

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 383

Revelation 13

July 4, 2021

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Episode Summary

Revelation 13 is known as the chapter about the Beast whose number is 666. However, the chapter actually describes two beasts. There are several Old Testament passages from which the descriptions of these beasts may derive. While people are familiar with the number 666, and that this number is also the name of the Beast (antichrist). The idea of “bearing the name” has a secure Old Testament context, one that largely goes unnoticed in the theorizing about the number of the Beast.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 383: Revelation 13. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What’s going on?

MH: Not a whole lot new this week, Trey. I did not get called any names this week, so I don’t really have much to report.

TS: I’m sure you did; you just didn’t see it. Somewhere, somebody called you a name.

MH: [laughs] Right. Yeah, isn’t that the truth? I’m sure it happened somewhere. [laughs]

TS: Absolutely. And we’re still on target? No pool? No beach?

MH: No, no updates there. No new pool adventures or the beach.

TS: Alright, just checking in. Well, Mike, this week, 666, the number of the beast and all that good stuff. Please tell me you made it exciting for us, that it’s the government’s program for the vaccine and all that stuff, right?

MH: [laughs] Right. Which political figure... [laughs] Right. Oh, I could find lots of political figures in Revelation 13. [laughs]

TS: Yeah! Make it relevant for today, you know? Spice it up some! Yeah.

MH: Yeah, we could do that. We could do that for sure. We could more or less say anything we wanted to and call it “Bible teaching” and somebody out there is going to believe it. So that’s the tragic state of affairs that we’re all in. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, that’s true, unfortunately.

MH: Yeah. And as a segue, speaking of the pool and the beach, we have the beast rising out of the sea. That’s my lazy attempt at a segue, Trey.

TS: No, that’s perfect. I can just see Mori popping out of the... Somebody’s going to make a meme of Mori or somebody popping out of the pool, like the beast.

MH: Oh, I know.

TS: Out of the sea.

MH: Yeah, give him seven heads, man. That’d be awesome. [laughter]

TS: A seven-headed pug! There you go. Everybody would die from the cuteness.

MH: Yeah, he’d be up for that. So... Well, let’s jump in here to chapter 13. I mean, this is one of those chapters where there are some obvious things. And of course, sprinkled in there there’s going to be some not-so-obvious things. And we’re going to stick to our trajectory: Old Testament backdrop for this sort of stuff. I can sort of telegraph where we’re going to go here. But as far as the beasts go, there are two of them in this chapter. There’s plenty of Old Testament antecedent material that could factor into that. When it comes to the number, not so much. When we get to that point, I will mention a few sort of... I’ll call them trajectories, but they’re really just speculative. Even though I think more highly of one than the other, at the end of the day, they’re both still speculative as far as an Old Testament connection or context. So as we jump into this, I’m going to just read through the chapter real quickly. It’s not that long. And then we’ll start off with the two beasts. So reading ESV again, verse 1:

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

**¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.
Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**

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¹¹ Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

Now again, since we're focusing on Old Testament stuff, we're not going to get into too many interpretive things here. But there are some fruitful trajectories as far as how to contextualize the content here. The most obvious is having to do with the beast. There are really two options here (two interpretive trajectories) that are possible with respect to contextualizing the beasts (both of them) with

the Old Testament. Now one of these is going to be pretty obvious. The other one is probably not going to be obvious.

And so I'm going to go through both of these. I don't really feel compelled to only go with one (the more obvious one). I think that they're actually both in play, because the more obvious of the two is, of course, what's going on in Daniel 7 with the sort of nondescript final beast and whatnot, so on and so forth. But there are disconnections from that. For instance, in Revelation 13... As we read there, there's not just one beast; there's two. And one is from the sea, and the other one's from the land. And there is some Old Testament precedent for two beasts (sea and land) that would have importance here (or "relevance" is probably a better word), especially if we look at what's going on in Revelation 13 as sort of Babel chaos, not reborn (because we've always got Babel chaos). When I use the term "chaos," I mean everything that is not Eden (Anti-Eden) specifically tied to the corruption of Eden, which, you have supernatural rebellion lurking behind that; you have human rebellions lurking behind that. And they are basically symbiotically related. My fullest expression of that to date is in the *Demons* book, where I try to flesh all that out in detail. There's a little bit in *Unseen Realm*. But the *Demons* book sort of takes up that cause, as it were, to go after the "three rebellions" explanation for why the world is a chaotic mess.

So when I say "chaos," I'm referring to the loss of Eden, everything that is not Eden, which means... It's things associated with death, disorder, the de-creation of the order that God instituted in Genesis 1—these sorts of themes. Death, decay, loss, estrangement from God, fragmentation of humanity—all of this stuff is chaos. And Babel is sort of a center point—most obviously the third rebellion, what happens at Babel with the fragmentation of humanity and the sons of God being assigned to the nations. But the other ones also have certain threads that connect them, as well, to the Babel theme. Because geographically, if we take the geographical descriptions like Genesis 6, it's Noah and the Flood, we're in the Mesopotamian part of the world, and the imagery of the Flood is often a theological response or polemic to material from Mesopotamia.

So there's that, and if you go even back to the first one, there's a good bit of material in Genesis, in Genesis 3 (this first rebellion), that also connects in some way to Babylon or Babylonian material. You know, it's not that it's isolated to Babylon. You've got Canaanite material as well. But if you loop in the Ezekiel 28 repurposing of this supernatural rebellion and the Divine Council, well, Ezekiel is obviously writing from Babylon, so there you go.

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So there's a number of things going on here that just connects all of it—the whole chaotic mess—to Babel (Babylon) both in terms of the history of the biblical story as it's told, the geographical orientation, the textual material that's used to tell the story, and then ultimately Babylon becomes the foil for all that is terrible—this ultimate reversal, like in the exile. Before that you get Egypt playing the big, bad

role, and then you get Assyria, and then you get Babylon. But it's interesting how all three are described in chaos terms, a number of which are Babylonish, even if it's not Babylon itself, even if it's Egypt or Assyria or something like that.

So there are a lot of interconnections here. Again, it would take a whole book to ferret out all of them and just go through all the material. But I think that's a necessary backdrop. Because if we look at Revelation 13 sort of generally as the war against chaos, or chaos' war against the people of God and the plans of God, that opens the door a bit to the less expected backdrop to the two beasts. The first one is Daniel in Babylon—Daniel 7. That's going to be easy when we go through it to see that. But the other one is a little bit unexpected.

So I'm going to start with the lesser-expected of the two. So of the two trajectories, let's go to, for example, the beasts of Job. Okay? Job 40 and 41. You have the sea beast and the land beast. Elsewhere in Scripture they're going to be described as Leviathan (the twisting serpent—the chaos that basically is known throughout the ancient Near East) and Rahab, the land counterpart to Leviathan. You actually get Rahab mentioned in the same chaos contexts as Leviathan normally is in—in Psalm 89, for instance. So there's a land and a sea chaos monster, two of them in the Old Testament. (And again, this isn't unique to me. I'm going to quote from Beale and McDonough here in a moment.) But you've got scholars who have obviously noticed this and they're well acquainted with the land and the sea chaos beast from the Old Testament. And so this seems like a natural trajectory to follow. So Beale and McDonough write (and this is from the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by Carson and Beale):

The depiction of the two beasts in chapter 13 is based in part [MH: and that's appropriately worded: "in part"] on Job 40–41, which is the only place in the OT that portrays two satanic beasts that oppose God [MH: the only time when they're together; elsewhere Leviathan and Rahab are separate]. The sea monster of the Job passage also has a companion classified as a land "beast" (*thērion* [MH: in the Septuagint in Job] [40:15–24]). Both beasts are described with demonic attributes and are said to have been "made to be mocked by the angels"...

If you're quickly looking back and wondering, "What's the verse there?" (it's Job 40:19-20 and Job 41:24-25, more importantly), you're not going to find it because this is the Septuagint. So I'm going to just open the Septuagint here real quickly and read some of this stuff. Because again, since we don't really read the Septuagint, this is a little bit surprising. So wait till you hear this. We'll go to Job 40 first. So Job 40:19-20. This is describing Leviathan. I'll go up to verse 18.

**¹⁸ If a flood should happen, it is not taken notice of.
It trusts that the Jordan shall rush up into its mouth.**

19 Shall one take it in its eye?

That's basically describing basically creatures of the deep and their effect on the land, and this "flood" language.

Being caught in a snare, shall one pierce its nose?

Now that's language that's going to be familiar from your English Bibles about Leviathan. Verse 20:

**20 And will you lead the serpent in by a fishhook
and put a halter around its nose?**

15:00 Obviously no, Job, you can't control Leviathan. It's Leviathan. You're no match for it. If you keep reading, in Job 41 in the Septuagint, here are the last two verses:

**24 There is not anything upon the earth like it,
being made to be mocked at by my angels.****25 It sees everything that is high,
and it itself is king of all that is in the waters."**

So it's real interesting, in the Septuagint you've got the big symbol for chaos—Leviathan, the sea beast, is going to be mocked by the angels. Now I'm going to go back to Beale and McDonough. They keep going with this trajectory:

The two beasts of Job 40–41 (cf. esp. LXX) are echoed throughout Rev. 13 [MH: especially in the Septuagint of Job 40-41, because Revelation is Greek and the Septuagint is Greek in these two chapters]: one is called a "dragon" from the sea (40:25) [MH: the vocabulary is going to be shared between Revelation and Job on these points]; the land beast is to be slain by God with a "sword" (40:19 MT) [MH: later in Revelation 13 you get that]; the sea dragon conducts a "war waged by his mouth" (40:32 LXX) [MH: and if you recall Revelation 13, the beast is speaking great things against God], and "burning torches" and "a flame goes out of his mouth" (41:11, 13 LXX); "there is nothing upon the earth like him" (41:25 LXX)...

Going back to Revelation 13, it's this description of the beast as being unique. I mean, it's the ultimate beast—the ultimate chaos figure here. Beale and McDonough also say:

Jewish tradition held that on the fifth day of creation God created Leviathan to be in the sea and Behemoth [MH: the land counterpart] to dwell on land [MH: so you

have Behemoth also known as Rahab, and they give some references here] (*1 En.* 60:7–10; *4 Ezra* 6:49–52; [MH: and some scattered rabbinic texts—this is a Jewish tradition that God created both of these] *2 Bar.* 29:4; *b. B. Bat.* 74b–75a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Suppl. 2:4). These two beasts were symbolic of the powers of evil and were to be destroyed at the final judgment.

Now that part there—the destruction of Rahab and Leviathan at the final judgment... Elsewhere in other episodes of the podcast, we’ve actually gotten into this because their destruction is part of what scholars call the divine banquet motif—the final Passover. Christians would call it the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—this great eschatological meal with God and with his people. And I’ve asked before, “Hey, do you know what’s being served [laughs] at this meal?” And in Jewish tradition, the answer was, “Yeah. Rahab, Behemoth, and Leviathan. That’s what’s on the table.” And again, it was a way of expressing the idea that chaos itself is going to be devoured. It’s going to come to an end.

Now I’m going to read a little bit from Brant Pitre’s book, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, about this Jewish theme—this theology. This whole idea... I’m going to start where he’s discussing the image of a banquet (or this divine banquet idea) in the Old Testament. So he writes this. This is his book called *Jesus and the Last Supper*.

Multiple passages in the Jewish Scriptures use the image of a banquet or feast to describe the joy of the coming age of salvation. However, by far the most explicit description of an eschatological banquet in the Old Testament is in the book of Isaiah. In the midst of a series of descriptions of the coming day of the Lord (Isaiah 24–27), the prophet speaks of a future banquet for Israel and the nations. . .

And then he starts to list out certain features of this banquet. So he writes:

First, the coming feast is no ordinary banquet; it is an eschatological event. This eschatological dimension is evident from the fact that the banquet culminates in the overthrow of suffering and death: God will “swallow up death for ever” and wipe away “tears” from “all faces.” Indeed, just a few verses after describing the banquet, Isaiah goes on to speak about the resurrection of the “bodies” of the “dead” (Isa 26:19). As Joseph Klausner suggests, the overall context of the banquet is Isaiah’s vision of “the cessation of death and the resurrection of the dead in the Age to Come.”

Second, the banquet is a feast of redemption; it will be tied to the forgiveness of sins. At the time of the banquet, God will take away “the reproach of his people” and give them salvation (Isa 25:8–9).

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Let me just interrupt here. Basically, the messiah (the coming of Jesus in the New Testament the first time around) was a signal that the exile is now ending. But this is an “already, but not yet” thing. The exile isn’t completely over until everything comes full circle and not only God’s people Israel, but also those from the nations who follow the Lord, are brought back into the family. They are no longer in exile. They’re home. And this is a Day of the Lord, final eschatological event. Back to Pitre:

Third, the coming feast will be a cultic or sacrificial banquet. This is the meaning of the strange imagery of [MH: some of the language] “fat things” and “wine on the lees.” This is technical terminology for sacrificial offerings of the Temple cult, as when Deuteronomy speaks of “the fat of their sacrifices” and “the wine of their drink offering” (Deut 32:37–38; cf. Lev 3:3; 4:8–9). This cultic dimension is important to stress, since Isaiah explicitly states that the banquet will take place on “the mountain of the LORD,” which in context refers to “Mount Zion ... in Jerusalem” (Isa 24:23).

Yet another reason why the Lord appears... the whole battle of Armageddon thing... it’s Jerusalem. It’s Zion. It’s not Megiddo, it’s Zion. It’s the *har moed*, the mount of assembly, the mount where the Divine Council is—all that stuff. That’s *Unseen Realm* material, obviously.

Fourth, in Isaiah, the eschatological banquet will be an international banquet, which will include both the restored tribes of Israel and the Gentile nations. The feast will be “for all peoples” and will result in the “veil” that is cast over all the “nations” or “Gentiles” (*goyim*) being lifted. This is a startlingly universal vision of salvation, nestled right in the heart of one of the most widely read prophets of the Old Testament.

Fifth and finally, given our focus... on Moses and Mount Sinai [MH: which he had done earlier in his book], it is significant that several scholars have suggested that the banquet in Isaiah 25 alludes to and is modeled on the heavenly banquet of Moses and the elders atop Mount Sinai.

Remember that? That’s from Exodus 24:9-11. They go up and they see the God of Israel. They have a meal with the God of Israel. Now other banquet texts that he gets into in the book (obviously we don’t have time to go through all of these) are Isaiah 55:1-3; 62:8-9; 65:13, 17-18; Zechariah 9:11-12, 16-17. This is not a little thing. It’s not a little theme. It’s not, like, just one passage. It’s not just Isaiah 24-27. But you’ve got a number of places that talk about this eschatological banquet with these themes. Now Pitre also writes:

Perhaps the most elaborate description of the messianic banquet comes to us from *2 Baruch* [MH: again, this is Second Temple Jewish literature,

pseudepigraphical literature in this case], which is commonly dated to the late first century A.D. Although the text is long, it is worth quoting in full, as it is perhaps the most full-blown expectation of the messianic feast from the period

So he's going to quote this 2 Baruch passage, I'm going to quote at least part of it here:

And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Messiah will begin to be revealed. And Behemoth [MH: there's the land beast] will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they [MH: the two monsters] will be nourishment for all who are left. The earth will also yield fruits ten thousandfold. And on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and one grape will produce a cor of wine. And those who are hungry will enjoy themselves and they will, moreover, see marvels every day [MH: this is the new earth description]. For winds will go out in front of me every morning to bring the fragrance of aromatic fruits and clouds at the end of the day to distill the dew of health. And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high...

25:00 **"Would you like bread with your meal?" [laughs] They're serving bread with Leviathan.**

... and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time. And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and he returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of him will rise [MH: there's the general resurrection, "the dead in Christ will rise first"]. And it will happen at that time that those treasuries will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out and the multitudes of the souls will appear together, in one assemblage, of one mind. And the first ones will enjoy themselves and the last ones will not be sad [MH: everybody's going to love to be there]. For they know that the time has come of which it is said that it is the end of times. (2 Bar. 29:1–30:4)

Several aspects of this grand vision are worth highlighting [MH: Pitre chimes in]. First, the banquet is both eschatological and explicitly messianic, directly tied both to the coming of the "Anointed One" and the "end of times." Second, it is important to stress that "eating in the messianic age takes place not on a single

occasion, but ‘every day.’” Hence “the messianic banquet not only marks the beginning of the eschatological age but is a feature of it in perpetuity.” Third, the banquet is described in terms evocative of the exodus from Egypt. Its commencement will be marked by the return of the manna from heaven. It will take place alongside the return of the heavenly “dew” that brought the manna in the first place (Exod 16:13–14). Even the image of superabundant wine and enormous clusters of grapes harks back to the gathering of the grapes in the land of Canaan by the emissaries of Joshua at the end of the exodus (Num 13:21–24). Fourth, and quite memorably, the righteous can also expect to feed on the flesh of Leviathan and Behemoth. It is not clear whether this image is hyperbolic and figurative or is intended as a literal description of the viands of the banquet. Either way, it seems to represent the triumph of the righteous over the destructive powers of this world. Lastly, but by no means least significantly, the inauguration of the messianic banquet directly precedes the return of the messiah to heaven and the resurrection of the righteous dead.

So the messiah comes; he goes back to heaven. Again, this is a Jewish portrait here. For a Christian in the book of Revelation, you would say, the messiah returns. Then heaven returns to earth. And so we transition from the return of the messiah on into the new heavens and new earth. It’s right there. So back to Pitre:

...[T]he banquet begins to be celebrated on earth during the days of the messiah, it finds its ultimate fulfillment in the return of the pre-existent messiah [MH: there’s an “already, but not yet” even in Judaism]—apparently along with the resurrected righteous—to heaven.

So this is common in Christian theology as well, that heaven (where we’re going to be forever) is not the New Earth. I actually believe it *is* the New Earth. But this is very common to have heaven be some sort of non-earth, ethereal existence. And of course that never answers the question, “Well, what happens to the New Earth, then? Is it empty?” But again, that’s just me. I don’t want to drift off into too many of my own criticisms of sort of a standard view. So back to Pitre:

... [J]ust as the righteous on earth “enjoy themselves” during the days of the messiah by eating the manna (*2 Bar.* 29:6), so too those who are raised from the dead will “enjoy themselves” in the heavenly “assemblage” of the exalted messiah (*2 Bar.* 30:2).

So again, where does this leave us? Well, it leaves us with the idea that these two beasts are ultimately chaos symbols. It’s very obvious: Leviathan and Rahab (or Leviathan and Behemoth if you like the Behemoth term), who wreak misery and destruction until they are defeated. And these two beasts may very well be what is behind the two beasts (one from the sea and one from the land) of Revelation 13. Now that’s actually the minority view. And it’s really because of

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the prominence of Daniel 7 throughout Revelation 13 that this view is minority. And let's be honest. Most people who are writing popular prophecy stuff are completely unaware of this. Maybe they've just heard so many times or maybe even taught that "Leviathan, that's a dinosaur," or something like that. And they miss all of this imagery. They miss all of the Second Temple Jewish understanding of these images—these symbols—and what they mean with the eschatological banquet. I mean, it's all there. And it's, frankly, all there somewhere in the book of Revelation. It's just sort of a Christianized version of it because now we're post-Jesus when we're writing the book of Revelation. We're not thinking completely like a Jew who either was writing before Jesus or has rejected Jesus. So Revelation's going to be a little bit different, but it's going to dip into all these wells. Okay? But again, most of your popular prophecy writing is just completely unaware of this. And *very much* aware of the next one. And that's the Daniel 7 one.

So the second view is more common and more likely. I mean, it's very likely in that there are a lot of secure roots here, but I still think that the first view is also on the table. I don't think we have to pick and choose one. I think they're both being utilized by John and repurposed. So I'm in agreement with Beale here that Job 40-41 (Leviathan and Behemoth) do play some role in what's going on in Revelation 13, but that is not to ignore or sidestep Daniel 7. So the second view here is that the beasts are accountable through this passage in Daniel. So Beale and McDonough write, sort of in summary, a few things here. They say:

The material in 13:1–2 is a creative reworking of Dan. 7:1–7. The "beast coming up from the sea" and his "ten horns" [MH: in Revelation 13] are based respectively on Dan. 7:2–3 and 7:7, 20, 24 [MH: again, it's very obvious]. Many understand the "seven heads" as a reference to an ancient Near Eastern sea-monster myth from before the time of Daniel...

He's referring here to the Ugaritic stuff: the defeat of Yam (the defeat of Leviathan, who is Yam in Ugaritic texts). And so he cites some Ugaritic texts here. He also cites Psalm 74:13–14, Psalm 89:10, Isaiah 27:1, because those passages dip in on a linguistic level (the terminology) into Ugaritic material. So he's saying, "Some understand the seven heads this way." It's about this Canaanite depiction. They write:

This is possible, but it is better to view the "seven heads" as a composite of the heads of all four of the beasts of Dan. 7...

Now that might sound a little awkward. But basically, what they're going to do in what they write is they're going to take Revelation 13's description and there are various elements that are found in Daniel 7, but they're not drawn out in the same order as the beasts of Daniel 7. It's sort of a scattershot assemblage, that "this comes from beast number 1; that one's beast number 4; this is beast

number 3... but they're all applied to these two beasts in Revelation." So they think it's just best to view the seven heads for one (and there's going to be other features) as just sort of, John is looking back at Daniel 7 and pulling things from any of the beasts at any given point. But Daniel 7 is the pool from which he does it. So back to Beale and McDonough, they write:

...the "ten diadems" upon the "ten horns" are a reference to Daniel's fourth beast, whose "ten horns" are interpreted as "ten kings" (Dan. 7:24). Likewise, the "blasphemous names" are connected with the blaspheming figure of Dan. 7:8, 11, who is also associated with the fourth kingdom [MH: just like he is in Revelation 13:5–6, just like the blasphemy is].

In Revelation 13:2, they note:

Whereas in Dan. 7:3–8 the images of the lion, bear, leopard, and "terrifying" beast represent four successive world empires, in Rev. 13:1–2 all four of these images are applied to the one beast. This probably includes a connotation of Rome as the fourth beast, which Daniel predicted would be more powerful and dreadful than the previous three beasts of Dan. 7:4–6.

Now what they don't say there is that if you parallel Daniel 7 with Daniel 2, the kingdom of God begins (the mountain not made with human hands that destroys the toes)... That is associated with the kingdom of God. That *is* the kingdom of God. In fact, Daniel is very pointed about saying that. Well, when does the kingdom of God get rolling? When does it take a foothold? (Pardon the pun.) Well, that's during the time of the messiah. And at the time of the messiah, what was the world empire? That's Rome. So I mean, Rome is a pretty secure hook here into all this.

Now I'm going to just go through Revelation 13, not verse by verse, but I'm going to pick things from different verses and just sort of link them back to Daniel 7 because this is what Beale and McDonough do in their commentary at this point. So Revelation 13:3. Let me just read that.

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³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

So there's that statement. And then a little bit later, in verse 14, it says that the beast "was wounded by the sword and yet lived." So it's apparently like a... It's cast as sort of a wound that should normally be fatal, but it lives. So Beale and McDonough write:

In Rev. 13:14 it is added that it was a sword that struck the beast's head. The added mention of the sword in this connection recalls the prophecy of Isa. 27:1

LXX [MH: now here we are back to the Leviathan thing, which says]: “In that day God will bring the sword, the holy and great and mighty [sword] upon the dragon, the fleeing serpent, upon the dragon, the crooked serpent.

So if you’re looking at that element, that actually goes back to the first view—that we’re dealing with the two chaos monsters here because it’s a pretty clear allusion back to Isaiah 27:1. If we go to Revelation 13:4, the phrase denoting authority probably goes back to Daniel 7:6, even though if we’re reading the Septuagint of Daniel 7, this is going to be said of the third beast in particular. But again, the argument is (and I think it’s a reasonable argument) that since all of the features of Daniel 7 (or the beast)... The things about all the beasts in Daniel 7, John is drawing on all those things to portray two beasts. And most of them specifically go to the first beast. But verse 4 says, “they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast,” and so on and so forth. So that’s probably an allusion (the argument is) back to Daniel 7:6. Let me just read that. I’ll read it in English, not from the Septuagint.

⁶After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion [MH: i.e., authority] was given to it.

So there seems to be a connection there. Revelation 13:5-6. The reference in verse 5 to the beast expressing his authority through speech has clear parallels in Daniel 7:6, 8, 11, 20, and verse 25. Specifically, if you’re looking at this in the Septuagint, in Daniel 7:6, 8, we read that “a tongue was given to it [the beast] ... a mouth speaking great things.” And again, you get a good bit of that vocabulary in verses 5 and 6 in Revelation 13. Here’s what it says:

⁵And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God...

So the beast was “*given* a mouth,” or he’s “*given*” this ability to speak. Okay? The “given” terminology’s a little odd, but it actually comes from Daniel 7. That’s the language there.

Verse 7. In Revelation 13:7 (the first part of it), the focus shifts back to the prophecy of Daniel 7. So in verse 7, we have here:

⁷Also [the beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation...

So if we go to Daniel 7 in the Septuagint, and I think it's around verse 8. Yeah. Let's just read Daniel 7:8:

⁸ And indeed, many counsels were being given among its horns and behold, a different horn sprang up in the middle of them, a small one among its horns, and three of the previous horns dried up on account of it. And behold, eyes just like human eyes were in this horn, and a mouth speaking great boastful things, and it began to make war against the holy ones.

It's very clearly the source for Revelation 13:7. Go on to verse 10. Beale and McDonough write this. Let me just read verse 10 here:

**¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.
Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**

So they write,

"If anyone [is destined] for captivity, to captivity he [must] go. If anyone by the sword is to be killed, by the sword he must be killed." This is a paraphrase combining Jer. 15:2; 43:11. Jeremiah prophesies to Israel that God has destined them to go into "captivity" and suffer from the "sword." This is a penalty for their unbelief and sin. In the present context [MH: here in Revelation 13], it appears to apply to genuine believers [MH: though] who suffer persecution for their witness.

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Again, I can see where you could go with that direction. In the Septuagint... What they're doing throughout their whole treatment of this is they're comparing the Greek of Revelation to (they're looking up these terms, this vocabulary) in the Septuagint. And you find out that the vocabulary here from verse 10 is a mixture from these two verses in Jeremiah. So you have the people of God, not going into exile because of sin (that was the Jeremiah context), but the people of God suffering because of the beasts, because they're under persecution. It's just that John draws this language.

Many have noticed that these beasts, just generally... I'm interjecting again. You've probably noticed at this point that the beasts sort of imitate Christ in certain ways. You have this lethal wound that gets healed, for instance. You've got this authority given. It's illegitimate authority, but yet again, some of this language you can find in Daniel 7 for the son of man and being given the kingdom and everlasting dominion, and all this. But you know, it seems like there's this counterfeit thing going on, which would make sense because what

we're headed to now is the mark of the beast. And the mark is a number and a name. You bear the name of the beast.

I think this is a good place to bring this up, because really “bearing the name” is behind the “name of the beast” idea—not the number itself, but the concept of bearing the name, which is very Old Testament. We had Carmen Imes on. This is what her whole book is about—bearing the name at Sinai, this thing about how in ancient Israel, there was this concept. It's really imaging. But in the book of Exodus and throughout the Torah, the idea of imaging God, being God's proxy, as it were, gets recycled and re-expressed in terms of bearing the name of Yahweh every day in life and among the nations. You represent him. You are his proxies. You are his kingdom of priests, a holy nation. “You” corporately. The whole country—the whole nation—was supposed to represent him. They were supposed to be his image and they bore his name. We're going to get into some Torah passages here that talk about this. But if that's the case, then what you have here is the beasts, and again ultimately with this number and so on and so forth, this is a counterfeit idea.

Now for Christians who read the book of Revelation, they can see the antichrist, the false Christ idea, the opposer Christ, (or poser Christ, I guess you could say)... I tend to think of antichrist not as being a fake, but as being sort of a mirror counterpart enemy—that sort of thing. So that's very common for believers who are studying Scripture and getting into prophecy to see that. But what they don't see is how the name of the beast—bearing the name—is also a counterfeit. And on the other side of it is bearing the name of Christ. And both of these are really metaphors for who you align yourself with—who you represent. Just whose proxy are you? Are you the proxy of the God of Israel and Jesus or are you the proxy of the beast? This is what “bearing the name” refers to.

So we often don't see that, because maybe we're just too fixated on what the number means, or antichrist (the false Christ). Okay, I get that. But there's an anti-name-bearing thing going on here, too. It's a pseudo-counterpart. And if you have that in your head, then at least the rationale—at least the concept—of bearing the mark (which is the name of the beast), that has an Old Testament flavor to it that makes it comprehensible. It's not about wearing bar codes, okay? It's not about stuff like this. It's about “whose side are you on?” And yeah, you could talk about how believers or whoever in the world might be manipulated into turning against the Lord and following the beast. I understand that. There's a lot of latitude here as to how this would get lived out if we were right here present at the time, with all this stuff going on. But fundamentally, it is about what or who is your believing loyalty choice. Is it Jesus or is it the beast? Whose name do you bear? Who is your master? Who is your owner? Okay? All these things that go into name-bearing as a concept.

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Now I think, again, this is really significant to observe. Beale and McDonough sort of touch on this. I think they could do a much better job of it than they do, especially with the bearing of the name thing, but they do get into the idea of imitation. I'll just give you one paragraph. And this is worth noting. But again, I wish they would go further with the idea. They say:

The idea of imitation is carried on in 13:13. First, the beast's activities are described by an ironic echo of the acts of Moses, whose prophetic authority was validated by "doing great signs"...

And let's go to Revelation 13:13. So what do we read there?

¹³ [The second beast] performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth...

Well, yeah, you get Moses, if you want to associate that with Moses with the hail, and just generally doing great signs. Okay, I get it. But it's actually more Elijah here. And they get to this point. He lists out a few Exodus passages about Moses doing great signs and says what the beast here is sort of a counterfeit of that.

Even in the Exodus narrative (7:11) Pharaoh's magicians "did the same [signs] with their secret arts." This is reinforced by Daniel, where God is praised for "doing signs and great wonders" [MH: Daniel 4:37a in the Septuagint aligns very well in their notes to Revelation 13:13a]. The casting down of fire from heaven in the presence of people recalls the prophetic demonstration by Elijah (1 Kings 18:38–39; 2 Kings 1:10–14), though now [MH: here in Revelation 13] it describes a pseudoprophetic action.

Now again, all of that is sure. But I wish they would do a little bit more with it. So better than pseudo-prophetic, I wish they would get into something like this: If Jesus is a superior Moses and a superior Elijah (and he is!)... And those are ideas present in the Gospels: Jesus is the new Moses; he is superior to Elijah, who is the forerunner. If that's the case, then these beasts mime both the idea of a pseudo-Christ... Okay, they certainly do that. But when they do it, they are still... It's almost like a recognition of what or who they need to imitate to have legitimacy. Because Christ is superior and that's why it's happening this way. The beast is sort of trying to pass himself off as the "new Moses" and "new Elijah." And it's a direct counterpart to the new Moses and superior to Elijah portrayal of Jesus in the Gospels. I just wish they would have spent more time on that.

But anyway, let's get into the 666 a little bit. So we have it described in verses 17 and 18 as the number of a man. It's also described as the name of the beast. And so the imitation trajectory, again, makes sense. Except in this case, we're

miming the followers of either Yahweh (Jesus) or the beast. Again, for whom are you a proxy? So if the point of 666 is bearing the name, and as followers of Christ bear his name, so followers of the beast would bear *that* name. In other words, as we have people who align themselves with Jesus (their believing loyalty is in Jesus), you're going to have a lot of other people whose believing loyalty is in the beast. Now Christians obviously didn't literally bear the name. They're not stamped or branded or anything like that. And neither did Israelites, even when the name was "given" to them. Do you realize that the name was given to Israelites? This is Numbers 6. I'm sure you've heard the passage. This is the priestly blessing. But the terminology actually matters here.

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

So God says to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'This is what you say to the people.'"

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

See, that's where the blessing ends. But we forget about verse 27.

²⁷ "So shall they [MH: the Aaronic priests] put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

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So the people of Israel *bore* the name, not in a literalistic way. But that's what Numbers 6 says. This is the result of it. So the mark is a parody of this idea. It's a fake. It's an imitation. It's a pseudo-bearing-the-name idea. Spiritually speaking, whose side are you on? And we see this with the 144,000. Because they're sealed and marked. The mark is a parody of that as well. But we miss this other corporate idea.

Now some commentators have looked at this and thought, "Well, okay. You say the Israelites didn't literally bear the name. We understand what's being meant there. But the name of the Lord actually does get described as being worn by Israelites on the forehead and the hand. [laughs] And if this sounds a little strange (because that's where the mark of the beast goes), Beale and McDonough summarize it this way:

In the OT God told Israel that the Torah was to be "as a sign on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead" in order to remind them continually of their commitment and loyalty to God (Exod. 13:9; so also Exod. 13:16; Deut. 6:8; 11:18). This was done with phylacteries (leather pouches) containing portions of

Scripture worn on the forehead and arm. The NT equivalent is the invisible seal or name of God (see commentary on Rev. 7:2–3 above) [MH: that's the 144,000]. The "forehead" represents their ideological commitment and the "hand" the practical outworking of that commitment.

Now it's interesting that the Greek word for "hand", *cheir*, which is used here in Revelation 13, can mean "arm," even though that's rare. So I just want to throw that out. But again, what do we think of the parallel? It's interesting. I actually think the Aaronic blessing captures the idea better. But it is nevertheless an interesting sort of point-for-point kind of analogy that could be made.

So some scholars have taken this (the Jewish idea here) and they see this counterpart in Revelation 13. And of course, they're bound to speculate (about the bad mark). Is there a literal equivalent somewhere in this, or is it all just sort of spiritual representation? I'm arguing for spiritual or theological representation—bearing the name spiritually here is the point. You bear the mark; you bear the name of the beast; that means you're on his side. Just like on the positive side, you bear the name of the Lord; you bear the name of Christ. You're not carrying a physical mark with you, it's just that's where your loyalty is. So I'm arguing that's the whole point of the bearing the name and the mark and all this stuff. But there are others who try to find a more literal equivalent. So Aune notes one Second Temple parallel. He says:

According to 3 Macc 2:28–29, Ptolemy IV Philopater (221–204 B.C.) inaugurated a program of persecution against Egyptian Jews in which he required them to enroll in a census and to be branded with the ivy leaf of Dionysus; those who did not cooperate were executed (it is likely that Ptolemy IV, who was particularly devoted to Dionysus, himself sported an ivy-leaf brand).

Again, is that really what John's thinking about? I don't know. It feels a little dubious to me, but I thought I would mention it. You have Psalms of Solomon as another possible point of reference. Again, this is Second Temple Jewish literature. Psalms of Solomon 15:9-11 says this:

⁹ For they will flee from the holy ones like those pursued in battle,
and they will pursue and capture sinners;
and those who do lawlessness will not escape the judgment of the Lord;
they will be captured as if by experienced warriors.

¹⁰ For the sign of destruction is upon their forehead.

¹¹ And the inheritance of the sinners is destruction and darkness,
and their lawless acts will pursue them to Hades below.

Hmm... Again, this stamping on the forehead thing, it's not really the same context here. And it's aimed against Jews. Again, I doubt this is what John's

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thinking about. And I would say that there's a general weak point to all of this, and that's the buying or the selling. So my own predilection here (it would get interpretive to this extent) is that I look at Revelation 13 with the two beasts, which I view as metaphors for chaos (basically the whole world gone to hell, and Christians as a result are persecuted by the chaos system), part of that persecution is going to be that you can't buy or sell. So I take it as a point of oppression. But I don't think it's based upon a physical mark that anybody's taking. I do think it's based on the fact that you're a Christian. That's enough to target you, that you will refuse to denounce Christ—to deny Christ—and assign your loyalty to the beast, i.e., to the anti-Christ system. That alone is sufficient to say, "Well, you're not shopping here." So that actually feels more sinister to me [laughs] than some of the scenarios that people come up with. But scholars try to ferret out possible ways that buying and selling fit in with a physical mark. And none of it has an Old Testament context. It's all Greco-Roman. So Aune, for instance, writes this:

The connection of buying and selling with the χάραγμα [MH: that's the Greek term for "mark"] of the beast has been understood as a reference to the use of Roman coins, which bore the portraits and names of Roman emperors (Kraybill, *Imperial Cult*, 138–39). The inability to buy or sell would then be the result of refusing to use Roman coins. This has a parallel in the Jewish prohibition of images, which for some, such as the Zealots, included the image of the emperor on Roman coins.

Well, really? Again, it just feels weak. I mean, this is nice, but that isn't really what the passage describes: refusing to use coins. It says you can't buy or sell. It doesn't say that Christians refuse to use coins. It doesn't say that the image is on coins. The image is on the hand or the forehead, which has theological imagery to it (that we've already talked about in this episode) back into the Old Testament. The word of the Lord... The name being placed *upon* the people of God by the priests. To me that makes a whole lot more sense than making the passage talk about, "I don't want to use those coins." Again, this is kind of where people go. Now Aune knows this, and he admits later:

...there is no evidence that *people* were stamped on their hands or foreheads" with coin images.

Well, no, there isn't. And it's nice that we can be forthright there. But I think he and other commentators more or less just struggle with this.

So the last part of our episode... What about the number itself? Well, I hate to disappoint people. Maybe you *won't* go away disappointed after I say what I say. But there's no real secure Old Testament contribution here. Now when I say "secure," I mean there's nothing that I can look at or anybody else can find in the text that really fits well with the number 666. In other words, it's not like, "Hey, we

can go through Revelation 13, and there are, like, 30 places where we see Daniel is quoted in the Septuagint.” I mean, we just gave a little sampling here in this episode. There’s nothing like that for the number. Typically, what you get in commentaries is you get suggestions of people whose names could correspond to this. And they’re all Greco-Roman. They all have weaknesses, which is why this hasn’t been resolved. So the typical name explanations like Nero... Well, yeah, Nero works if you spell his name a certain way. Like one of them is you add an “N” to it. Which, again, that was a spelling for Nero. So okay. You can get to Domitian through gematria (letters corresponding to numbers), depending on what spelling they used, depending on if you use sort of a nickname or an abbreviation or part of it. [laughs] It just feels like cheating at some point. Another candidate would be Pythagorean magic squares. Magic squares are essentially sudoku, where the vertical lines, horizontal lines, and diagonal lines all add up to the same number. So someone pointed out that 666 is the Pythagorean magic square of the sun. So now you get solar deity imagery in there—Zeus and whoever. Aune calls these “triangular numbers,” and so do other scholars. But “magic squares” is what I’m used to.

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Again, is this really what we’re talking about? Would John have known of the Pythagorean system? Now there are actually serious weaknesses to the Pythagorean element here. And I put this in the protected folder. I came across... I didn’t have this earlier when we got to some of the numbers earlier in the book of Revelation. But I was able to procure something this week that I’m putting in the protected folder. And for those of you who are really into Bible number stuff, this is *the* article. In other words, when I say that, this is the most thorough treatment of the subject. It’s over 60 pages. It’s by Adela Yarbro Collins. And her treatment here basically has not been superseded. So it’s called “Numerical Symbolism in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature.” She goes through everything: Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Enoch, New Testament, Pythagoras, all of it. Okay? It’s a great article, but it doesn’t solve the problem. All of these suggestions are Greco-Roman. Now I find the one that’s most intriguing (just to drift off into Greco-Roman-land here—and there’s a reason why I find it intriguing that does link back to the Old Testament), is Irenaeus’ suggestion. And I wrote about this in *Reversing Hermon*. But I’m going to give you... This is John J. Collins in DDD. He’s the husband of the first Collins. He has the entry on Titans in DDD. And he writes this:

The name [Titan] is not found as such in the writings of the NT, but may be hidden in “666” in Rev 13:18, the number of “the Beast” and also of a man. One of the solutions of this riddle that have been listed by Irenaeus [MH: Irenaeus actually lists a few of these, but this is the one that is most interesting], happens to be Τετταβ [MH: there’s a specific spelling, and this is something Irenaeus brings up in his book] (*Against Her.* 5, 30, 3), of which the numerical values $300+5+10+300+1+50$ add up to 666. He comments that this solution is particularly convincing to himself, because it is not the name of an actually

venerated god or a known king, but nevertheless a divine and kingly, even a tyrant's, name.

So it gave a certain flexibility. Interestingly enough, everybody says that the Nero thing solves the 666 problem. Irenaeus doesn't even bring it up. He doesn't even bring Nero up. He's well acquainted with Nero, folks, and he didn't find that at all persuasive, or even interesting. So he takes this different trajectory.

Now why should we care? Again, I discussed this a bit in *Reversing Hermon*, with 666 and Titan and Teitan (Τειταν). There's no direct Old Testament reference here, so it's an analogical argument. Basically it goes like this: 666 points to a Titan. The Titans were the giants (in the Greco-Roman retelling of Genesis 6). One of those was Nimrod in Jewish tradition (not in the Bible). Nimrod is called a *gibbor*, and *gibbor* does not have to mean "giant." David is called a *gibbor*. God is called a *gibbor*. It doesn't have to mean "giant." So let's get that straight. But you go from 666 to Titans, to giants, to Nimrod. And Nimrod, of course, is associated with... Drumroll please. Babel. And of course, Revelation's antichrist is associated with Babel, Babylon, great whore. Again, there's no biblical text that makes those connections. But they're interesting. So I wrote in *Reversing Hermon* this little bit here:

The point being made here is not that the Antichrist will be a giant. No biblical or Enochic text draws such a conclusion. Rather, the material indicates that Second Temple Jewish readers of Revelation may have parsed the Antichrist as having a direct association with the fallen Watchers, the classical Titans, and the giants.

That's possible. And the Nimrod trajectory establishes that possibility. So I kind of like that, because I think that the number has something to do with Babel. That's kind of obvious though, because if you keep reading in Revelation, you get Babylon the great whore. I mean, that's kind of obvious. I'm not, like, patting myself on the back here, that I've seen something that no one else has seen. Everybody sees this who reads it. So what I'm interested in is what's the Babel connection. Now we certainly have a chaos connection with the two beasts. That's in play absolutely. And then we get this number. And what I want to see, where I think the answer's going to be, and we may never find it, but it's going to have some connection to Babel chaos stuff.

I have to mention one other thing. I also recently came across an article that tries to make the argument for 666 from the Old Testament... And I don't find this persuasive at all. I'm going to tell you why. But I also put this in the protected folder. So 666 as a number is actually mentioned three times in the Old Testament. The first one is the number of the talents of gold that Solomon collected each year. It's mentioned in 1 Kings 10:14, 2 Chronicles 9:13. So those are two of the references. The third reference is Ezra 2:13, where Adonikam has 666 sons (descendants). That's it. There's nothing to build on there. Nothing is

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said about Adonikam, and all this stuff. That's where you get the number. Now this particular article by Brent Strawn and Keith Bodner, entitled "Solomon and 666 (Revelation 13.18)"... This is from *New Testament Studies*, volume 66, which is 2020. So it's very recent. Pages 219 to... Let's see. No, I messed up the numbers here. I can't remember what page numbers it actually is, and I don't want to open the file right now. But it's eight to ten pages. It's not real long. Here's what they argue. This is from their abstract:

The present article argues that 666 in Rev 13:18 is best related to the notice of Solomon receiving 666 talents of gold (1 Kgs 10:14 // 2 Chron 9:13) which is, in turn, an important notice of this king's wayward and unjust practices: his inordinate wealth, exploitation of his own people and eschewing of God's law.

So basically in non-academese, Solomon got 666 talents of gold (he got lots of other stuff, too), and that shows that Solomon was an evil, sinister monarch that was just milking everybody for his wealth, and he exploited his own people. And this is one of the things that you're not supposed to do as a king, according to the Torah. And so that becomes why we see 666 used of the antichrist. Okay, I don't find this at all persuasive for one big reason (and they actually try to address this in the article and do not do a good job of it): Solomon's portrayal in Second Temple Jewish literature is not a bad one. He's an exorcist. He has power over demons. Basically, he's the exact opposite of what he would be if he turns out to be the foil or the touchpoint for the antichrist.

So I think this is really weak. But I wanted to mention it because some of you will know that the number 666 occurs in the Old Testament. There you go. Again, I just don't find that option persuasive. I don't find any of the Greco-Roman options persuasive. I'll admit that I'm influenced by Irenaeus here. If he yawned at the suggestion of Nero, well, to me that says something. And again, all of these systems that try to align with certain names, they kind of cheat a little bit to make it work. None of these things has won the day. The closest you get to a consensus is the Nero thing, but people are very quick to point out that you have to fiddle a little bit. The one advantage it has is that it also accounts for the textual variant (616). Some manuscripts of Revelation 13:18 do not say 666; they say 616. And if you spelled Nero an altogether different way, you can get 616. So it can account for both of them. But to me that just sort of demonstrates somewhat the artificiality of it. And again, if Irenaeus just thought, "Why would we even think that?" to me that suggests something there. To me that's actually a strong argument that we don't need to take Nero too seriously. Because Irenaeus is very close—a lot closer than we are—to the period. He's one of the early Fathers. He knows all about Nero because Nero put Paul and Peter to death. I mean, you would think, if this idea of Nero being the beast (this legend of Nero being revived, and all this stuff), you'd think as sort of how that circulated... And it did circulate in the ancient world. People were freaked out by Nero—that he would come back from the dead, and all this. Not even for biblical reasons, just

generally. There's that. It's current. People are thinking about it. They're talking about it. They fear it. You've got this number thing going on. And Irenaeus doesn't even bat an eye. Not even on the radar. Gives it no consideration at all. Again, to me that is a good argument against it.

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So again, none of these things are going to solve the problem (just so summarize here as we close). The one I prefer, again, is... I'll prefer something that has a connection to Babel. And right now all you have is an analogous reasoning chain that goes back to *Teitan* (the Titans) and Hermon and Nimrod and all this kind of stuff. You have to dip into Second Temple Jewish thinking about Nimrod and equate him with Babel. And it's possible. All these things are possible. All the elements of this logic chain are possible. The problem is that the logic change is never spelled out in Scripture. Not even *part* of the logic chain is spelled out in Scripture. All of the links in the chain are isolated from each other, scripturally speaking, except for Nimrod and Babylon. That's about the only one you've got. There's a direct connection there. So where does that leave us? Well, it leaves us in the quandary that we started with. Nobody knows what this specifically is talking about. And there really isn't a clear Old Testament precedent. Maybe what I've just suggested is the right way to think about it. I don't know. Neither does anybody else. Because we're dealing with the absence of data when it comes to texts, at least to this point, as far as I've been able to find. And I've looked at a lot of stuff. So I'm not holding my breath. But that's kind of where we are with the whole issue. So the real meat here is with the beasts. I think it helps. I think it helps solidify a chaos orientation to the whole chapter. And again, with that, we'll bring this one to a close. That's really the Old Testament contribution to Revelation 13.

TS: Mike, Mike, Mike, no, no, no, no, no. I'm going to need a current name that you think... [MH laughs] You're going to disappoint... You could've just said... You could've saved us an hour and just said, "I don't know." [MH laughs] You could've just said it up front. "I don't know."

MH: [laughs] Well, there's plenty of things we do know in here.

TS: We want a name, Mike. You know? We need to spill the tea, as they say now. Have you ever heard that? Spill the tea? It's what all the...

MH: I have heard that, too many times, actually. [laughs]

TS: We need a current name. You know how many times I've heard people say names? Even at my church. I don't want to say anything bad or speak anything, but...

MH: Henry Kissinger is still alive. He was the antichrist when I was growing up. So he's still alive. We'll go with him.

TS: Or Hitler. He's coming back.

MH: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah, there you go. [laughs] Yeah, there you go.

TS: You can go really far down the rabbit hole with chapter 13 there.

MH: Oh, sure.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, next week, chapter 14, getting into the 144,000 again.

MH: Yep, yep. And we won't spend a whole lot of time on that part of the chapter, because we did so much with it earlier on. But yeah, we're going to hit them again. They're unavoidable. Because hey, there they are. But there's plenty of other stuff in chapter 14, and then of course on into 15, that... I don't know. I'll have to take a look at it. But we might be able to do 14 and 15 together, because the plagues are there. We've had a lot of that language already too. So we'll see. Well, we're making good progress. At least we can say that much.

TS: Alright, sounds good, Mike. Well, I'm disappointed. No computer chips and no modern names have been named in this episode, but that's okay.

MH: Nope. But the emails will keep coming. [laughs]

TS: You can email Mike, not me. But alright, Mike. Well, with that, we look forward to chapter 14 next week, and I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.