

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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666

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John writes, “*Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty and six*” (Revelation 13:18).

Many in the media have focused our attention this week on the date (June 6, 2006). The remake of the 70’s horror movie “The Omen” opened. *Hell* Michigan had a special day in their city. Talk show hosts used the date to open the mike to the public’s self-interpreting signs that the end of the world was near. Why all the hoopla? It is the only time in this century when the numbers 666 role up on the calendar. Of course, you have to make some concessions: eliminate some zeros (06-06-06), and disregard a “2” (2006). But when you want to hype religious superstitions, it does not take many concessions to arouse those geared to superstitions, but biblically ignorant.

A cursory look at the passage in the Bible where the number “666” focuses attention for a special meaning informs us the number is the number of “a man”, not a date on the calendar.

So, we ask, “Why is the date, contrived my ignoring other numbers in the date, equated with “the number of a man”?

Also, a Catholic priest who is a frequent “scholarly” guest on Fox News, said that we should not be upset about the date, for the number is describing “*The Devil*”, not a particular date. A closer look at your Bible reveals that 666 is “*the number of the beast*”. The context informs readers “*the Devil*” is the “*red dragon*” (Revelation 12:3, 9). While the dragon gives “*his power, and his throne, and great authority*” (Revelation 13:2) to the beast coming out of the sea, and the beast coming out of the earth “*spake as a dragon*” (Revelation 13:11), the beast and the red dragon are not the same person. Those who worshipped the beast were worshipping the dragon, not because the dragon and the beast are the same person, but because the beast acts with the power and authority of Satan and speaks with the blasphemies against God like the Devil (Revelation 13:4-5,11).

Some recognizing “*Gematria*” in the Hebrew and Greek culture, have applied the

number to the name of various men in history. This practice “*is the use of the letters of a word so as by means of their combined numerical value to express a name, or a witty association of ideas*” (ISBE. Vol. IV, p. 2162). The Greek, NERON KAISER (Nero Caesar), crunches out the number 666 when reduced to Hebrew letters: NRWN KSR. But the combination of emperors’ names, TRAJAN and HADRIANUS (A.D. 98-117, 117-138) when reduced to the Hebrew also produce the same number, 666.

The text directs us to understand that “666” is the number of man in general. “*Man*” translates the Greek word, “*ANTHROPOU*”, meaning “*mankind*”. The absence of the “*definite article*” emphasizes man in general, not a particular individual in history. Since “6” falls short of the complete and perfect “7”, we see this powerful and blasphemous beast as simply man, not God. To repeat the number “6” three times (666), John emphasizes this fact as HOLY, HOLY, HOLY emphasizes the holiness of God (Isaiah 6:3). The reader is being encouraged to not fear, nor worship the beast by considering the number 666.