

The number of the beast

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[0:00] Right, good evening everybody. Well done for turning out on a rainy evening.

! We're going to continue looking at the book of Revelation.! And let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we can be together and we can be together around your word.

And we pray that you will bless this time. We're looking at a rather, I don't know, challenging, difficult passage, difficult content.

We pray that you will enable us to gain blessing from this and be enabled better to live the Christian life, to fight the good fight and to overcome.

And come at last to the heavenly city. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So before we get into it, there's a little sort of diversion here, which is two of the Greek words from the text that we're going to look at.

[1:10] One of the golden rules is you should never try and tell the congregation about the Greek words. But you can cope with it, can't you? Yeah. This one is arithmos, which I've put into English here, arithmos.

Any suggestions what word comes from the Greek? Arithmos. Arithmos. Arithmos, yeah. And in the text, it is the number.

So the number of the beast, which we're going to say is the arithmos. And another word in those sentences is sephizo.

I think I'm pronouncing it right. Or something very much like it. In there somewhere is the same word as in, that's Greek, that's Latin.

It's a stone. Stone. What's the name? Stone. Stone. It's a stone. A calculus is a little stone. And calculus in English is...

[2:11] Calculator. It's a... Well, you get calculated from that. And you also get... Calculus is a method of measuring, isn't it?

We could have that sort of way. So that's the Latin version, little stone. And in this Greek word, apparently, is little stone somewhere.

And this word is used to, we would calculate it, calculate. And it also means like to reckon, to do the arithmetic.

So doing a calculation, calculating the arithmetic or calculating the number, that's one of the things that the text says. And because I'm interested in words, and you were very patient with me, I thought I would show you that because I think it's quite fascinating, where the words come from and where they go to.

Well, I think you started it. Can I ask you more questions? Well, listen. What is the actual phrase that is 666? Is it 666? Is it a... Is it a... Is it a...

[3:15] ekastos, ekastasi, ex, or something like that. It's in words rather than in symbols. It is in words. So the hex is six, isn't it?

It's something like ekastasi, meaning 600, ekastos, or something like that, meaning 60, and ex, meaning six. So it's three words. Yeah.

And the other thing I probably should say was that there used to be, and I don't think we do it now, a thing where you give each letter of the alphabet a number.

So if you were to do it in English, I suppose you'd say one, two, three, C, C, D, four, et cetera, like that.

And if you put somebody's name, like Marina, you can give each of those letters a number, and then you can add them up and get a total, and you will have a sepid, so the arhythmus of that name.

[4:20] And as we shall see, you could turn the mirror into a number. I haven't done it, I'm afraid, but let's suppose it was 545. You can get the number, but you can't work back to see whose name it was.

And that turns out to be significant later. Season error, isn't it? Season error. Could be. Yep. I mean, the thing is, you don't know. You can't, you can go forwards from the letters to the number, but you, with certainty, but you can't go backwards from the numbers to work out what the letters were.

Right. We've prayed, and this is the introduction. So far, we have seen that the book of Revelation is not really meant to just be a conundrum.

It is for our edification, for our survival and our progress as Christians. Apocalypse ellipsis means taking away the veil. It is an unveiling so that you can see the realities behind the surface, the truth behind the appearance.

[5:30] Lord, help us to see the reality behind the appearance so that we know who our real enemies are. it's in the form of a letter addressed to seven churches, so we assume straight off that it must have some relevance to the people who are reading it.

It must have some relevance to the people who in the first case were reading it. It's to, I would say this, churches, how many? Seven.

Seven, yes. Let's just make sure that you're awake at this point. It is also in the form of a prophecy. So prophecies do look forward, but usually what a prophecy does, it says in the large picture of what's going to happen, how you are to behave now.

So in Isaiah chapter 2, come now, let us walk in the light of the Lord. That's the bit where it says all the nations will stream.

In latter days, the mountain of the Lord's house will be lifted above all the other mountains, etc, etc, and it says, come now, O Israel, let us walk in the light of the Lord. So there's a current behavioural implications of the prophetic picture.

[6:45] There's some of the pictorial things that we come across in the book and today we're going to be looking at these beasts, which on my screen, they're two different colours, but on this screen, strangely, they're both the same colour, which is rather strange.

So far, we have seen the scene in heaven, the lamb upon the throne opens, what I believe, I think we could say is the scroll of world history, it has seven seals, and the seven seals are plagues and troubles on the ecosystem, which finally lead to judgement.

But in that series of seven, the church, that's the believing people of the Old Testament and New Testament, are secure because they are sealed with a mark on the forehead, which is copying something from, in the Old Testament.

Then we have seven angels sounding seven trumpets, which again were plagues on the ecosystem. These sevens included satanic disorder, and the comment that despite all this, people still did not repent.

So the idea of those plagues meaning to lead people to repentance was in there. But there were also, in a pictorial way, the church giving God-enabled witness.

[8:07] And as we came to the chapters that we were looking at last week, which is, let's open it up. Excuse me.

We've got, we've got as far as the chapter 12, and we started to see what sort of specific opposition the church encounters.

And we found out about the dragon, who is both defeated and aggressive. And we found that in chapter 12. And we're going to look at chapter 13, and perhaps a little bit of 14, depending on time. And here we find the dragon does not work direct, but uses agents and processes. And that's what we're going to find out about in chapters 13 and 14.

So shall we read, what we usually do is have a microphone, isn't it? I forgot to say that. Could we have a really friendly microphone? Could you find it in that drawer there? So we're going to look at chapters 13 and 14.

[9:32] And while we're finding the microphone, I'll just indicate to you, chapter 13, verse 1, is the dragon standing on, actually it says, the sand of the sea.

And there's a beast that comes from the sea. And then if you go to verse 11, you see a second beast, which comes out of the earth. And this beast sets up an image which is in verse 14. So you get three players. So where should we start? We start with Maria. So shall we read verse 13 in the way we usually do, which is one verse each.

And if you don't want to, if you're not unhappy about reading, just nudge somebody and pass them on to the next person. So let's read Revelation chapter 13 from verse 1.

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea and I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on its horns and on each head a blasphemous name.

[10:40] The beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast.

people worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast and they also worshipped the beast and asked who is like the beast who can wage war against it.

The beast was given a mouth that utter proud words and blasphemes and exercised its authority for 42 months. It opened its mouth to besie God and to slander his name and his relic place and those who live in heaven.

It was given power to wage war against God's willy people and to conquer them and it was given authority over every tribe of people by virgin nation.

[11:58] All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast. All his names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the lamb but was slain from the creation of the world.

He who has an ear lets him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with a sword they will be killed.

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness and the part of God's people. Then I saw a second beast coming out of the earth and had two horns like a man and spoke like a dragon.

It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf and made the earth and his inhabitants worship the first beast whose fatal wound has been healed.

And it performed great signs even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. and he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in sight of the beast telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

[13:27] and he had power to give life unto the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Verse 16. Pardon? 16. 16, thank you. It also forced all people great and small rich and poor free and safe to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads.

So that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom.

Let the person who has the insight calculate the number of the beast for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. Thank you very much. It says at the beginning of the book of Revelation blessed are those who read aloud the words of this prophecy.

Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it. So I think that we could be glad that we've had the blessing of reading this aloud.

[15:11] So we've read chapter 13, haven't we? And in a moment we'll sing something. But the main characters here, the dragon, beast number 1 which is in chapter 13 verse 1 which is purple on my screen, beast number 2 which is in 13, 11 and the image of the beast so some sort of, I guess we're supposed to think of some sort of idol.

I haven't drawn the beast realistically have I? Because they've got 10 horns and 7 heads and 10 crowns so it's just impossible to draw it but so that's a sort of representation.

And we didn't read into chapter 14 but that is, the whole context is not only telling us about beasts which is as far as we'll get today but it's also telling us about the lamb and I think it's probably just worth casting our eyes into chapter 14 and perhaps if you're able to sort of skim read it in chapter

14 verse 1 as contrasted with the enemy agents we have the lamb and where is the lamb? On Mount Zion. On Mount Zion. So we have the heavenly city referred to there. He's standing on Mount Zion and who has he got with him?

144,000 144,000 which is a symbolic number. I won't go all through the reasoning of it again but when we looked at that 144,000 I would say that that is the whole church of God all the people of God Old Testament and New Testament all together and the flip side of that is it's a multitude that no one could number.

[17:01] It's both those things. I'm afraid I haven't got time to go into that this evening. We have an angel in verse 6 flying in midair. What does he announce in verse 7?

Or what of verse 6 and verse 7? What does he announce? Yes, say it again. Right. He's in God and he's in glory and we are in his judgment.

Right. Now both those sentences so Jekunda you said? The eternal gospel. The eternal gospel. And you said judgment. And I think there's something interesting here.

I don't think it's using the word gospel in the way we would use it. When we say gospel we mean the good news of the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the fact that people can be saved seems to me that he's using the word in a different sense to say here's good news that God will judge the world and he'll put all the wrong things right.

Because the angel doesn't say anything about the atonement doctrines it says the hour of his judgment has come. So that's my working hypothesis that when it says gospel there it means the good news that God is going to judge the world and there are other places in the Bible where God judging the world is good.

[18:26] So you might or might not agree with me but I think that's probably the most sensible way of making sense of that. There's another angel in verse 8 who says what?

Fall and fallen as Babylon the Great. So that's another declaration of judgment. And there's another Babylon falling over and in verse 9 there is another angel and in verse 11 this angel says the smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever.

There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name. And that seems to me to be yet another declaration of final judgment.

And if you go quickly into verses 14 and onwards take a look at verse 15 just have a read of verse 15 to yourself.

what is going on in verse 15? A harvest and it looks like a final harvest the time to reap has come that like Jesus says in the parables gathering in the wheat and getting rid of the tares the weeds now is the time for harvest.

[20:04] Again that seems to be a final judgment thought. And then in verse 17 there is another angel a sharp sickle and if you look in verse 19 what would you say is going on in verse 19?

Judgment. Yeah. this again seems to be final judgment put in the picture of harvesting grapes cutting them down and then the picture moves from grapes to blood gathering grapes throwing them into the great winepress of God's wrath they trampled in the winepress outside the city and blood flowed out of the press rising as high as the horses bridles and that's it's a very I mean the great bit seems fine but then it gets turned into a picture of awful gory blood but again it's a picture of final judgment.

So it seems to me that if we're to take chapters 13 and 14 together the whole we have another whole span from the time of writing right up to the day of judgment and we're given the ingredients of that or some of the ingredients of it which is the activity of these beasts but also to note that the lamb with his fair army on mount zion stands and glory glory dwelleth in emmanuel's land the final victory the final defeat of evil and the final victory of the lamb so that's in a nutshell what's going on in chapters 13 and 14 does that make sense let's sing something we're going to sing 888 because not 666 our God stands like a fortress rock with walls that will not fail us he helps us brace against the shock of fears which now assay us the enemy of old in wickedness is bold this seems his victory hour he fears no earthly power he arms himself with cunning we win no battles through our might we fall at once dejected the righteous one will lead the fight by God himself directed you ask who can this be

Christ Jesus it is he eternal king and lord God's true and living word no one can stand against him so let's stand and sing 888 a God stands like a fortress rock with walls that will not fail us he helps us brace against the shock of fears which now assail us the enemy of old in wickedness is bold this seems his victory hour he fears no earthly power and arms himself with cunning we win no battles through our might we fall at once ejected the righteous one will lead the fight by God himself directed you ask who can this be Christ Jesus is his he eternal king and lord God's true and living word no one can stand against him!

[24:45] And though this world seems full of ill with hungry demons prowling!

Christ's victory is with us still we need not fear their howling!

! The tyrants of this age strut briefly on the stage their sentence has been passed we stand unharmed at last our word from God destroys them God's word and plan which they pretend is subject to their pleasure will bind their wills to serve God's end which we who love him treasure then let them take our lives good children husbands wise and carry all away theirs is a short lived day ours is the lasting kingdom

Amen please sit down I think Martin Luther caps that very well actually the tyrants of this age struck briefly on the stage their sentence has been passed we stand unharmed at last a word from God destroys them it's a bit difficult to sing that last verse isn't it let them take our lives goods children husbands wives we're not wishing!

that are we? and by God's mercy we're probably not facing that but if we were to if push came to shove we would agree that we weren't living just for this life and for this world and if we had to leave those precious things behind or let them go so be it and God would give us grace for that at the time when we had to do it but the everlasting kingdom cannot be touched by persecution or sickness or illness or famine or sword nothing can separate us from the love of Christ and his kingdom lasts forever and that's certainly the perspective that revelation would have us to embrace so let's go a little bit further there's a long term perspective in these chapters now where am

[27:58] I going so let's wind back a little bit and think about beasts we have had one reference to a beast so far and that was in chapter 11 thank you yeah chapter 11 when they finish their testimony the beast that comes up from the abyss the abyss will attack them overpower them and kill them so that's the we've had that reference and what John sometimes does is he introduces something and then just leaves it to a later chapter to enlarge on so we had that reference to the beast but now we're getting more detail and he's not inventing from nothing the idea of beasts as symbolising something anybody like to tell us which other book of the bible uses beasts to symbolise something it is indeed

Daniel and we're going to look into Daniel chapter 7 so this might take us the long way round and if you get tired you can just say can we leave it for now and come back to it another time but this is sort of going the long way round we're going to Daniel chapter 7 and this is Daniel prophesying in the time of and this is actually in Belshazzar king of Babylon let me read you this verses one to actually there's a lot let me read it in a swift way in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed he wrote down the substance of his dream Daniel said in my vision at night

I looked and there before me were four winds of heaven churning up the great sea four great beasts each different from the others came up out of the sea the first was like a lion and it had the wings of an eagle I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being and the mind of a human being was given to it there was a second beast which looked like a bear it was raised up on one of its sides and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth and it was told get up eat your fill of flesh after that I looked and there before me was another beast one that looked like a leopard and on its back it had four wings like those of a bird beast terrifying and frightening and very powerful it had large iron teeth it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left it was different from the former beasts and it had ten horns and while

I was thinking about the horns there came up there before me was another horn a little horn which came up among them and three of the horns were uprooted before it the horn and as I looked thrones were set in place the ancient of days took his seat his clothing was white as snow the hair

of his head was white like wool his throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze a river of fire was flowing coming out from before him thousands upon thousands attended him ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him the court was seated and the books were opened and I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking I kept looking until the beast was slain its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire the other beasts had been stripped of their authority but were allowed to live for a period of time in my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like of days and was led into his presence he was given authority glory and sovereign power all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed so that's where the idea of the beasts come from did you notice anything else in that passage is actually very significant in the New Testament the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven is that what it says that's what Jesus quoted at his trial wasn't it you will see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven and just to be clear where does he come to what does it say he comes to the throne of the ancient of days he comes to the position of power in!

[33:24] and it's important actually what the quote says it's not directly a reference to the return of Jesus it is a reference primarily to his ascension really to his coming to the position of power and authority and let's not get bogged down too much by the details of the beasts but we are actually told in verse 17 what the interpretation of the beasts is the four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth but the holy people of the most high will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever forever and ever so it's it is referring to four states four political systems like four beasts so one two three four the last beast is a bit different horns horn and there's the coming of the son of man which is in verse 13 the meaning of the four beasts are four great kingdoms and four great empires and again time does not suffice to put it into context in the book of

Daniel because in several other places we have four kingdoms A statue with four layers four components and four animals in another chapter when the fourth kingdom towards the end of it or simultaneously but there is the setting up of the kingdom of the son of man and many interpreters and I think rightly would say that these kingdoms starting at the time of Daniel are Babylon the great kingdom of Babylon then the Medo-Persian empire which followed Babylon then the Greek empire which followed the Medo-Persian empire then the Roman empire at which time Jesus came and set up his kingdom and the son of man came into his authority so in contrast to these political kingdoms which seem to carry all before him there comes a kingdom which is a bit different to the others a kingdom which is never taken away which is set up by the son of man who has received all power and that seems to me to be the most sensible interpretation of that it's a wonderful interpretation isn't it it's a wonderful picture of the glory of

God and the coming of the son of man Jesus into that position of glory and then exercising that power progressively in as he extends his kingdom over all the earth in this gospel age the coming of the kingdom of heaven already started when Jesus rose from the dead if you like not yet completed but we're living in the age of that kingdom of Christ that make sense so I wanted to go back and give you that context for these beasts because like John does so often he takes something from scripture he will perhaps develop it sometimes he will twist it round to do the opposite of what he thought it was going to do which he does in this chapter as well but it's important to know the context now then if you're getting sleepy I will cut to the chase and tell you what we should go away with because

John tells us the application points of this and in your Bible it might have said this calls for in the original it just says here is but I mean I think it means this calls for does anybody notice what this passage calls for wisdom now which verse was that 18 wisdom and let's come to that in a moment and there was another one patience which verse is that 10 this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people and in chapter 14 verse 12 it says this calls for patient endurance on the part of God's people who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus so if you're about to go to sleep don't do it just yet because let's just be clear on what this passage calls for it doesn't call for panic it doesn't say here's something that nobody has ever realised before we've got to panic we've got to panic it doesn't say that it doesn't say you've got to do something

completely different to what you've been doing being an ordinary Christian is not enough because of this what it says is it calls for patient endurance and faithfulness of the saints so what we should go away with this evening having read this is not saying oh we should panic or now I've got the key that none of those other Christians have got what we should go away so I'm going to live the Christian life with patience day by day and endurance and I want to keep on trusting Jesus Christ I want to live faithfully for him that's what we should go away thinking what are Christian virtues virtues and there's some Christian cultures in which being passionate is the ultimate Christian virtue I'm not wired up like that so I'm bound to say this aren't I but this passage doesn't say therefore be passionate therefore be enthusiastic and full of emotion what it says is you've just got to live the

[39:31] Christian life patiently putting up with suffering you've got to endure you've got to keep going and you've got to be faithful you've got to keep trusting and those are the virtues that this passage calls for yeah does that make sense that's what it calls for and then keep praying keep watching keep trusting keep obeying we knew that anyway but this passage says here's extra reasons for doing that that's what's called for another place it says be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life and maybe that's what faithfulness will look like being faithful unto death or maybe it's just being faithful as a husband or a wife or a medical professional or whatever God has called each of us to be he said just be faithful and that second one that I think Rosemary mentioned a call for wisdom this calls for wisdom and

I think we'll come back for some more detail on this but whatever the detail of it is it says what you need is wisdom wise living which is exactly what Paul says in Ephesians 5 which I will refer to we could look that up couldn't we Ephesians 5 Ephesians 5 5 to 17 says be careful how you live not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity or redeeming the time we only get our time once make the most of it he says because the days are evil therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is that's a call for wise living and Revelation has a call for wise living think about things use your head think things through analyse see what's really going on have a clear head make good choices don't be stupid don't be foolish but be wise this calls for wisdom so those are the application points be patient and endurance and be wise ok that's where this is all going so you can go to sleep now so having done that let's go into some details shall we and look at the actual text

I do have I do come back to the 666 so you might want to wake up for that bit so looking at these beasts if you have an authorised version there is a mistranslation or an unhelpful translation where living creatures that surround the throne is also translated beasts but it is a different word so these beasts are not the same as the living creatures this is used for wild beasts we've already seen one in 11 7 it's using material from Daniel and let's look at the first beast would you like just like to confer with your neighbour for one minute and pick out one or two features of this first beast a■ a■ a■ a■ a■ a■ a■ a■ I'm going to get 10, 7, 10.

That's the mistake. Thank you.

Thank you.

[44:45] Okay, we need to move at a certain degree of pace. So, somebody call out one thing about the beast? 10 heads.

Yeah, this anatomy, it has, how many heads does it have? Seven. Seven heads. Ten heads and ten horns. And ten horns and ten crowns on its horns. So, it's impossible to draw that, isn't it?

Yep. Like a leopard. Yeah, it resembles a leopard, which is one of the animals in the book of Daniel. And I, was there a bear and a lion in Daniel? Yeah.

So, he sort of combines aspects of all those kingdoms. Yep. Anything else? And a lion. Yep. And a mouth like that of a lion.

Yes. The dragon gave its power. Yeah. There's a satanic impartation of power to this kingdom, or this sort of beast.

[45:46] Yeah. Which is a healed scar. Say that again. It has a healed scar. Is that your, is that the... A healed. A fatal wound. A fatal wound that had been healed.

Yeah, it's a fatal wound that had been healed. As we go through this, you get more and more uneasy about the descriptions. What would make that uneasy about that bit? Well, it's fatal, but it's been healed.

It's fatal, but it's been healed. Yeah. And it's rare. So, it was stained, doesn't it? Fake. Well, it could be fake. It's like a mirroring. It's a mirroring. It's like a mocking of Christ.

Mocking of Christ. Mocking of Christ. It comes, it trespasses into Christ's territory, doesn't it? Because our Saviour died and was raised again. And this beast sort of seems to be trespassing into that territory, a fatal wound, and is healed.

Which, I think, makes us feel uneasy, doesn't it, when we read that? Anything else? Yes. It says in verse 1, it says, be clear to have a blasphemous net. I mean, that's, again, attacking God.

[46:53] It is. Thank you. It's attacking God. Yes. It's being worshipped. Yes. And does it tell us how many people worship?

Can you give us a verse? Three. Three. Thank you.

The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast. There's another description of the worshippers. And the things.

Yep. All the inhabitants of the earth worshipped, all those whose names have not been raised in the last of the fire. Thank you. Would you like to think of verse 7 as well?

What's the target area? What's the scope there? It's given power to wage war against God who made people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over all peoples.

[47:54] To every tribe, people, over nation. Thank you. Why would that make us feel uneasy? Well, there's a question. Why do you think it made me feel uneasy?

It has power over us. Power over us, yeah. But that would be usurping the power of Christ's kingdom. Yeah. Because of Christ's kingdom, we're told it's every tribe and tongue and language and nation.

And we've got the same. There's a trespassing into that area, isn't it? That makes me feel uneasy. I think Jesus ought to be the person who is followed by every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

But here the beast is followed by that. Yep. Can you say that the best word as well? Where it is like, who is like the Lord? Yeah.

And why do you say it is who is like the beast? I agree with you. Yeah. That's what we say. Who is like the Lord? He's incomparable. That is sort of characteristic and distinctive of the Lord God.

[48:54] Who is like him? He's incomparable. But they say that about the beast. Who is like the beast? That makes me feel uncomfortable. That's what's described there. Yeah. Anything else?

Comes out from the sea. Yeah. Comes out from the sea. Now, one of the commentators I listen to makes a contrast between the sea and the land.

Because the second beast comes from the land. The sea in the Bible often, I don't know whether always, but often represents the churning of the nations.

And whether we're supposed to think that this beast comes from the churning of the nations and the other beast is different. I don't know. But certainly the sea is a significant thing.

Maybe it comes out of the sea. Maybe it comes out of the sea. Maybe it comes out of the sea.

Maybe it comes out of the sea. The Bible sees their nations as churning and restless and like that. Yeah. Anything else? It has authority for 42 months.

[49:53] Thank you. Yes, 42 months. Now then, why is that a significant time? Three and a half years. It is three and a half years. And that time comes up.

Three and a half years, 1,260 days, 42 months. Time, two times, and half a time. Time, times, and half a time. It seems to be a symbolic duration.

And one of the things it's symbolic of is a time of protection, a time of stress. When Elijah prayed and there'd be no rain and then the rain came, he prayed for three and a half years.

It says in James, I believe. So this is a symbolic period, a testing time, a time of pressure, challenge, and also a time of protection.

Because when the woman went into the desert, she was looked after and cared for for that same amount of time. Was she not? Can we find the reference to that? It's in chapter 12, verse 14.

[51:14] She would be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time. That's... And verse 6, isn't it? Where she might be taken care of. Or that, as you might be seeing today.

Thank you very much. Yes. So there's a number of things that go on simultaneously in this period. And the thing in chapter 13 is the attack, the authority blasphemies for 42 months.

Yeah, thank you very much. In verse 7, it says that it was given power to wake up against all the people and conquer them.

Yes. That makes us uncountful, doesn't it? What does that mean? Yeah, in chapter 2, verse 10. Chapter 2, verse 13.

We have the specific example of Antipas in Pergamon.

[52:31] You remain true to my name. I know where you live, where Satan has his throne. That's a similar language of the beast, isn't it? You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city where Satan lives.

So Antipas was put to death. So I ask the question, did the beast conquer Antipas? Or did Antipas conquer the beast?

It looks as though the beast won, doesn't it? It looks as though he successfully killed Antipas. And he did kill him. But Antipas remained faithful unto death.

So I would say that although it looked as though the beast conquered Antipas, in fact, Antipas overcame by the word of his testimony and by the blood of the Lamb.

And I think this is what's going on in this of the beast here. He's saying it looks as though, from one point of view, the beast conquers the people of God.

[53:46] But that is only one point of view. And you could easily say, actually, the people of God who held their testimony, even in the face of such extreme pressure, they were the ones who overcame.

Yes. About the suppression. He's not suppressing them. Yes. There's certainly suppression, putting pressure on the people of God.

I think conquering is quite a stronger word. But it's certainly both of those. But they don't lose their faith. And I think that's an important thing.

They don't lose their faith. They remain faithful. There's two rewards. Sorry? There's two rewards. There's the rewards of following the beast. I'm not sure.

But that's for a short time. And then there's the reward of not being my family. Yes. So the beast's saying that there's, as it were, there's two timescales, two horizons.

[54:53] On the present world, as it's going to say here, there's a sense in which you have a much freer life because you can buy and sell if you follow the beast. So that's an easier life.

But the long term is that all those who follow the beast end up in this unspeakable judgment. So looking at it in the long term.

Yes, Brenda. I was just thinking that conquer could be a sort of, you know, perhaps a little out.

Yeah. A people can outwardly be conquered. Yeah. But inwardly. Yeah.

They're unchanged. You know, so it says, all in Hamid, which of the earth will worship the beast, all whose names have not been written in the land of life.

[55:51] So outward conquering is not the same as, you've sort of, you've got the heart and soul of people.

It's just living under occupation. Occupation of the beast. Well, People of God are living under occupation. Well, you could say they're living under occupation.

Your idea that they, Yeah. The people whose, he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

All inhabitants of the earth worship the beast, except those whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life. It's the other negative, isn't it? All whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

If you're in the Lamb's book of life, you're not conquered. See what I mean? Physically, but not spirit. Yeah, physically. Yeah. Like in the song, though they take our life, our goods, our honour

wife, yet is their profit small, God's kingdom.

[56:59] I can't remember. Yeah. It's like the children of Israel in Egypt, 400 years or so, it appears as if they were conquered.

Yeah. But then, what's the first time? It's a good job. It's there. Well, they had a redemption ahead of them, didn't they? And it was a temporary conquering or enslavement.

Yeah. Let's look a little bit further. There is this slandering, and I meant to look this up because I was a little bit puzzled by this. Verse 6, opened its mouth to blaspheme God and slander his name and his dwelling place and all who live in heaven.

So there's a speaking aspect. Sound to me, there's something that ought to be understood by that which I haven't understood. but that's what it says.

There is a slandering of, what does it say? His blaspheming and slandering God, his dwelling place, actually it says, his tabernacle, and his people.

[58:07] Maybe that's something we need to take home and think about. What would that be like to slander God? I get that bit. His tabernacle. I'm not quite sure if I understand that.

It could be. Yeah, it could be. His people would be the same thing, wouldn't it? Anyway, let's move on. So he wages war and apparently conquers.

And that was my reference to Antipas, I think. It has authority like the Gospel. And who are the people who are not taken in by this? Those written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Yes. There is a security for God's people. So this is the first beast who I would say uses political and military power to conquer, to suppress, to destroy the Gospel.

And, as a question, do you think the beast is still active? Yes. I think the answer is yes.

[59:13] I think we're tempted to think, is he active like this in Brighton? And the answer is probably he's active in a different way in Brighton. But if you lived in North Korea or in Yemen, or perhaps in Saudi Arabia, you would say, yes, the power of the state is used to squash the life out of Christians, either by physically killing them or just making life so difficult that it squashes the spiritual life out of them.

So I think this beast is still active. And that's beast number one. Shall we look at beast number two? Give myself ten minutes and stop.

So beast number two is verse 11. This one comes from the earth. It had two, so we get the same sort of uneasy things. It has two horns like like a lamb.

It's like a fake Jesus. But when it speaks, it speaks like a dragon. And there's a close link between first and second beast. It exercises the authority of the first beast on its behalf and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast whose fatal wound had been healed.

And it performed great signs even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. And I should say this beast later on gets referred to as the false prophet.

[60:43] It seems to me, and see if I can convince you of that, that the first beast is about political power and the second beast is about deception. I mean, they both interact, but the main characteristic of the first beast is political state power.

The main characteristic of the second beast is deception with what it says. It looks, what does it say? It has two horns like a lamb, but it speaks like a dragon.

So it's a speaking. It causes false worship. Where are we? Yeah, it makes the inhabitants worship the first beast, verse 12.

And, oh, there's some worshippers. And it deceives using deceptive signs. That's the fire thing. So, I think this is one that Steve has mentioned before.

What, the comment on the sign of the fire coming down from heaven, Steve? There's Elijah, and the piece of garlic. Yep. And, carry on with that.

[61:52] how did you know the true spokesman of God on Mount Carmel? Yeah, the one who answers by fire, isn't it?

Because the prophets of Baal couldn't make the fire come down. And the God who answers by fire, he is God. So, sending down the fire was the thing that would clinch the argument.

But here, and this is another thing that makes us uneasy, the beast can send down fire. So, that really is deceptive, isn't it? Because you think, no, no, how can that be? But that's what it says. So, that's Elijah, isn't it? Yeah. The first 15 is Isaiah. This image can speak. Yes.

Isaiah and Jeremiah would very much speak, you know, it's fake because it can't speak. Exactly. This one can. Yeah. Thank you very much. So, this image, the image can speak.

[62:55] So, again, it's really quite, what do you say, quite scary. It makes us quite uneasy. The thing about images is that they have their noses but they can't smell, feet but they can't move, hands but they cannot touch, mouths but they cannot speak.

But this image seems very much as though it speaks. So, you know, really have got to get your head screwed on right, spiritually speaking, not to be taken in by this.

And once again, there is a, verse 15, the second beast was given the power to give breath or spirit to the image of the first beast so that the image could speak and cause all who refuse to worship the image to be killed.

So, I put an image there. In our culture, we don't have visual images that people worship but we're very parochial. Ashwin, in your culture, in a Hindu culture, there would be lots of images around that people fall down and worship.

Thousands. Yeah, thousands. Yeah. So, we shouldn't be too parochial and say, oh, this is irrelevant because this is very relevant. But in doing that, it would be Catholic churches. Yeah, in Catholic churches.

[64:07] Yeah, there are sort of, yes, in Catholic churches there would be little images and in Orthodox churches there would be icons. A Greek Orthodox or an Orthodox Christian would say, well, we don't worship, it's just a window into eternal reality.

But I think if a Hindu went into an Orthodox church they would find themselves very much at home because you've got these pictures. We've been into an Orthodox church in Cyprus and the mum and dad brought their little baby and made the baby kiss the icon to make it, you know, to give it blessing.

And I think that's very much in this territory. That's the answer. Give it a little. Okay. And it causes refusers to be killed.

You can kill people's faith. You don't have to chop their heads off. You can squash faith out of people in other ways than that. And it causes all people to be marked.

Verse 16. All people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark.

[65:16] This is the counterpart to the mark that was on the people of God. They were, which comes from Ezekiel, those people that with the mark of God on their foreheads, figuratively speaking, were spared judgment.

And that mark secured them. And we saw that in an earlier chapter. This is the counterpart of that. And again, I don't, in a way that Christians, I'm looking at Mark's forehead, I can only see a nice haircut.

I can't see an actual mark. Mark, Mark. But it is a figurative thing. And here, figuratively, the people who don't belong are marked.

And they need this mark, as it says, to conduct business, really, doesn't it say? They couldn't buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

So let's get to the number and then we'll feel it. I have a question about that. Why do you think there are so many Christians who think that it is a literal mark?

[66:34] It's a regular mark. Yeah, people do, don't they? Because there's this idea that the way to take the book of Revelation is to take it all literally. But I, what I've been trying to do as we've gone through the book of Revelation is to say that to take it literally is to misunderstand it.

We've got to look at what the reference is, what the connotation is, because he's always sort of using a symbol to denote something else.

And I think people just get the wrong idea because people will say, oh, it was when we all had those injections for COVID or when we didn't have them, we were getting microchips under our skin and that's the mark of the beast.

Well, it doesn't say under the skin, it says a mark on the forehead or on the hand. So, people just go for things like that. That's not, if you look at the whole thing in context, you would not come to that conclusion.

But, let's take it a little bit further. On the next screen, I looked this up on Wikipedia and I thought you might like it. It's found on graffiti in Pompeii around 79 A.D.

[67:55] And that says, philo is arithmos f f m e. Right? I don't know why, but what the translation is, I love her whose number is 545.

So, somebody's written that on a wall. Oh, she's my sweetheart and her number is 545. Who is she? I don't know. You could, you can generate the number 545 from her name but you can't work backwards to find out who she is from the number.

I mean, you could say, is it Daisy? Let's work that out. No, it can't be Daisy. Is it Maria? Ooh, might be Maria. You know, you could work it that way.

And, the Wikipedia thing quotes the book of Revelation. What could I? Yeah.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number. That's the arithmos of the beast. It is the arithmos of a man. His number is 666.

[69:03] The word rendered count is what I said. sefizzo, sefizato. But it's to do with pebbles and counting. So, what the text says, do the arithmetic.

Count up. Do the calculation. And, so, Pete, I think you were saying that you can calculate Caesar Nero and it comes to 666.

Yeah, that would work. Apparently. So, some people have done this and they say, the beast, that's the Pope.

No, it's just like, if it was Nero and that's all it meant, then we would say, oh, right, we're fine. No problem for us because that was Nero.

Now, back in, in the day, they would have said it was the Pope. He's the beast. 666. Don't know how they would have done the calculation, but they say, that's the Antichrist.

[70:10] That's the one you've got to watch out for. And then we would say, well, that's great, isn't it? Because we're not Catholics. So, we're fine. We do the calculation, we're fine. But I think we've got to keep on doing the calculation.

I think the Bible is saying, deliberately, in this rather provocative way, you do the calculation. Who or what is marking you with such a way that you can't do business unless you fall in with the pressures of this unbelieving world?

So, do the calculation. I mean, is it the society that insists that you put he, him, my pronouns are? Is that the mark that we have to be careful of?

Is it, oh, I don't know, is it that we've got to fall in with what the world says about transgenderism?

So, the world says, you can't come to the office unless you call that person he, when biologically that's problematic, or you can't trade unless you are willing to ice cakes for the LGBT, or whatever it is.

You can't operate as a bank unless you put a rainbow flag. I mean, do the calculation. That's what he's saying. Yesterday's calculation might have worked.

[71:45] I mean, the Pope might be fit this, Nero might fit this, but this calls for wisdom, that's what it says. We've got to do the calculation today. What is trying to squash the spiritual life out of us?

And we've got to be aware of it, and as the people of God we've got to have wisdom. Can I just ask for you, and it talks about, relating to that, and it talks about the beast, is it talking about the second beast, the first beast, both beasts?

Which, which was? It talks about the number six of six, because it just says that the person who has calculated the number of the beast, so is it referring back to the second beast? I think it's the second beast, verse 17, the name of the beast, the number of its name, it's talking about the second beast, but they're very, they're sort of, they merge into one another, aren't they?

And I think in different cultures, these pressures will take different configurations. We don't live in an age in which Satan tries to squash the spiritual life out of us by the stasi coming to the door and arresting us, but there's lots of other pressures, aren't there?

And we've got to be wise, we've got to do the arithmetic and beware, and I'll just remind you, what we're supposed to go away with is patient endurance and faithfulness and wisdom.

[73:15] We should stop. There's a little bit more, but we'll stop there. Roger, please could you pray for us? Thank you, Lord Jesus, you have all of this book to be written, the Proclamation.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, you have protected it all through the generations and we thank you today. It is a strong and a living work for us.

thank you for the story of tonight and previous times. Together, Lord, help us to continue to study and seek you in understanding and recognising what you want to show us today.

Lord, help us as we enter into the next days, in our individual situations, Lord, provide us, defend us, Lord, have mercy on us and things that you allow to come before us to go through.

Help us hold on to you. And we commit ourselves to you now, which is the same. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, everybody. everybody.