, the *"number"* is something tangible that has a very practical use in the buying and selling operation. Without this 666-number in the bar codes, point-of-sale computers could not read the information, and buying or selling would become difficult. So the *"number"* has become a vital aspect nowadays in shopping – without which *"no one can buy or sell"*, exactly as John predicted. It's not an overnight fad, but an ingrained and permanent feature in the supermarkets of the world.

The number 666 may show up elsewhere in our computerized world; but as far as buying or selling goes, there doesn't seem to be any better fulfillment other than the 666 patterns found in the

product barcodes. Maybe something new or better will come up, but it doesn't have to. For all intents and purposes, this aspect of John the apostle's prediction can be taken as already fulfilled.

3) The 666-encoded barcodes fit nicely with the wording; the phrase *"mark… or number"* parallels the phrase *"buy or sell"*. The words *"sell"* and *"number"* should correspond with each other. And indeed they do. The bar code *"number"* pertains more to the selling side in commercial transactions.

4) Although the unnumbered guard-bars in the barcodes are not read by a shop's computer as a number, yet as far as we are concerned, they resemble the bar-space-bar pattern of a 6 repeated three times. Because barcodes have this threefold repetition of the number 6 in them, that seems to be why the Scripture states that the number is 666 rather than just two sixes or one six.

The fact that it takes a little *"wisdom"* to *"calculate the number"* suggests that it is not supposed to be very obvious. And this is true; one has to do some searching or figuring to find it in those bar codes. The *"number"* is hidden so that you cannot see it at a casual glance. And this hidden feature of the *"number"* seems to be why John posed this last verse 18 as a challenge or riddle; and as a riddle, the answer should be something unexpected and not in accordance with a rigid standard of adherence to reality.

So, just because the computers don't read the guard-bars as 6-6-6, that doesn't mean they should be ignored. Our human eyes do read them as 6-6-6. And as far as riddles are concerned, that's good enough.

5) The bar codes are something that people have to use nowadays; it's been forced on the world, but in a rather subtle way. The Scripture suggests this too, that the False Prophet Beast *"causes"* the world to accept the *"mark"* and the *"number"*. The approach is gradual enough so that people have time to get familiar with the new system and rather oblivious to where it is all heading.

Once upon a time these barcodes with their hidden 666-numbers were thought of in mysterious terms and as a dreaded forewarning of things to come. But isn't it remarkable that nowadays, 40-plus years since their

inception, here they are and we hardly give them a second thought?

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Continue to Part 14 – Conclusion