

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 142

“ THE SETTING OF REVELATION AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST”

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The responses to the last two newsletters on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, have surpassed my fondest expectations. Hundreds of pastors, teachers, and lay members have ordered the newly released CD-ROM with 180 slides on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*. If you have not purchased yet your album, you can still order it at the special price at the end of this newsletter

Some fellow believer without computer have urged me to make this research available in a book form and on a live DVD recording. To fulfill this request, I have devoted every spare moment to these two projects during the past two months. God willing, the video taping will be done by a professional crew on Wednesday evening, February 1, 2006, at the *University Towers* auditorium of Andrews University. The publication of the book (about 250 pages) will follow soon afterwards, hopefully before the end of March.

The unusual interest for the study of the book of Revelation, especially the central prophecy of the mark and number of the beast, reflects the fact that our Seventh-day Adventist came into existence largely as a result of the study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Our fascination with these two prophetic books has not diminished during the course of our church history. In fact, about 20 years ago some creative pastors developed a “REVELATION SEMINAR” outreach program which has been widely used with considerable success by pastors and lay-members.

The new satellite evangelism seems to have partly eclipsed *Revelation Seminars* outreach efforts, but the interest for an understanding of the intriguing prophecies of the book of Revelation remains unabated. In fact, the themes of the Satellite crusades are largely inspired by the book of Revelation. Titles such as “Prophecy Seminars, Prophecy Code, Rev-

elation Speaks Peace—Unlocking the Signs (March 10-April 8, 2006),” clearly indicate that the book of Revelation is still a major source of inspiration for public evangelism. The sermon on “The Mark of the Beast,” is still likely to draw the largest crowd.

The continuous interest for the study of the prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation is a positive sign. It tells us that there are sincere believers who are eager to understand the significance of the time in which we live in the light of Bible prophecy. They want to know what are the issues facing mankind in the final conflict.

Temptation to Ignore Original Setting

The problem is the method often used to interpret Revelation. The desire to see the fulfilment of Revelation prophecies in the present and future conflicts facing mankind, leads some to ignore the social, political, and religious issues that occasioned the writing of the book in the first place. For example, most Bible students want to know how and by whom will the mark and number of the beast be enforced in the end time, without first exploring the meaning of the mark and number of the beast in John’s time. Yet the end time fulfilment of the mark and number of the beast can hardly be understood without first comprehending what it meant to John and his contemporary Christians.

A responsible interpretation of Revelation seeks to understand first of all how the prophetic messages were understood by the original readers and listeners during the church service. We must not forget that John wrote “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” to encourage, warn, and rebuke seven real congregations in Asia Minor. Shortly we shall see that Christians were promised a blessing for reading, listening, and obeying the messages of the book.

Until recent years, Adventist writers, evangelists, and pastors have largely ignored the political, social, and religious world of the book of Revelation. The latest studies on Revelation are making up for this deficiency. I recall attending about 20 years ago the annual meeting of Biblical Research Institute, of which I was a member. Our committee was asked to evaluate a newly released *Revelation Seminar Syllabus* that

had been published for the use of pastors and lay members interested to conduct *Revelation Seminars*.

Being a church historian by training and profession, I looked immediately for any information on the historical setting of Revelation. To my surprise there was none. The lessons gave the impression that Revelation was written exclusively for the end time generation. Yet an understanding of what caused John to write “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” in the first place, is the key to unlock the prophetic messages and their application to our time.

While preparing for the video-taping of this powerpoint lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* (scheduled for February 1, 2006, Wednesday evening 7:00 to 9:00 p. m. at the *University Towers* auditorium), I sensed the need to become better acquainted with historical, social, and religious setting of Revelation, in order to better understand the immediate and ultimate fulfillment of the intriguing prophecy on the mark and number of the beast. I felt that I could not examine this prophecy in isolation. To put it simply, I needed to find answers to some fundamental questions that would determine the direction of my study. Incidentally the quality of any research is largely determined by the probative questions posed by the investigator.

Questions to be Addressed

Some of the questions I needed to resolve in my mind are: Did John write his prophetic messages primarily for his contemporary congregations in Asia Minor or exclusively for the end-time generation or for both? Were the symbols used by John (dragon, beasts, image, mark of the beast, number of the beast, seal of God, harlot, Babylon, etc.) readily understood by the original readers? Or are these symbols a giant puzzle to be solved 2000 years later by the end-time generation?

What are the social, religious, and political circumstances that compelled John to write Revelation? What is the central theme of Revelation and how does it relate to the prophecy regarding the mark and number of the Beast? Is the prophecy of the mark and number of the beast central or peripheral to the book of Revelation?

Time and Place of the Video-Taping of the Lecture

Before sharing my preliminary findings, let me give you some specific information about the time and place of the video-taping of my powerpoint lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*. The date and the place have changed since my last newsletter, because I was looking for a chapel with a nice platform setting, and a large screen coming down toward the front of the platform, yet leaving me adequate room to move.

The Place. After checking a few chapels and auditoriums, I decided to use the auditorium of the *University Towers* (known also as Burman Hall) of Andrews University. It is a cozy auditorium that looks like a chapel with padded pews, which are needed for a two hours long lecture. The stage has a large 12” screen, with a nice brown-bricks wall, and several plants.

The Time. God willing, the taping will take place on Wednesday evening, February 1, from 7:00 to 9:00 p. m. A cordial invitation is extended to anyone able to attend the video-taping that will be done by a professional crew. The *University Towers* auditorium can seat about 300 person. For those coming from out of town and unfamiliar with the campus, the *University Towers* is located behind Pioneer Memorial Church, opposite the sport fields. As an incentive, those attending the taping session will be offered the DVD album of the lecture for only \$5.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$50.00.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THE NEWSLETTERS

Several subscribers have suggested me to place all the announcements at the end of each newsletter. This is a valid suggestion that I intend to follow by listing at this juncture only the title of each announcement. The details of each announcement are given at the end of this newsletter

1. INVITATION TO ATTEND THE VIDEO-TAPING OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI’S LECTURE ON *THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST*.

2. SPECIAL OFFER ON DR. JON PAULIEN'S 5 CD-ROM ALBUMS, called *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation*.

3. SPECIAL OFFER ON THE PACKAGE OF ALL MY RECORDINGS CONSISTING OF 5 ALBUMS, including the newly released CD-ROM album on *The Mark and the Number of the Beast*. The regular price for the package of the 5 albums is \$450.00, but the **SPECIAL ONE-TIME OFFER IS ONLY \$100.00**. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

4. A WEEKEND SEMINAR AT YOUR CHURCH: Information on how to invite me for a weekend seminar in 2006.

5. CALENDAR OF UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS.

6. HITACHI PROJECTORS: Recently I received a special overstock discount from HITACHI on the volume purchase of four projectors models: 2000 lumens, 2500 lumens, 3200 lumens, and 4500 lumens. See the details at the end of this newsletter or call me at 269-471-2915

7. TOSHIBA LAPTOPS: Special 30 to 40% discount on Toshiba laptops computers for Adventists. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

8. REMOTE PRESENTER: The smallest and most powerful REMOTE powerpoint presenter by Honeywell. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

9. DA-LITE SCREENS for your church at 30% discount. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

“ THE SETTING OF REVELATION AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST”

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During the past few weeks I spent considerable time acquainting myself with the historical setting of the book of Revelation. I highly recommend the chapter “The World of the Book of Revelation” from Jon Paulien’s book *The Deep Things of God*. The chapter offers a concise but informative survey of the precarious situation of the church in John’s time and the challenges Christians were facing from outside and inside. The chapter helps the reader to appreciate some of the issues John is addressing in Revelation.

Jon Paulien, Ph. D., currently serves as the Chairman of the NT Department at Andrews University Theological Seminary. He is recognized as a foremost authority on Johannine literature, especially the book of Revelation. In appreciation for his scholarship and his contribution to the understanding of Revelation, I have offered to promote and distribute without any commission, his 5 albums set of 60 CD-ROMS, containing a total of 120 lectures on the book of Revelation. Considerable time and efforts went into recording these lectures by a professional crew.

The 5 CD-ROM albums set are called THE BIBLE EXPLORER SERIES ON REVELATION. They take you verse by verse through the whole book of Revelation. You can enjoy learning at a distance in your home, office, or while driving, without investing thousand of dollars to come to Andrews to seat in Prof. Paulien’s Revelation class. At the end of this newsletter you will find the information on how to order the set of 60 CD-ROMS directly at my website.

Revelation: A Three Dimensional Perspective

The first conclusion that emerged from my preliminary study is that Revelation was not written as a giant puzzle to be solved two thousand years later, but as a powerful drama designed to speak to the challenges facing the original readers as well as future generation of Christians. We might say that Revelation has a three dimensional perspective: past, present, and future. This three dimensional perspective is reflected in the formula used three times to describe God as “the One who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev 1:4; 1:8; 4:8).

John wrote to seven real congregations in seven real cities of the Roman province of Asia Minor. They are expected to read, to listen, and

to practice the words of the prophecy. “Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near” (Rev 1:3). The Greek verb for “reads—*anaginoskon*” literally means “reading with understanding.” The reader (preacher) and the listeners (the congregation) were expected to understand the prophetic messages.

This text promises a special blessing to the reader and the listener of the book of Revelation. “The readers is the person who reads publicly the book of prophecy — that is to say, the preacher — while the listeners are the assembled congregation listening to the reading. While the reading and hearing of the prophecies are very important, the fullness of the blessings is pronounced upon those *keeping* its messages” (Ranko Stefanovich, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 59).

Revelation Reaches to the Consummation of Redemption

But the prophecies of Revelation reach beyond John’s day to the consummation of redemption with the establishment of a new world. They describe the unfolding of the great controversy from its inception in heaven to its various manifestations on earth. They portray with dramatic imageries the satanic forces, represented by the dragon, the beasts, and the false prophet, battling for the loyalty of the human heart by enforcing false worship. But the victory belongs to Christ, who returns as the “King of kings and the Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16), to destroy the wicked and establish “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev, 21:1).

The fact that the book of Revelation speaks powerfully, not only to its original audience, but also to future generations of believers, calls for spiritual discernment in interpreting its prophetic messages. No single method (Preterists, Futurist, Historicist, Idealist) can be used as a template to interpret the whole of Revelation. Instead, we need to examine each passage, asking, as Jon Paulien points out, ““What is the approach called for in this passage?” As we go through the book of Revelation, we will want to be sensitive to the evidence of the text. We will let the biblical text govern what we see in the passage” (Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God*, p. 30).

Applying this principle to the prophecy regarding the mark and number of the beast, it means that we need to be sensitive to the evidence of the text. Does the text suggest that the enforcement of false worship by the beast will take place exclusively at the End? Or was there an initial fulfillment already in John’s time? The answer to this question will be found shortly when examining the challenge of emperor worship that John and fellow Christians were facing.

Worship is the Central Theme of Revelation

The second significant conclusion that emerged from my preliminary study is that *worship* is the *central theme* of Revelation. It is the key to understand much of the book. No other book of the Bible contains so many worship scenes. Time and again John is shown heavenly and earthly beings praising God (4:9; 7:12; 11:17) and serving Him in His temple (7:15; 22:3).

The worshippers sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (5:9; 14:3; 15:3). They give praise to God (19:5) and glorify His name (15:4). Elders, angels and living creatures fall down before Him and worship Him (4:10; 5:8,14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). The word Amen and the exclamation Hallelujah are found regularly in settings of worship (1:6,7; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 19:1,3,4,6).

The verb “to worship—*proskuneo*”—a fundamental liturgical term—occurs 24 times in Revelation. This represents almost half of the New Testament occurrences. The worship of God and the Lamb radiates from the epicenter of the throne room of God, into even widening concentric circles which includes the four living creatures (19:4), the twenty-four elders (4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4), all the angels (7:11), and all the nations (15:4). The final summon to mankind, is a call to “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and *worship* him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev 14:7; emphasis supplied).

Simply stated, I discovered that worship is the key that unlocks Revelation. By understanding the reason for the centrality of worship in Revelation, we can interpret the prophecy of the mark and number of the beast in its proper historical setting.

Worship is the Root Cause of the Great Controversy

The third conclusion is closely related to the second. I found that the reason worship is so central in Revelation is because John was shown in vision that worship is the root cause of the titanic controversy between Christ and Satan. In Revelation 12, John describes how that the conflict over worship began in heaven when Michael and his angels fought and defeated the dragon (Satan) and his angels, both of whom were thrown down to the earth.

After his expulsion from heaven, Satan made this earth his theater of his operations, using all his resources to suppress the worship and worshippers of the true God, promoting instead the false worship of himself, through the unholy trinity, represented by the dragon, the sea-beast, and the land-beast, known also as the “false prophet.”

The conflict comes to a climax in Revelation 13, where Satan, represented by the Dragon, empowers the sea-beast and the land-beast to enforce its false worship by placing a mark, a name, and the number 666 on the foreheads and hands of their followers. Thus, as we shall see, the mark, name, and number of the beast, represent the nature of the false worship promoted by the unholy trinity.

Why is Worship a Critical Issue in Revelation?

Why is worship such a critical issue in Revelation? Why worship is not the central theme of other New Testament books? Why only in Revelation Christians are warned against the dire consequences of participating in false worship?

For example, we read in Revelation 14:9-11: “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured out full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who received the mark of his name” (Rev 14:9-11).

Why is such a stern warning against false worship found only in Revelation? In the Pauline Epistle the central issue is faith versus works, but in Revelation the central issue is true worship versus false worship. What is the reason for the different emphasis? There are two answers to this question and both of them are suggested by the historical setting of the book.

The Threat of Emperor Worship

The first reason for the centrality and conflict over worship is to be found in the threat of Emperor Worship. By the time John put pen to paper the emperor cult had so penetrated the political and economic institutions of the Roman Empire, that it had become increasingly difficult for conscientious Christians to remain loyal to Christ.

Emperor worship began under Emperor Caesar Augustus (27 B. C. - A. D. 14) as a way to unite the multiplicity of nations that made up the Roman Empire into a common loyalty and a sense of national destiny. It was, however, toward the end of the first century, during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96), that the emperor cult posed the greatest threat to the Christian church.

While Domitian's father, Vespasian (69-79) and his brother Titus (79-81), were accorded divine honor at their death, Emperor Domitian sought them during his lifetime. The Roman historian Suetonius informs us that Domitian referred to himself grandiosely as *Dominus et Deus—Lord and God*. Suetonius continues: "And so the custom arose of henceforth addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation. He suffered no statues to be set up in his honor in the Capitol, except of gold and silver and of a fixed weight"(Suetonius, *Domitian* xiii).

The worship of the emperor became for Christians a test of their faith. Later on we will discuss the letter that Pliny, Governor of Bythinia, wrote in A. D. 111 to Emperor Trajan to obtain instructions on how to proceed against Christians. He explains that the procedure he had followed was to ask them if they were Christians. Those who confessed were executed, but those who claimed that they were no longer Christians, were asked to *worship the image of the emperor* by offering incense and wine before it. The worship of "the image of the beast" was an acid test

of the Christian faith. This helps us to understand why John speak of the land-beast bidding people “to make an image for the beast” (Rev 13:14), and “to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain” (Rev 13:15).

The Choice Between Allegiance to Christ or Caesar

As the emperor worship was spreading in the Roman Empire, especially in the Province Asia, the prophet John could see in it the signs of the coming crisis when “all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb” (Rev 13:8, NIV). John recognized that Christians would soon have to choose their allegiance between Caesar or Christ as their Lord.

John himself made the choice to be loyal to Christ and paid the price by being exiled to the tiny, “God-forsaken” island of Patmos. He tells us that he was in that island, not on an evangelistic tour, but “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 1:9). Most likely “the testimony of Jesus” refers to John’s choice to worship Christ as *Dominus and Deus—Lord and God*, instead of the Emperor Domitian.

The term “LORD—*Dominus* in Latin or *Kurios* in Greek” became the battle ground of loyalties. Christians had to choose whether to worship Christ or Caesar as their LORD. This helps us to understand why the angel commends those Christians who “have endured hardship for my *name*” (Rev 2:3), “remained true to my *name*” (Rev 2:13), and who “have not denied my *name*” (Rev 3:8).

But if the Emperor thought that Patmos was an ideal God-forsaken place to isolate John, an influential church leader in Asia Minor, he was wrong. Because it was from that tiny island that the Spirit of God gave him messages to meet the spiritual needs of each of the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev 1-3). Furthermore, the angel took him in vision into heaven to the very throne room of God (Rev 4-5). From there he was shown the unfolding of the conflict between God and Satan, until the final victory and the establishment of a new world.

Influence of Pagan Worship Upon Christian Churches

The second reason for the centrality of worship in Revelation is John's concern over the influence of pagan worship upon the Christian congregations of Asia Minor. We detect this concern in the messages of rebuke to six of the seven churches. The messages reveal that some congregations were conditioned by the pagan worship around them. When compared with the rest of the New Testament books, Revelation contains unusual sharp rebukes. The reason is that John addresses some divisive teaching promoted by some influential members.

In Revelation 2, John describes these false teachers by three different names: the Nicolaitans, Balaam, and Jezebel. "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the *teaching of Balaam*, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality" (Rev 2:14; NIV). The same issue of "eating of food sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20) is mentioned with reference to Jezebel.

Apparently, these false teachers saw nothing wrong in participating in the pagan worship of the Emperor and gods, by eating food which had been consecrated at their altars. This compromise with pagan worship threatened the spiritual life of some congregations. For example, the Church of Sardis is told: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die" (Rev 3:1-2).

Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan written few years later (A. D. 111) confirms John's concern over the compromise with pagan worship by an increasing number of Christians. Pliny, Governor of Bythnia, wrote: "The contagion of this superstition [Christianity] has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded" (Pliny, *Letters X*, 97).

At that critical time when some Christians were compromising their allegiance to Christ in order to fit into a pagan world, John, from his exile in Patmos, calls upon them to wake up and recognize the demonic nature of the Emperor Cult. Rome is a beast empowered by Satan to demand the worship that belongs to God. The central thrust of Revelation is a call to faithfulness in the context of the beguiling influence of the idolatrous worship of the Roman society.

Warning Against False Worship Relevant Today

John's warning against false worship reaches beyond his time to the very end of time. This is indicated by the fact that the final attempts of the beast to enforce false worship, are followed immediately by the announcement of the fall of Babylon and the judgment upon the beast and her followers at the coming of the Son of Man in the cloud (Rev 14:14).

In John's time false worship was promoted especially through the emperor cult which forced Christians to choose between Christ or Caesar. Today false worship is promoted by a variety of satanic agencies through both Christians and pagan religions. In my live DVD lecture and my book I discuss the global scope of the false worship embraced by people of all religions. This makes the prophecy of the mark and number of the beast especially relevant to our time.

The Centrality of the Prophecy of the Mark of the Beast

Before discussing the global scope of false worship today, it is important to note the location of the mark of the beast prophecy at the center of book. The prophecy is preceded by the great battle between Christ and the dragon in chapter 12 and followed by God's final appeal through the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14, which are followed by God's final judgments upon mankind, especially Babylon.

In his book *The Deep Things of God*, Jon Paulien writes: "At the center of the book of Revelation looms the great final battle between the dragon and the remnant. This section, with its messages from the three angels, is what the whole structure works toward and away from. It is the key to understanding the whole book. . . . Here God sets forth His agenda for the final event of earth's history" (p. 122).

The importance of the mark of the beast's prophecy is evident when looking at the so-called chiasmic literary structure of Revelation. Several scholars have noted that the messages of Revelation are laid out as a chiasm. The word "chiasm" derives from the Greek cross-shaped letter X, and is used to describe the typical literary structure of the Hebrew literature. While literary compositions today follow an A-B-C pattern with the climax coming at the end, the chiasmic structure follows the A-B-A'. In a chiasmic outline the story progresses from A to B and then back to A. But the second "A" expands the thought of the first "A," like in a musical scale where the same keys keep coming back but at a higher pitch.

It is important to note that in a chiasmic structure the climax of the story comes at the center, with the preceding and following sections moving up to and away from it. In Revelation the first half of the chiasm is *historical*, focusing on events of the history of the Christian church, while the second part is *eschatological*, dealing with events leading to the consummation of redemption.

The center section on the FINAL CRISIS contains the central theological theme of the book. The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan that begins in heaven and continues on this earth where the dragon persecute the remnant. In his desperate attempt to suppress the true worship of God, the dragon empowers a sea-beast and a land-beast to enforce the false worship by placing the mark and number of the beast upon their followers. The attempts of the beast to suppress the worship of God (Rev 13) are followed by God's final warning to mankind and judgments upon Satan and his supporters.

The point of this discussion about the chiasmic structure of Revelation is that the prophecy we are about to study on the mark and number of the beast, is not an isolated prophecy dealing with external markings or pope's titles, but a central, pivotal prophecy that describes with dramatic imagery the final desperate attempt of Satan to win his battle against God by promoting and enforcing a false idolatrous worship.

The mark and number of the beast represent Satan desperate attempts to win the battle for the mind and heart of mankind, before God intervenes to execute His judgments on the dragon, the beast, the false

prophet, and the wicked, in order to resolve the cosmic conflict by destroying permanently the wicked and establishing a new world.

The key issue in the final conflict is the proper worship of God. John's prophecy about the mark and number of the beast, calls for believers to recognize, not papal titles, but the global false worship promoted by a variety of religions, including Catholicism.

In John's time Christians faced the challenge of false worship promoted especially by Emperor Domitian who wanted to be worship as "LORD AND GOD." In addition Christians had to contend with the more appealing mystery religions of Mithra, Cybele, and Isis, which offered hope for the after-life. Today the Christian challenge of false worship is far more complex and widespread.

The Global Scope of False Worship

To help people visualize the global scope of false worship today, I am using in the live DVD lecture and the book, a color chart of major world religions. In the chart, Christianity with its 2.1 billion nominal members accounts for 33% of the world population (about 6 billion). But most of the Christian population of Western Europe consists of non-practicing Christians. They attend church occasionally for special events and view religion as a cultural heritage largely irrelevant to their daily life. The problem of false worship in Christian countries is just as widespread as in non-Christian countries.

False Worship Promoted by Islam

The chart shows that next to Christianity comes Islam, with 1.3 billion members. They represent 21 per cent of the world population. Islam also plays a major prophetic role in promoting the end-time false worship of the unholy trinity of Revelation 13. It embodies the Spirit of the Antichrist by denying the deity of Christ (1 John 2:22-23), His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

For Muslims the biblical teaching that Christ is the Son of God is blasphemous. "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trin-

ity, for there is no God except One God” (Surah 5:76). Islam’s teaching of the absolute Oneness of God stems from their believe that God is “far above” and beyond any intimate relationship. He lives in solitary aloofness. Such a teaching derives from gnostic sects that lived in Saudi Arabia at the time of Muhammad. By contrast, the God of the Bible consists of three Beings who live in eternal fellowship. He is both transcendent and immanent, beyond and within His creation.

There is no divine provision of salvation in Islam. Muslim earn salvation through religious rituals like praying, fasting, alms-giving, and pilgrimage to the Mecca. Allah is a fearful god who requires total submission to his rules and rituals. For example, if a Muslim doesn’t pray to Allah daily, he will have to fulfill the missed duties in hell before going to heaven. Muslims worship Allah out of fear of punishment on earth and in heaven.

There is a striking similarity between Islam and Catholicism in their respective understanding of the importance of good works to earn salvation. Both in Catholicism and Islam salvation is the result of a combination of grace and works. In Catholicism, God’s grace is infused into believers to enable them to do the necessary good works to merit salvation on the day of judgment.

On a similar vein in Islam salvation is a combination of Allah’s grace and Muslims’ works. On the Day of Judgment, if a Muslims good works outweigh their bad ones, and if Allah accept their good works, then they may be forgiven of all their sins and enter into Paradise. Therefore, Islam is a religion of salvation by works because it combines man’s works with Allah’s grace.

The Koranic Allah explicitly enjoins to slay the pagans, Jews, and Christians who do not embrace Islam. “When the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war). But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity [become Moslem], then open the way for them.” (Surah 9:5).

Such a coercive method of evangelism stands in stark contrast to the teachings of the biblical God to win men and women for His King-

dom by proclaiming to them the Good News of His saving grace through Christ's atoning sacrifice.

False Worship is Promoted by Pagan Religions

False worship is a global phenomenon promoted by pagan religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, African indigenous deities, Sikhism, Spiritism, Shintoism, etc. The common denominator of these pagan religions is salvation through human efforts, not through a divine provision of grace. Rituals are used to persuade man-made gods to be merciful and grant life in this world and the world to come.

False Worship is Promoted by Humanism and Secularism

False worship is also promoted today by a host of ideologies such as humanism, secularism, materialism, evolutionism, all of which deny the existence of God and of His plan for human and sub-human creation. They believe in the human ability to construct a better tomorrow without divine intervention. Many live by the motto displayed in the motto above: "No God, No Guilt. The belief in god awakens fanaticism and guilt. Live free and responsible. Debaptize yourself!"

Nonreligious people who embrace these secular humanistic philosophies account for over 1.1 billion people today. They represent 16 per cent of the world population. Their goal is to promote a *self-centered* rather than a *God-centered* worship.

False Worship is Promoted by the Papacy

The Papacy has played a major prophetic role in leading people into the false worship of God through icons, statues, crucifixes, relics, Mary, and above all, the exaltation of the pope. Any attempt to objectify Christ or the other members of the Trinity, by identifying them with objects, shrines, icons, crucifixes, or statues, is condemned by the Scripture as idolatry. This is the fundamental problem of Catholic worship. It is an idolatrous worship largely dependent on objects as worship aids. Believers are deceived into believing that through the Eucharistic elements, holy relics, images, sacred shrines, they can experience the divine.

Worshipping God through objects ends up upstaging preaching, which is God's chosen means for communicating the faith and nurturing the spiritual life of His people. The Apostle Paul explains that "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Rom 10:17). This means that saving faith comes through the reading, preaching and hearing of the Word of God, and not through the partaking of the physical body of Christ or the veneration of "holy" objects.

The pope promotes false worship today, especially by reviving Marian Worship. During this past year, Pope Benedict XVI has made constant appeals to pray to Mary for guidance and protection. The website "The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict VI, "lists over 90 appeals to pray to Mary that Benedict made between April 19 and November 6 (<http://www.udayton.edu/mary/popessaying.html>).

For example, on the day of the Feast of the Assumption, Benedict XVI said: "Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven: there is even room in God for the body. Heaven is no longer a very remote sphere unknown to us. We have a mother in Heaven. And the Mother of God, the Mother of the Son of God, is our Mother. He himself has said so. He made her our Mother when he said to the disciple and to all of us: 'Behold, your Mother!' We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart." Does this mean that without Mary God does not have a heart?

It is hard to believe how the Catholic Church has succeeded in twisting Christ's words to John: "Behold, your mother" (John 19:27). By these words Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of John, and not mankind to the care of Mary. This is clearly indicated by Christ's statement to Mary: "Woman, behold your son" (John 19:26). By these two statements Jesus first entrusted John to Mary and then Mary to John. In these verses there is no exaltation of Mary as the mother of God and of mankind. The latter is a pure Catholic idolatrous fabrication.

Worship through Mary, saints, objects, shrines, icons, crucifixes, or statues, is condemned by the Scripture as idolatry. This is the fundamental problem of Catholic worship. It is an idolatrous worship largely depended upon human creatures and objects used as worship aids. Believers are deceived into believing that through Mary, the saints, the Eucharist, holy

relics, images, sacred shrines, they are worshipping God, when in reality they are worshipping man-made idols.

It is important to recognize, however, that the papacy is not the only agency used by Satan to promote false worship. We noted that false worship is promoted today by many non-Christians religions, as well as by the materialistic and humanistic philosophies. As Adventist we cannot afford to place all the eggs in the basket of the papacy. We must recognize that false worship assumes different deceptive forms, that can find their ways even in Adventist churches, where sometimes physical stimulation takes the place of spiritual elevation.

These preliminary conclusions drawn from a study of the setting of the book of Revelation, provide the basis for a closer study of the pivotal prophecy of the mark and number of the beast. Such study is presented both in the live DVD lecture to be recorded on February 1, 2006, at the *University Towers* auditorium of Andrews University and in the forthcoming book on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*. These studies show that the key issue in the final conflict is the proper worship of God. John's prophecy about the mark and number of the beast, calls for believers to recognize, not external markings or papal titles, but the global false worship promoted by a variety of religions, including Catholicism.

The best protection against the end-time deceptive false worship, is the seal of God, manifested in living by the enabling power of the Spirit in obedience to God's commandments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE VIDEO-TAPING OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S LECTURE ON *THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST*.

You are cordially invited to attend Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi's lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* that will be video taped at the University Towers Auditorium by a professional crew on Wednesday evening, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., February 1, 2006.

With the help of 200 powerpoint slides, Dr. Bacchiocchi will help you to see the various past and present interpretations of this intriguing prophecy about the mysterious mark, name, and number 666 of the “wild beast of Revelation 13.

The slides contain stunning pictures of inscribed papal tiaras, popes, documents, Reformers, Adventist pioneers, authors, and significant books related to this study. The lecture will help you to appreciate why our Adventist church recently rejected the numeric identification of 666 with the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and adopted instead the symbolic interpretation of the number of the beast.

This visual and gripping powerpoint lecture shows that in the final conflict the diabolic mark and number of the beast, consist not in external markings or pope’s titles branded upon people, but in the the internal control of the mind of every human being. It will be the battle over who will people worship: the true God or Satan, represented by the Dragon and the Beasts.

SPECIAL OFFER ON DR. JON PAULIEN’S 5 CD-ROM ALBUMS, called *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation*.

The book of REVELATION has both delighted and frustrated readers ever since it was written. Sensational but senseless interpretations of the book abound. In this unique 60 CD-ROM series, consisting of 120 lectures professionally recorded, Prof. Jon Paulien guides you through a verse by verse study of the intriguing messages of Revelation.

Currently Jon Paulien, Ph. D., is serving as Chairman of the New Testament Department and Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

Besides teachings and writing, Prof. Paulien travels extensively throughout the world, presenting seminars with the help of his wife, Pamela. He has authored over 100 articles and several books, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets*, *The Book of Revelation, Too Good to be False*, *Present Truth in the Real World*, *What the Bible Says About the End Time*, and *The Deep Things of God*. These books are available in Adventist Book Centers, by calling 1-800-765-6955.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded inside and outside the Adventist community, as a foremost authority in Johannine literature, especially the book of *Revelation*. Students have told me that listening to his lectures, is a mind-opening experience. Personally I esteem Prof. Paulien as the leading Adventist authority on the prophetic books of the Bible.

If you wish that you could go back to school and seat in Prof. Paulien classes, I have good news for you. You do not need to worry about your age or your financial limitations. You do not even need to enroll at Andrews University and spend thousands of dollars of tuition to benefit from Prof. Paulien's instruction.

All what you need to do is simply to order his 120 lectures which have been professionally recorded and packaged in FIVE ALBUMS, EACH CONTAINING 12 CD-ROMs, for a total of 60 CD-ROMs. The set is called THE BIBLE EXPLORER SERIES ON REVELATION and takes you verse by verse through the whole book of *Revelation*. These lectures are the equivalent of four Seminary courses (about \$2000.00 of tuition), yet they are presented in a way that lay people can understand. Each lecture concludes with spiritual lessons for everyday life.

To express my appreciation for the contribution that Prof. Paulien has made to the understanding of Revelation, I am promoting and distributing his THE BIBLE EXPLORER SERIES ON REVELATION consisting of 5 albums with a total of 60 CD-ROMS, as a free service without any commission. I have offered my service to facilitate the purchase of this timely set of 120 lectures through the shopping cart at my website.

Your special offer for the complete THE BIBLE EXPLORER SERIES ON REVELATION consisting of 5 albums with a total of 60 CD-ROMS, is only \$175.00, airmailing expenses included to any domestic or oversea destination. To order your set simply click here: [If you have problems processing the order through my website, just call us at \(269\) 471 2915.](#)

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE 5 ALBUMS CONTAINING ALL OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDINGS

In occasion of the release of the new album on *THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST*, I am pleased to offer you the complete package of all my DVD and CD recordings, consisting of **5 ALBUMS, FOR ONLY \$100.00, INSTEAD OF THE REGULAR PRICE OF \$450.00**. This is a one-time incredible offer never made before.

You can see the picture of all the FIVE ALBUMS and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this URL address:
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THE COMPLETE PACKAGE OF RECORDINGS contains the following FIVE ALBUMS:

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2) The DVD SABBATH/ADVENT ALBUM contains 5 DVD disks with 10 live PowerPoint lectures of the popular SABBATH and ADVENT SEMINARS.

3) The CD-ROM BOOKS/SEMINARS ALBUM contains 2 CD disks with all my research and PowerPoint presentation.

4) The MP3 ALBUM contains 2 CD disks with 22 AUDIO lectures on vital beliefs and practices.

5) The DVD PASSION ALBUM contains 1 DVD disk with the 2 hours interview on 3ABN on my book *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History*.

THE SPECIAL OFFER FOR THE COMPLETE PACKAGE OF THE FIVE ALBUMS is only \$100.00, instead of the regular price of \$450.00. The special price includes the airmail expenses to overseas destinations.

THE SPECIAL PRICE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL ALBUMS is as follows:

ONE CD-ROM ALBUM ON THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Regular \$50.00 – Special \$35.00

FIVE DVDS ALBUM WITH SABBATH/ADVENT SEMINARS

Regular \$150.00 — Special \$75.00

TWO CD-ROMS ALBUM WITH ALL MY PUBLICATIONS AND POWERPOINT LECTURES

Regular \$100.00 — Special \$50.00

TWO MP3 AUDIO CDS ALBUM WITH 22 POPULAR LECTURES

Regular \$100.00 — Special \$50.00

ONE DVD PASSION ALBUM WITH 3ABN INTERVIEW

Regular \$100.00 — Special \$50.00

Four Ways to Order

You can order the five albums, individually or as a package at the special prices listed above, in four different ways:

1) ONLINE: click: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

2) BY PHONE: call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915

3) BY EMAIL: email us your order with your credit card number at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> or <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

4) BY MAIL: Send your personal check to the following address: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

HOW TO INVITE ME FOR A WEEKEND SEMINAR IN 2006?

If your church is interested to invite me next year to present one of my PowerPoint seminars on the **SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, or CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE**, feel free to contact me at this time. You can call me at (269) 471-2915 or email me your request at sbacchiocchi@qtm.net I will email you the open dates and the outline of the three PowerPoint seminars.

At this time I am setting up my 2006 calendar of speaking engagements and I would be glad to include your church. If your church is small, there is the possibility of rallying together the district churches. Every weekend capacity crowds attend these timely seminars in the USA and overseas.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of February 2006. It is always a privilege and pleasure for me to ministers to our fellow believers in England. The reception and response is always very encouraging. I wish to extend my personal, warm invitation to all who are able to attend one of the followings rallies.

FEBRUARY 1: ANDREWS UNIVERSITY VIDEO-TAPING

Location: The video-taping of my lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, will take place at the *University Towers* auditorium on February 1, Wednesday evening, 7:00 to 9:00 p. m.

For information about the location of the auditorium, feel free to call me at (269) 471-2915.

FEBRUARY 3-4: LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Location: 4937 Sierra Vista Avenue, Riverside, California 92506

For information call Pastor Daniel Smith at (951) 354-7095

FEBRUARY 11: CHICAGO - BURR RIDGE SDA CHURCH

Location: The church meets at the Lord of Life Lutheran Church, located at 725 75th Street, Darien, Illinois 60559.

For information call David Babcock at (630) 795-1095 or (630) 789-3840

FEBRUARY 17-18: LONDON - HOLLOWAY SDA CHURCH

Location: Holloway SDA Church, 381 Holloway Road, London N70RN, London, England.

For information call Pastor Emmanuel Osei at 020 8581 8311 or 0795 634 4085

FEBRUARY 24-25: LONDON - STONEBRIDGE & ACTON

Location: The rally is sponsored by Stonebridge Community SDA church and the Acton Community SDA Church. The meetings will be held at the Stonebridge Primary School Auditorium located at Wesley Road off Harrow Road, leading to Shakespeare Avenue, London NW10 8NG

For information call Pastor Clive de Silva at 0208 384 1710

MARCH 3-4: READING, ENGLAND - WHITLEY SDA CHURCH

Location: The Reading Whitley SDA Church meets at the Maiden Erlegh School, which is located at Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading, Berks RG6 7HS, England.

For information call Pastor Everett Picart at 01189 755 110

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

Recently HITACHI offered me a volume discount on four of their projector models, in order to reduce their inventory. If your church is looking for an outstanding projector at a bargain price, this is the golden opportunity. To be brief I will only list the model, the lumens, and the special price.

CP-X250 HIGH RESOLUTION 2000 LUMENS – Only \$1195.00

Previous SDA price for the 2000 lumens was \$1900.00.

CP-X440 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS – Only \$1795.00

Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2900.00.

CP-X444 HIGH RESOLUTION 3200 LUMENS – Only \$2195.00

Previous SDA price for the 3200 lumens was \$3295.00.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS – Only \$4195.00

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00.

These special offers are not listed at my website, because the prices change all the time, depending on the deal that HITACHI gives us. Feel free to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> I will email you all the details of each projector. Keep in mind that HITACHI offers us a 3 years 24/7 warranty package that is worth about \$285.00.

TOSHIBA LAPTOPS COMPUTERS FOR ADVENTISTS

TOSHIBA has agreed to offer to Adventists two of their business laptop models, called TECRA. I shared the information in the last newsletter and the response has been overwhelming. If you are looking for an outstanding TOSHIBA laptop at a bargain price, visit my website at <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Toshiba/Notebooks.html>

If you cannot surf the web, feel free to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. We will email you immediately all the information about the TECRA laptops. Call me for details at 269-471-2915.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacture of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at a about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward

your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

THE SMALLEST AND MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your Power-Point presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market. You can view it at <http://www.powerremote.com/>

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

I can offer you this incredible remote for only \$120.00, postage paid. To order a remote, call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915 or email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>

Christian regards

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