

Let's Set Aside the 666 Conspiracies to Decode the True Mark of the Beast

Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part series. For Part 1, click [here](#).

The term "Antichrist" has come to be associated with the end times and the book of Revelation, by believers and non-believers alike. But, in reality, the term is not found anywhere in "the revelation of Jesus Christ" at all. Rather, the apostle John introduced the term only four times, and those occasions are not in Revelation, but in two of the three small epistles that bear his name.

There he affirmed that "the antichrist is coming" and "even now many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18). Specifically, he referenced false teachers who had left the church and were promoting heretical teachings, mainly denying that "Jesus has come in the flesh" and was both fully God and fully human; that Jesus was and is the Jewish Messiah and also the Savior of the Gentiles.

He identified this heresy as "antichrist" and energized by the "spirit of the Antichrist" (1 John 4:3). It was a theological error deceptively circulated among the churches and not the future, evil personality revealed in Revelation, who will serve the purposes of the one called the "great dragon ... that ancient serpent called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Rev. 12:9b).

The quest to know the name of the Antichrist has often devolved to a Jewish mysticism practice called *gematria*, or the manipulation of the numerical equivalency of alphabetical letters to try to find hidden meaning. For instance, if a = 100, b = 10, and c = 102 (and so on), then add up the values

of “Hitler” and you will get the number 666.

That three-digit number has been used for other conspiracy-rich applications. John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, has been the only Catholic elected to the Oval Office. With many historic suspicions among Protestants about the Catholic Church and the possibility of the pope (any pope) being the Antichrist or the false prophet, imagine the consternation of these conspirators when Kennedy received 666 votes at the 1956 Democrat Convention.

Or, consider the challenge to some end-of-the-world enthusiasts when Ronald Wilson Reagan was elected our 40th president, in 1980. He had three names, with six letters each. There’s your 666. In addition, when the Gipper and his wife retired to a Bel Air mansion, given to them by wealthy friends, the address was actually 666 St. Cloud Road. Unsurprisingly, they had the number changed to 668!

The latest 666-conspiracy application may be Jared Kushner, the Orthodox Jewish son-in-law of President Donald Trump. The Kushner family’s real-estate business is located in their 41-story Manhattan office building at 666 Fifth Avenue. Yep! And his role in the Trump administration? Seeking to establish a lasting peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority!

But, the significance of the name or numbers associated with the future Antichrist may not be their personal identity but their ideological identity. We live in the day of “identity politics,” where a person is known more for their ideology and the groups with whom they associate than who they are as individuals.

Gordon Lawrence, in his book *Silence in Heaven*, suggests “it is possible that the *shahadah*, the Islamic confession of faith, could be the test of faith that is rewarded by a mark which allows one to buy or sell.” The “mark,” to be required

“on their right hand and on their forehead” (v. 16), may be more of a branding mark or “trademark” symbol showing ownership and control by the Antichrist in this future devilish system.

Today, we wear shoes, shirts or hats with trademarked logos or brand names of clothing companies, sports teams or our favorite transportation. Women may carry purses with elite brand names and symbols. Kids may wear backpacks with the same. In doing so, we willfully advertise our affiliation and relationship with these marks or brands.

Consider that the Islamic confession of faith is “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.” This is increasingly seen in Arabic, as a printed brand or symbol of Muslims public confession of commitment and allegiance to the false god, Allah.

But, the Bible calls true believers to “confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9a). If that is our true conviction, we are told that “confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be ashamed’” (Rom. 10:10b-11).

Perhaps you have heard or sung the little testimony song, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” Often used by children for its simplicity of lyrics and the easily learned folk-melody, the first verse reads:

“I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus/ I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back.”

During the future days of great persecution and tribulation, true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, will not deny Him nor submit to having this blasphemous branding applied to their right hand or forehead, despite the natural desire for self-preservation. It won’t be easy—especially when it may mean

people cannot provide for their own families. Yet, Jesus promised His disciples at the Great Commissioning, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

The marking of a fish has been used as a symbol of Christian faith and confession since the first century. One believer would make an arching mark with his foot on the ground and a confessing companion would make a reverse mark of the arch below it, interlocking the lines at one end. The resulting fish symbol was their mutual mark and affinity of faith.

In the Gentile world, the common (*koine*) Greek word for fish was *ichthus*. Where the fish symbol could be drawn or painted with more care, the Greek letters for the word "fish" were drawn in the middle of the fish symbol. It innocently identified the symbol as a fish, but the letters also meaningfully formed an acronym for the faith-filled phrase "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

As we live in these latter days, before these events described in Revelation 13 and beyond unfold, let us continue to affirm our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and eagerly desire for that day of full redemption to come. May we "be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" as we "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:14b).
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