

Lucan: It's time to begin. Bro. David, will you please offer an opening prayer?

Zahakiel: Loving Father in Heaven, we thank you for preserving us through another week of work. We rejoice in the blessings you have provided for us during these days, and come before your Throne tonight, laying down our cares and drawing near to you during these sacred hours. May the blessing of unity and fellowship be ours this Sabbath day, and may the words you have prepared for us be effectual in drawing us ever nearer your Kingdom, for we ask all this in the name of your dear Son, Yahshua. Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Barb: Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

nattie: Amen.

Lucan: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number [is] Six hundred threescore [and] six." (Revelation 13:18)

This verse has been the subject of much discussion and study, both among CSDAs and Adventists as a whole. We have examined many aspects of the number "six hundred threescore and six," including the unusual way it was written in Greek and how, translated to Hebrew, it would have read "Nero Caesar" in the time of John – a fitting warning of the 10 years of persecution soon to break upon the church under that emperor. We have also examined the potential application of it to the spiritual state of unrest belonging to the unconverted, symbolized in the number "6" as opposed to "7" in the body, mind, and spirit.

Tonight I would like to share a potential application of this passage that is closer to the second of those in principle. I hesitate to call it definitive, yet I believe it has spiritual value for the consideration of the brethren, and am eager to see what discussion the Spirit may bring forth as a result.

What I would like to begin with is not the number 666, which is the end of the verse, but rather the beginning. Presenting this subject and number for the only explicit time in prophecy, John writes, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast." In order to take an eternal principle from this passage, we will begin by seeing what principles and examples the Scriptures offer regarding wisdom and understanding. This verse is one of only two times in Revelation they are mentioned together; although it is easy to miss, it also appears in the following passage:

"And here [is] the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, [and] the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." (Revelation 17:9, 10)

The word "mind" in verse 9 is "nous" in Greek, and is the same word translated "understanding" in Revelation 13:18. Thus for both the number of the beast and the seven heads, we have "understanding and wisdom" required. It is worth noting that Revelation 17 specifically applies the symbol of "seven heads" to two separate things; "the seven heads are seven mountains," "and are seven kings" according to the properly rendered Greek. Thus, we have a dual-fulfillment outlined explicitly. One is a physical and literal symbol of the seven hills of Rome, and the other is applied to the spiritual progression of that beast.

Similarly, in the "number of a man" we have the potential for a physical and literal reading indicating Nero's enforcement of emperor worship, and also a symbol of the spiritual state of those involved in emperor worship, or government worship, or state worship, or leader worship, or any other worship of a beast over Yahweh.

Now, as Adventists in particular and Bible students generally, we follow the prophetic rule of allowing the Scriptures to interpret the Scriptures. Let us see, then, where else "wisdom and understanding" are spoken of together, and what is said of them:

"But where shall wisdom be found? and where [is] the place of understanding?... God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof... And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom; and to depart from evil [is] understanding." (Job 28:12, 23, 28)

And again, "The fear of Yahweh [is] the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do [his commandments]: his praise endureth for ever." (Psalms 111:10)

So, we see the definition of both wisdom and understanding given; the fear of Yahweh, and obedience to Him through departure from evil. While David wrote of wisdom and understanding in the Psalms, and Job spoke of it in his trials, there is one name that ought to stand out for anyone familiar with the Old Testament as being nearly synonymous with "wisdom and understanding," and for very good reason:

"And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of Yahweh my God:... Now, my son, Yahweh be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of Yahweh thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only Yahweh give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of Yahweh thy God." (1 Chronicles 22:7, 11-12)

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that [is] on the sea shore." (1 Kings 4:29)

Why were these blessings given to Solomon in particular? We may read the answer:

"And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Yahweh God, let thy promise unto David my

father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, [that is so] great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge [is] granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that [have been] before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like." (2 Chronicles 1:8-12)

(LMK)

Pastor Chick: F

Naraiel: F

Zahakiel: Finished.

Adriel777: F

Barb: F

daphna dee: F

nattie: F

Lucan: Solomon in his sense of need and dependence on Yahweh sought His help to meet the great task to which He was called. In answer, Yahweh gave him such wisdom and understanding as none other before or since. This testimony is a sure one, and a blessing for all who are called to a work despite their lack of natural qualification. Yet we may look further; let us see what Solomon himself said of wisdom and understanding. As we will see, and as some may already be familiar with, the book of Proverbs is virtually a treatise on this twin set of characteristics. In fact, the very first words of the book read thus:

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;" (Proverbs 1:1, 2)

Shortly thereafter:

"Happy [is] the man [that] findeth wisdom, and the man [that] getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it [is] better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She [is] more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her... Yahweh by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." (Proverbs 3:13-15, 19)

Now, the mention of "merchandise" here is an interesting one for the purposes of our study. As we saw in a recent study on this subject, it is one Solomon was no stranger to, also writing:

"Buy the truth, and sell [it] not; [also] wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23)

Yet again, "How much better [is it] to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! The highway of the upright [is] to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul." (Proverbs 16:16, 17)

Repeatedly and forcefully Solomon contrasts "wisdom and understanding" with merchandise, buying and selling, and wealth. This is not limited to wisdom and understanding, of course; he often compares and contrasts the value of principle and character to material wealth, as we know from another familiar verse:

"A [good] name [is] rather to be chosen than great riches, [and] loving favour rather than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1)

Yet when it comes to wisdom and understanding, we find that Proverbs – as its introduction says – was written with these subjects at front and center:

"For Yahweh giveth wisdom: out of his mouth [cometh] knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

And again:

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget [it] not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom [is] the principal thing; [therefore] get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." (Proverbs 4:5-7)

And again:

"The fear of Yahweh [is] the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

And yet again:

"He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good." (Proverbs 19:8)

Clearly these matters were very relevant to not only Solomon, but those to whom he was writing. Yet for all of the wisdom and understanding that Solomon was granted, we know that his course was not a perfect one before Yahweh. This also is a major subject of both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the reason for his regular contrasting of commerce and wealth with wisdom and understanding is something we will be examining further.

While the sin that Solomon is most noted for is that of idolatry and marrying heathen wives, neither of these came forth in an instant. The "large sins" of Solomon's life in regards to apostasy consisted of his being the first king of Israel to engage in open

idolatry, to set up idols, and to multiply foreign wives. Yet as we will see, the path of Solomon was marred by an earlier set of departures from the word of Yahweh, and from this, we find the reason for much of his comparison of riches with character:

"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, Beside [that he had] of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country." (1 Kings 10:14, 15)

This may seem like a relatively minor verse, yet there are at least two things that stand out about it. One is that the number of gold talents Solomon received happens to be the same as the "number of a man," which wisdom and understanding were needed to count in Revelation. This is the only time in Scripture this number appears outside of Revelation, and while we cannot build a doctrine on a verse, it does leave us with little else to refer to if we are to allow Scripture to interpret itself. Yet there is another, deeper issue involved here than mere numbers. Let us read what was required of the kings of Israel:

"When thou art come unto the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that [are] about me; Thou shalt in any wise set [him] king over thee, whom Yahweh thy God shall choose: [one] from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which [is] not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as Yahweh hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of [that which is] before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, [to] the right hand, or [to] the left: to the end that he may prolong [his] days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deuteronomy 17:14-20) (LMK)

Pastor Chick: F

Naraiel: F

Zahakiel: Finished.

Barb: F

daphna dee: F

Adriel777: F

nattie: f

Lucan: There are but three things the king was required to avoid in this passage:

- 1) He shall not multiply horses, and specifically not go to Egypt to multiply horses.
- 2) He shall not multiply wives.
- 3) He shall not multiply to himself silver and gold.

In addition to this, there was one positive requirement: He shall write out a copy of the law, and read therein all the days of his life. And what would be the end of obedience, and a diligent reading of the book of the law he had copied? That "his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment." We know that before his repentance, both his heart was lifted up and he departed from the commandment.

Solomon was not only the first king of Israel to engage in open idolatry and unholy marriages with the world, but he did so having "sealed up the sum" of wisdom previously, being entrusted with greater insight and blessings than any before him. This is a fitting type of the ambition of the Papacy, and those who follow as its daughters and its image. The end result of ones "heart being lifted up above his brethren" is ever that they "...opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

It is similarly the "doctrine of the Nicolaitians," who seek to oppress the laity. Such a thing is indeed a "great marvel," that a professedly Christian church should be drunk on the blood of God's people. Yet the fall of a Church, a man, or a covering cherub does not happen in an instant; apostasy must first creep in, and we may see in the case of Solomon how matters of merchandise, commerce, pride, wisdom, and understanding are united. We may trace this course in the Scriptures plainly, having read what was required in the law:

"And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of Yahweh, and the wall of Jerusalem round about." (1 Kings 3:1)

Now, the marriage with an Egyptian princess described here was before Yahweh had blessed Solomon with wisdom in his vision, and before he had built the temple. We note that it came about as the result of Solomon "making affinity" with Pharaoh, not as the result of an affinity for the daughter; therefore, this was a political marriage. And at that, it was a political marriage with a nation which Yahweh had explicitly commanded to not return to. For a time Yahweh bore with this sin, which, from the human perspective, surely seemed to be a wise move for the prosperity of the people of God. Yet therein lies the issue. In a lesson that Solomon later learned was sufficiently important to repeat, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

And again:

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death." (Proverbs 16:25)

In 1 Kings 10, after Yahweh has blessed Solomon with wisdom and influence, immediately after being visited and honored by the queen of Sheba, we find the verse we read above, which marks the first step recorded in Solomon's downfall after his exaltation:

"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, Beside [that he had] of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country." (1 Kings 10:14, 15)

In the verses following, the lavish application of this very large amount of annual gold is described, with the majority of it being for what Solomon later described as "vanity:"

"Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold... And all king Solomon's drinking vessels [were of] gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon [were of] pure gold; none [were of] silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon... So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom." (1 Kings 10:18, 21, 23)

Now thusfar, despite having "multiplied to himself silver and gold" in the plainest manner and spent it on self-gratification and exaltation, there is no plain rebuke spoken in the Scriptures.

Yet let us remember the true definition of wisdom and understanding; to fear Yahweh, and to depart from evil in keeping His commandments. "Let him that hath understanding" count the matter as it is, as we continue reading:

"And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem. And the king made silver [to be] in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he [to be] as the sycomore trees that [are] in the vale, for abundance." (1 Kings 10:26, 27)

Now we have the king multiplying silver and gold, and also horses and chariots. Still the sin is not explicitly spelled out in the Scripture. Again, "let him that hath understanding" reckon the matter as Yahweh reckons it:

"And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred [shekels] of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings

of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring [them] out by their means." (1 Kings 10:28, 29)

Now we have the king multiplying silver and gold, multiplying horses, and explicitly going down to Egypt for chariots and horses. Still, no plain rebuke is spoken in the Scripture. In fact, one reading this account might consider it to be a positive one; the people appeared to be blessed, and commercial trade in particular was noted as thriving. To one who has the mind of the beast, these things are sure indications of God's favor.

Once more, "let him that hath understanding" account the matter:

"But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, [and] Hittites; Of the nations [concerning] which Yahweh said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: [for] surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart." (1 Kings 11:1-3)

What began in his early years as an ill-advised political marriage was overlooked, yet bore fruit in the amassing of 666 talents of gold annually, the opening of trade with other nations, and the open disregard of Yahweh's plainest instructions both for kings and all mankind. Yet it all began with a seemingly innocuous, unrebuked set of deviations wherein one with great wisdom and righteousness began to think more of their own counsel than the words of Yahweh through His prophets, messengers, and writings. Let us mark this example well, for the spirit of rebellion need not openly say "times have changed" in order to believe it.

Mrs. White writes much on this subject, and I strongly recommend chapter 3 of "Prophets and Kings," called "Pride in Prosperity," be read in association with this study. For now, I will share a few salient quotes as we prepare to close:

"But Solomon had begun to lose sight of the Source of his power and glory. As inclination gained the ascendancy over reason, self-confidence increased, and he sought to carry out the Lord's purpose in his own way. He reasoned that political and commercial alliances with the surrounding nations would bring these nations to a knowledge of the true God; and he entered into unholy alliance with nation after nation." [PK 53]

Now, what examples are we familiar with in which self-confidence has lead religious leaders to carry out the Lord's purpose in their own way, reasoning in political and commercial lines in order to further the gospel?

"Engrossed in an overmastering desire to surpass other nations in outward display, the king overlooked the need of acquiring beauty and perfection of character. In seeking to glorify himself before the world, he sold his honor and integrity. . . The conscientious, considerate spirit that had marked his dealings with the people during the early part of his reign, was now changed. From the wisest and most merciful of rulers, he degenerated into a tyrant." [PK 55]

What examples are we familiar with in which a desire to appear worthy in name and "surpass other nations" has overshadowed the focus on true worthiness, ending in tyranny and cruelty towards brethren?

"Christians are to keep themselves distinct and separate from the world, its spirit, and its influences. God is fully able to keep us in the world, but we are not to be of the world. His love is not uncertain and fluctuating. Ever He watches over His children with a care that is measureless. But He requires undivided allegiance. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24 ... Solomon was endued with wonderful wisdom, but the world drew him away from God. Men today are no stronger than he; they are as prone to yield to the influences that caused his downfall. As God warned Solomon of his danger, so today He warns His children not to imperil their souls by affinity with the world. "Come out from among them," He pleads, "and be ye separate, ...and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18." [PK 59] (LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished.

Pastor Chick: F

Naraiel: F

Barb: F

Adriel777: F

daphna dee: F

nattie: F

Lucan: Here is the crux of the matter. The story of Solomon, in spiritual terms, is the story of the Roman bishops that became the Papacy, the story of the General Conference that became the Image, and the story of every man or leader who, through prosperity and trust in their own wisdom, comes to think like the world and to unite with the world, "his heart being lifted up above his brethren." It is the story of every one, king or servant, who regards reason as higher than the fear of Yahweh, manifest in strict obedience to His commands just as stated. It matters not if this disobedience takes the form of "it doesn't matter what day I worship on..." or "it doesn't matter which sacrifice I offer..." or "it doesn't matter whether I touch the ark..." or "it doesn't matter what name I use..." or "it

doesn't matter if I join in marriage with unholy powers." All are the result of rebellion and iniquity, and found in those who have "the number of the beast," which is "the number of man" rather than composing the number of the 144,000 that are redeemed from the earth.

We may see further in the example of Solomon warnings against "evangelism through compromise," whether it be baptized Paganism or baptized secularism. We may see the warning against trusting in commercial success over spiritual power, of relying on the political arm of flesh rather than on Yahweh. There we may find wealth and trade before principle, and the nearly imperceptible work of apostasy in one who had once been signally blessed with Yahweh's "wisdom and understanding."

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number [is] Six hundred threescore [and] six." (Revelation 13:18)

Every character will be fully developed within a short time. Those who have the seal of Yahweh will be those who are "settled into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so that they cannot be moved." They are settled in "understanding" and they are settled in "wisdom."

Those who receive the mark of the beast will have similarly settled, albeit for a lesser standard of righteousness than perfection. They will have the mold of the world upon them, and, having compromised with the world point after point, fail of discerning their true standing before Yahweh until open rebellion is the sure result. They will not discern the danger in amassing gold when Yahweh says not to; they will not discern the danger of going to Egypt for horses when Yahweh forbids it. They will not see the danger of using the civil courts for religious matters when this is the very thing Yahweh has told them not to do. They will not see the danger of mixing church and state to the slightest degree, or killing their brethren thinking they do God service. They will not buy the eyesalve, and they will not see.

Yet as with Solomon, the most brazen apostasy may begin with a deviation of seemingly little significance, a single step taken off the path of perfect submission, an amassing of 666 talents of gold when Yahweh says "thou shalt not multiply to thyself silver and gold." This is how apostasy takes root, and pride, not feeling its need for dependence on Yahweh, is cut off from His saving power both in individuals and nations.

Having these examples before us, let us "watch unto prayer," for it is not the willful sinner that Satan seeks to ensnare, but those who have "wisdom and understanding." May we not be ignorant of his devices, but rather examine ourselves diligently lest there be any root of worldliness, self-confidence, or divided allegiance.

"Watch and pray" is the message Yahweh has given to His people, for it is the means of maintaining our complete and constant reliance on the Source of our power, wealth, and wisdom. Let us not be found sleeping in the closing moments of history as the disciples in Gethsemane, but realizing our constant reliance on the indwelling Christ let us draw near in confession and the attitude of constant repentance. Only through this will we be overcomers at last, enduring unto the end until the vision is fulfilled:

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, [and] over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for [thou] only [art] holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." (Revelation 15:2-4)

"Happy [is] the man [that] findeth wisdom, and the man [that] getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it [is] better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." (Proverbs 3:13)

Are there any questions or comments?

Zahakiel: C

Adriel777: Amen

Lucan: Go ahead

Zahakiel: I appreciate this study very much. While we've spoken at times of the various components, I think you've tied them together very well. I am favorable to this information, since, while we can legitimately take prophetic license to draw meaning out of various passages, this viewpoint does indeed involve "counting" the full number represented in Revelation. Furthermore... by showing that the 666 number indicates the result of gradual and increasing apostasy, it gives a deeper meaning to the instruction to "count." It does not say to merely observe, but to itemize, to examine, to trace from small coins to large sums, and to understand how even if unrebuked at the time, small errors, failures, or sins will result in the heart being distanced from Yahweh, and open rebellion follows. I would like to think on this idea some more before giving any other thoughts, but I believe there are some gems to mine from the connection here made, and across a wide range of issues - as Bro. Luke pointed out, this affects religious and secular leaders and institutions equally, and certainly any individual seeking the impress of the Heavenly in these last days. (End)

Lucan: That is an application of "count" I hadn't considered before, but it does seem fitting... Are there any others? If not, I'll ask Pastor to offer a closing prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We count it all joy to be Your children in this age when we are counted as sheep for slaughter, and we know that nothing will come to us without Your Divine Permission. As we take up our cross in following You may we hear no grumbling from the brethren, but that all may be marching in perfect harmony as we sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. In Yahshua's holy and precious name, Amen.

Adriel777: Amen!

Lucan: Amen

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

nattie: Amen.