

Charts: The Third Parenthetical Visions: Chart #15

PREFACE

I have lost count of the number of times either the Scripture text or this teacher has used the phrase “the wrath of God.” The wrath of God is the bedrock lying beneath all of the Tribulation, as well as the judgments and subsequent penalties handed down immediately following.

Chapter Thirteen in the Revelation paints portraits of the first and second beasts—Antichrist and the false prophet, respectively—but it also illuminates in a unique way the righteous wrath of God poured out against an Israel that rejected His anointed: the *true* Messiah, Jesus the Christ—this time not with earthquakes and floods; not with plagues, famine, or drought; not with the extinguishing of celestial bodies. Here in the verses before us the “wrath of God” no longer masquerades behind what could be seen as natural phenomena, but takes direct aim at the heart of the matter: *Israel’s rejection of the incarnate Son of God as the Messiah*. After centuries of their scribes, lawyers, and priests poring through the Scriptures, reading the almost countless references to Messiah, to Savior, to the Redeemer, they saw *none* of them as prophesying Jesus of Nazareth. Not only that, they tortured and killed those who claimed that those Scriptures *did*. [Turn please to John 8](#).

To illustrate how much the Jews loathed and rejected Jesus as Messiah, I have lifted a portion of John 8 without including, just for the sake of time, most of Jesus’ responses (may God have mercy on my soul).

v33: They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’”[...]

v41: “**You are doing the deeds of your father.**” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.”[...]

v48: The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”[...]

v52: The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”[...]

v57: So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.**” Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

As a result of this, just as God promised, there would come a day when He would pour out His wrath upon a nation—*His chosen people*—that rejected the Redeemer He sent. We must remind ourselves that it didn't have to be this way; God gave Israel untold opportunities to repent, to obey Him and place its faith in Him, but Israel repeatedly turned its back on Him. Here in this passage, especially in vv15-17, we see that wrath inflicted—in a different way—upon the remaining unbelieving Jews.

What is the setting?

The world is in turmoil; civilization in shambles. World-wide population has been dramatically reduced by plagues, demonic invasion, sickness, and brutal homicide and genocide; parts of the world have been geographically changed—and not for the better. The remaining population cries out for a savior—someone to offer them hope.

Early on, Antichrist, in a cynical ploy, makes an agreement with the remaining Jews to permit them to practice their religion, including temple worship and sacrifices. But Judaism is divided; some have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, becoming Christians—or what we would call today, “Messianic Jews”—while the rest continue to reject Him as the promised Messiah. God has protected some of those who have become Christians: the remnant numbering 144,000 from the twelve tribes (7:1-8), and those He has hidden and protected in the wilderness from the dragon (12:6, 14-17).

So we might deduce that the population remaining alive and free represents a mix of Jews and Gentiles who still reject Jesus as Messiah, along with Jews and Gentiles who have placed their faith in Jesus. We might also deduce that if not before, at least by the mid-Tribulation point, Jerusalem will be the center of Antichrist's world-wide power structure. Modern technology will give them world-wide reach, but Jerusalem is where the false prophet will have established worship of Antichrist.

What form does the wrath take?

Appreciate the irony. The record shows that Israel, as a nation, rejected Jesus as the Messiah because her religious leaders were envious of Him, and unwilling to relinquish their power over the people. If they had acknowledged that Messiah had come, *He* would be Israel's Redeemer and Lord, and thus casting them into the shadows. The truth is, they would not have welcomed *any* Messiah.

Israel holds to this position even today; she still waits for Messiah. Yet any serious-minded Jew, studying prophecy and examining the stated qualifications—from Scripture—that Messiah must meet, can only conclude that it is now too late for anyone else to qualify. For example, the genealogical records are now gone; how can they prove today that *anyone* is of the tribe of Judah ([Genesis 49:10](#)) and of the house of David ([2 Samuel 7:12-13](#))? No, it must be Jesus of Nazareth or no one.

But one day in the future there will come forth an *anti*-Messiah presenting himself as god. He will be a servant of Satan, imbued by Satan with satanic powers, desiring only to do evil, to do whatever is within his means to drag as many souls as he can along with himself to an eternal hell-fire. He will in fact be no redeemer, no savior, he will make no sacrifice of himself to atone for sin.

And now Israel will have no choice; no other option. All those left who have rejected Jesus of Nazareth will now be forced to bow, as branded slaves, before a *false* messiah. They will do this or die—not as righteous martyrs, but as helpless sheep on a fast-track to hell.

There is a believing remnant that will be saved, but Israel, as a nation, had the chance—and blew it. Now it will pay the price of its arrogance.

And *that* is the wrath of God exhibited in the verses before us.

Read Revelation 13:13-18.

v15

And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

The apostle Paul describes this moment in his second Thessalonian letter with “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9 KJV). During His time on earth Jesus lost patience with those demanding more and more signs—and with good reason: If your “faith” is dependent on being impressed by signs and wonders, it is no faith at all.

And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast,

The original KJV has “life” instead of “breath.” But the word is not *zoe* or *bios* (life), but the familiar *pneuma* (literally wind, or breath), which more often than not is translated “spirit” in the NT. Only God can create life from lifelessness; here the second beast—either by technical trickery or by supernatural evil—makes the graven image appear to breathe, as if alive.

so that the image of the beast would even speak

We might wonder if perhaps the false prophet, in his PR and evangelist roles, might reference God's word, where the psalmist points out the inadequacies of idols.

Read Psalm 115:4-7.

I can imagine the false prophet saying something like, *In the old religion it was said that there is no real life in images. But, behold, I present to you the image of your god—an image that does speak, and see, and hear, and knows all—an image that is alive, for he is god!* And it may be the graven image itself that gives voice to the decree that

as many as do not worship the image of the beast [are] to be killed.

We know from history that totalitarian regimes imperfectly execute their sweeping edicts. It was Hitler's intent to kill every Jew, and though he succeeded in his purpose beyond any rational expectation, he ultimately failed to kill all. Stalin purged even more of his own people—*far* more (tens of millions)—than his world-war enemy, yet even he failed to kill all. A dictator can say what he likes, but we know from the future history of God's prophecy that not everyone who will refuse to worship the beast (or bear the mark of the beast) will be killed. Two thirds of the remaining unprotected Jews *will* be killed, but one third will not, as the prophet Zechariah tells us.

Read Zechariah 13:8-9.

All one need do to realize the immensity of the task is lean back and consider the sheer numbers of military and informants and executioners required—even in a world of vastly reduced population—to kill everyone who refuses to bow down before Antichrist.

v16-17

And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Unless I'm missing something, this will be an easier edict to enforce. Whether wholesaler or retailer, vendor or customer, the door will be shut unless one bears the brand. The storekeeper won't be able to stock his shelves and the customer won't be able to purchase the product. (Can one say "black market"?)

John MacArthur points out the parallel—and contrast—to the 144,000 (7:2-3).

MacArthur: God sealed, with a mark on the forehead, the 144,000 to preserve them from His wrath against the unbelieving world; the false prophet marks the unsaved to preserve them from Antichrist's wrath against God's people.

This will be the functional inverse of the Nazis forcing upon Jews living in the German sphere of influence a yellow badge of the star of David sewn into their garments. That yellow badge typically included the word “Jude” (German for “Jew”) identified them as someone who could be openly ridiculed, denied basic rights, persecuted, beaten, forced into ghettos and ultimately shipped off to the camps.

During the last half of the Tribulation, the mark bearing either the name or number of the beast will *ensure* basic rights of buying and selling; it will, more importantly, identify one as *belonging to* the beast, following him, worshiping him, aligned with him. For the moment this will seem like the right move—especially considering what will be happening to those *without* the mark. You are a father with a family to support and feed during difficult times; doing something that will let you put food on the table might seem to be the right decision—even if you see through the deceit of the two beasts and do not wholeheartedly worship Antichrist.

Yet even if you *do* survive through the Tribulation by taking the mark, you will soon discover that it no longer works in your favor.

Read Revelation 14:9-11.

The word translated “mark” is the Greek *charagma* (kaw-rahg-maw), which means to sharpen, to engrave; it is a picture of etching an image into something, which could refer to a tattoo, or something impressed into the flesh (like a brand). MacArthur shares the testimony of someone who experienced this firsthand, living under Bulgaria's communist regime:

You cannot understand and you cannot know that the most terrible instrument of persecution ever devised is an innocent ration card. You cannot buy and you cannot sell except according to that little, innocent card. If they please, you can be starved to death, and if they please, you can be dispossessed of everything you have; for you cannot trade, and you cannot buy and you cannot sell, without permission. (Cited in W A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969], 4:120-21)

...either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

We don't know Antichrist's personal name. It certainly won't be “Beast” or even “The Antichrist.” Some will call him god, but that will not be his personal name.

Whatever his name, there will probably be a numbering system in place to convert letters to numerals. In this digital age in which we live, it is easy for us to imagine some sort of scannable mark—perhaps even subcutaneous—containing not just the digital number of the beast, but personal information of the mark’s bearer. The world-wide dictatorship will track every human being, not just purchases and sales, but probably location and activities as well.

Sound familiar?

v18

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

The last verse of Chapter Thirteen expands on the last phrase of the previous verse, but begins with a cautionary appeal for (implied) spiritual wisdom and understanding. Volumes have been filled with scholars (?) and commentators trying to work out who Antichrist is from the number 666. We have already discussed the errant theory that the first beast is an historical figure either reincarnated or resurrected. There is a technical term for that theory: Hooie.

It is true that the ancients, including the Greeks, Jews, and Rome had numerical equivalents for letters, as in A=1, B=2, C=3, etc. In this way one could add up the letters/numbers in a name to come up with a cryptic replacement—as in the oft-cited Pompeii graffiti, “I love her whose number is 545.” So many scholars down through the centuries have worn down so many pencils trying to show that the number 666 refers to the Pope or the papacy, Nero, Caligula, Domitian, John Knox, Martin Luther, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, *ad infinitum*. I’m sure there will come a day, if it is not already here, that Donald J. Trump will be added to the list.

My position (not unique) is that v18 is *not* telling us to “do the math” to identify the individual known as the beast, as Antichrist. Instead we are to use *wisdom*—i.e., spiritual wisdom from God—to have *understanding* for what that number 666 means. And the verse itself contains a vital clue: “the number is that of a man,” and on this rare occasion I believe the original NIV ([not the more recent update](#)) captures the correct interpretation: “for it is man’s number. His number is 666.” That is, not the number of a specific individual by name, but the number of *humanity*.

We can, on occasion, declare that something in the prophecies of the Bible will not be fully understood until we are, at last, in God’s presence, and that may be the case here. But, for a moment, let’s run with what I believe to be the rational explanation of this verse.

It is well-accepted that in God's word the number seven represents *perfection or completion*. It is *God's* number, and, as J. A. Seiss notes, "Six is the bad number," representing imperfection and incompleteness.

Seven

- In Genesis 2 we are told, "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." (Genesis 2:1–3)
- In Deuteronomy 15 is established the "sabbatic year"; at the end of seven years debts would be forgiven, and bondsmen and slaves were to be freed.
- In 2 Kings 5:10, Elisha tells the leper Naaman to "Go wash in the Jordan seven times" to restore his flesh and be clean.
- Israel marched around Jericho for six days, but on the seventh day they were to blow their trumpets and the city would fall.
- Jesus told Peter to forgive someone who had sinned against him "up to seventy times seven" times.

Six

By contrast, six is *man's* number.

- In the Jericho narrative God illustrates that man's imperfect effort—for six days—could not accomplish what *He* could do on the seventh.
- Men could harvest their crops for six years, but on the seventh they were to let the land rest and be restored.
- God ordained six cities of refuge for accused murderers.

I am not suggesting some exotic numerology voodoo. Numbers in God's word suggest helpful patterns for its understanding. For example, something being stated or performed three times illustrates strong, even supernatural emphasis, as in the seraphim around the throne calling out "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts" ([Isaiah 6:3](#)). Yahweh is not just holy, He is "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Absolute, unimaginable, supernatural holiness.

Repeatedly in God's word man is told to do something either six times or for six days, but rarely does that accomplish the end goal. Man's efforts are not sufficient because they are imperfect. Perfection or completion is not attained until God, who *is* perfect steps in to complete the task. Thus number seven represents the perfection of God, while the number six—one less than seven—represents the imperfection of man.

And no man is more *imperfect* than the man, Antichrist.

for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Christ Jesus, the true Messiah, is as perfect and holy as Father God. He, too, is “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The Godhead is, we might say, 777, utter, complete perfection and purity. Expressing man’s imperfection is 666—here in the person of Antichrist—utter, complete imperfection and impurity.

God in His wisdom and perfection may be telling us something more here by this number; we may not know the full answer until The Day itself. But we can at least glean this: Man compared to God always comes out lacking. He is God and we are not. He is perfect; we are not. He is seven; we are six.

CONCLUSION

The longer I study the Last Things in God’s word—especially the evil work of and subsequent end of the beast and his followers met with God’s righteous wrath and certain judgment—the more I am convinced that many modern-day witnesses and evangelists are sharing an incomplete message. How many unsaved people do you know who, when told that “God loves them,” and “has a plan for their life,” would almost certainly respond, “My life is just fine, thank you very much. I am happy, have a good job, plenty of money, a loving family. Life is already good; I don’t need God for that.”

God has not granted me the gift of evangelism. He has been most generous to me with other gifts, but that is not one of them. Thus I cannot speak from experience, only observation.

And my observation is that this wretched, self-satisfied, self-centered world could use more “hellfire and brimstone” preachers and evangelists, more witnesses of the ilk of the late, great Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). In his famous sermon entitled, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, based on Deuteronomy 32:35, “Their foot shall slide in due time,” Edwards preached this:

Jonathan Edwards: They [the unsaved] are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John 3:18, “He that believeth not is condemned already.” So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is, John 8:23, “Ye are from beneath.” And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God’s word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assign to him.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

In our next session we will begin Chapter Fourteen, and the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion, continuing our study of the third parenthetical visions.