



## LESSON #13 - 666: THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

First, a very important fact that has been overlooked more frequently than not is that the name of the beast is a **blasphemous name**.

**Revelation 13:1:** *“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads **a blasphemous name**.”*

Now that we know that the name (whose number is 666) is blasphemous, we must discover the **Biblical definition of blasphemy**. Is there such a definition? The answer is an emphatic yes!

The Scriptures clearly define blasphemy as man’s attempt to occupy the place of God and as such to exercise the power and prerogatives of God.

When Jesus affirmed: *“I and my Father are one”* (**John 10:30**) the Jews went ballistic. They picked up stones to execute the death penalty required by the Law (**Leviticus 24:16**). When Jesus asked them what evil work He had done to merit stoning, they responded: *“For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, **being a Man**, make **Yourself God**.”* (**John 10:33**) The terminology of the accusation is significant. Jesus was reprimanded for blasphemy because He, **being a man**, made himself **God**. In fact, Jesus not only claimed to be **God**, He also claimed to work the **works of God**!

**John 10:36-39:** *“ . . . do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the **Son of God**'? <sup>37</sup> If I do not do **the works of My Father**, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup> but if I do, though you do not believe Me, **believe the works**, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” <sup>39</sup> Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.”*

Interestingly, in the thinking of the Jewish leaders, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy when He claimed to be **the Son of God** (**Matthew 26:64; 10:36, 37; John 19:7**). All the Jews claimed to be **sons of God in a general sense** but it is clear that Jesus did not claim to be a Son of God in a general sense but in the strictest sense of being the **representative** of God on earth! He was the **spokesman for God** on earth—**His vicar**, if you please! This is the reason why Jesus could say:

*“He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)* Jesus undoubtedly claimed to be **Vicarius Dei**, and rightfully so.

Blasphemy is also defined as when a mere man claims to have the **power to forgive sins**. This means that any man who claims to have the right to **exercise the prerogatives of God** is guilty of blasphemy.

When Jesus told the paralytic of Capernaum: *“Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5)* the religious leaders murmured saying: *“Why does this **Man** speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but **God** alone?” (Mark 2:7).* The religious leaders were actually thinking: If this man claims to have the right to **forgive sins**, then he must claim to be God because **only God can forgive sins**.

**II Thessalonians 2:3, 4** has similar terminology.

**II Thessalonians 2:3, 4:** *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*

Here we are told that the **man** of sin sits in the temple of God (the church) proclaiming himself to be **God**. Once again we notice that this power is **human** and yet it seeks to occupy the **place of God**.

Later on in the passage we are told that this power also claims to perform the works that Jesus Himself performed while He was on earth

**II Thessalonians 2:9:** *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.”*

**Acts 2:22:** *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.”*

In this context it is worthy of note that the little horn of **Daniel 7** (which symbolizes the same power as the beast of **Revelation 13:1-10** and the man of sin of **II Thessalonians 2**) has a mouth that speaks “pompous words against the Most High” (**Daniel 7:25**). These great words are identified as **blasphemies** in **Revelation 13:5** where we are told that the beast was given a mouth that speaks “*great things and blasphemies.*” This little horn/beast not only claims to be God but also claims to have the power to exercise the **prerogatives of God** even to the point of **changing God’s prophetic times and His Law!** (**Daniel 7:25**) Thus, in a very specific sense, the little horn (or the beast) claims the right to occupy the **place of God** and to exercise the **power and prerogatives of God**.

**In what sense** does this little horn/beast speak blasphemies against God? **Daniel 8** provides the indisputable answer. In **Daniel 8** (in distinction to **Daniel 7**) we are **not** told that the little horn **speaks blasphemies** against the Most High. Rather, we are told that the little horn attempted to **supplant or take the place** of the **Prince of the host** (see **Joshua 5:14, 15**) by taking away the **daily ministration** from Him (**Daniel 8:11**). Thus the little horn's blasphemy consists in the act of trying to supplant or **take the place** of the Prince of the host and to **carry on His work**.

In the light of this overwhelming Biblical evidence, it would seem that the blasphemous name of the beast must be linked with his attempt to supplant or occupy **the place of God** and to exercise the **power and prerogatives of God**.

There can be no doubt that the power represented by the little **horn**, the **beast** and the **man of sin** is the Roman Catholic Papacy. The little horn (and the beast) does not appear in a vacuum. There is a clear **sequence of powers** which precede the horn's arrival on the scene. The kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and divided Rome must rule before the little horn comes on the scene.

Numerous quotations could be provided from Roman Catholic writers to the effect that the pope claims to occupy the **place of God on earth**. Space limitations will allow for only a few examples.

*“. . . the pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts in the place of God upon earth, with the fullest power of binding and losing his sheep.”* (Lucius Ferraris, **Prompta** Bibliotheca, vol. 2, article ‘Papa’, (bold is mine))

**Pope Nicholas I** (who ruled from 858-867 A. D.) once said:

*“It is evident that the popes can neither be bound nor unbound by any earthly power, nor even by that of the apostle [Peter], if he should return upon the earth; since Constantine the Great has recognized that the pontiffs **held the place of God upon earth, divinity not being able to be judged by any living man**. We are, then, infallible, and whatever may be our acts, we are not accountable for them but to ourselves.”* (Cormenin, **History of the Popes**, p. 243, as cited in R. W. Thompson, **The Papacy and the Civil Power**, p. 248, (bold is mine)).

Pope Leo XIII in an Encyclical Letter (‘On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens’) dated January 10, 1890 affirmed:

*“But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, **as to God Himself**.”* (**The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII**, p. 193, (bold is mine))

Leo XIII in an encyclical letter dated June 20, 1894 stated:

*“We hold upon this earth **the place of God Almighty.**”* (The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII, p. 304, (bold is mine))

Repeatedly Roman Catholic sources refer to the popes as vicars of Christ, vice-regents of Christ, representatives of Christ, and, yes, Vicars of the Son of God (proof to be provided later in this article).

Furthermore, the popes have claimed the right to exercise the power and **prerogatives** that belong only to God. They claim to have the right to **forgive sins** (cf. **Mark 2:7**), to set **up and remove kings** (cf. **Daniel 2:21**), to be **bowed down to** (cf. **Revelation 19:10**), to be called **Holy Father** (cf. **Matthew 23:9**), to execute the **death penalty** upon dissenters (cf. **Daniel 7:21**), to **change the Sabbath** (cf. **Daniel 2:21; 7:25**), to change God’s **prophetic calendar** (cf. **Daniel 7:25**), to be the **supreme judges** of heaven, earth and hell whose decision cannot be appealed (cf. **John 5:22, 27**) and to be infallible expositors in matters of faith and morals (cf. **James 1:17**).

*“Were the Redeemer to descend into a church, and sit in a confessional to administer the sacrament of penance, and a priest to sit in another confessional, Jesus would say over each penitent, ‘Ego te absolvo,’ the priest would likewise say over each of his penitents, ‘Ego te absolvo,’ and the penitents of each would be equally absolved.”* **St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva**, p. 28.

Thus the priest may, in a certain manner, be called **the creator of his Creator**, since by saying the words of consecration, he creates, as it were, Jesus in the sacrament, by giving him a sacramental existence, and produces him as a victim to be offered to the eternal Father. As in creating the world it was sufficient for God to have said, Let it be made, and it was created ‘*He spoke, and they were made*’ so it is sufficient for the priest to say, ‘*Hoc est corpus meum,*’ and behold the bread is no longer bread, but the body of Jesus Christ. ‘*The power of the priest,*’ says St. Bernardine of Sienna, ‘*is the power of the divine person; for the transubstantiation of the bread requires as much power as the creation of the world.*’” **St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva**, pp. 33-34. (Bold is mine.)

*“When he ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ left his priests after him to hold on earth his place of mediator between God and men, particularly on the altar. . . The Priest holds the place of the Saviour himself, when, by saying ‘Ego te absolvo,’ he absolves from sin.”* **St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva**, p. 34.

**Is the name a proper name or a title?**

**Revelation 19:16:** *“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

Second, besides the name of the beast being blasphemous, the **name also has a number**

**Revelation 13:17:** “. . . and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

The critical question at this point is this: **How do we get a number from a name?** The answer lies in the fact that in ancient times **numbers were written with the letters of the alphabet**. This practice, referred to as ***gematria***, was used in **Hebrew, Greek and Latin**.

For example, in Greek *stauros* has a number value of 777. *Iesous* has a number value of 888 and *paradosis* has a number value of 666

This means that when the **letters of the beast’s blasphemous name** are given their respective numerical value the total will be **666**.

The **Living Bible** captures well the meaning of **Revelation 13:18**:

*“Here is a puzzle that calls for careful thought to solve it. Let those who are able, interpret this code: **the numerical values of the letters** in his name add to 666!”*

The **New English Bible** renders **Revelation 13:18** in similar fashion:

*“The number represents a man’s name, and the **numerical value of its letters** is six hundred and sixty-six.”*

Even the Roman Catholic **Douay Version** adds a footnote to **Revelation 13:18** which states:

*“The numeral letters of his name shall make up this number.”*

Third, we are told in **Revelation 13:18** that number 666 is the number of a **man**:

**Revelation 13:18:** *“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”*

It is important to realize that the noun “man” has **no definite article**. This means that **qualitatively** the beast is a system that is **centered in man**. It is noteworthy that the little horn has **eyes** like a man, the apostate one of **II Thessalonians 2** is called the **man of sin** and here the beast has the **number of a man**. This is certainly a system that is based on the power and prowess of **man**.

A very important question arises at this point: In **which language** should we look for the name or title? Should the name be sought in **Hebrew, Greek, Latin** or perhaps even English?

I believe that we can **definitely** know from the Bible itself which language to use! And which language is that? There is persuasive evidence that the name and number must be found in the **Latin language**.

You are probably **wondering why** the name and number should be in Latin. The answer is actually quite simple. The beast is clearly a **Roman power** and the **official language of Rome** was **Latin**.

**John 19:20:** *“Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.”*

Notice that according to **Revelation 13:2** the beast received his “*power, his throne, and great authority*” from the dragon. Though the dragon primarily represents Satan (**Revelation 12:9**), it also represents the kingdom through which Satan attempted to slay the man child and this kingdom was **Rome (Matthew 2:16; Revelation 12:1-5)** It is not coincidental that the Catholic Church is officially called the **Roman** Catholic Church.

Now, if the beast represents the **Roman** Catholic papacy, then we should look for his name in **Latin**, the official language of ancient Rome and Papal Rome! And if the name is in Latin then we should use **Roman** numerals to ascertain the number of his name! In short, both the name and the respective numerical equivalents of its letters must be sought in the Latin language.

Let’s summarize what the **Bible** tells us about this number: **First**, it must be a blasphemous name. That is to say, it must be a name whose bearer claims to represent God and to exercise the power and prerogatives of God. **Second**, the name must be in Latin, the language of Rome. **Third**, the numerical equivalents of the letters of the name must be found in Roman numerals. **Fourth**, the number must be that of a man. It will be noticed that the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* fits all of these criteria.

But two critically important questions remain to be answered. But before we do, allow me to **digress** for just a moment.

It is noteworthy that the **Latin poets** who originally devised the system of Roman numerals **broke with the norm of the day** and instead of using all the letters of the alphabet to represent numbers they chose **only six** characters to represent **all numbers**: **I, V, X, L, C** and **D** (the M was not part of the original numerical system. Before the advent of the M, the number 1000 was written by placing two D’s side by side). When the six Roman numerals are added the total is **666**. This strongly suggests that the number 666 is **linked in some manner with Rome**.

Now to the two questions: Is the name *Vicarius Filii Dei* a **title which has been given** to the pope by Roman Catholics themselves or is it a **Protestant fabrication**? And, was this title ever inscribed on the papal tiara or miter? Let’s wrestle with the first question.



The **Donation of Constantine** which was used by at least ten popes to justify their claims to temporal power contains this very title:

*“ . . . as the Blessed Peter is seen to have been constituted **vicar of the Son of God** [vicarius filii Dei in the original Latin] on the earth, so the Pontiffs who are the representatives of that same chief of the apostles, should obtain from us and our empire the power of a supremacy greater than the clemency of our earthly imperial serenity is seen to have conceded to it.”*

The **Donation** was purportedly a letter written by **Constantine the Great** to **Pope Sylvester I**. In the letter Constantine supposedly gave **temporal power to the pope**. We know for certain that the **Donation** was in existence **as early** as the **ninth century** but was used beginning in the **eleventh century** to **justify the outrageous temporal claims** of the papacy.

The **authenticity** of the **Donation of Constantine** was first questioned in the **fifteenth century** with the advent of historical criticism. **Nicholas of Cusa** had serious reservations about the **Donation** and around **1450** it was proved to be a forgery and a fraud by the scholarly work of **Laurentius Valla**. Notably, the Vatican did not appreciate Valla's work as can be seen by the fact that the **Office of the Inquisition** officially placed his work on its **index of forbidden books** in **1559**.

Roman Catholic apologists, **brush aside** this evidence by **stating the obvious**, that the **Donation of Constantine** was a forgery. Therefore they say that it **cannot be used as an official and authorized statement** of the Roman Catholic Church.

Though it is true that the **Donation** was a forgery, it is also beyond dispute that the **Donation** was **panned off** as **authentic and official** by various popes and Roman Catholic theologians for **hundreds of years** to sustain the temporal power of the papacy. Though a forgery, it was **used as an official document** by these popes to sustain their claims to temporal power. If they used it knowing full well that it was a forgery then they were **guilty of deception**. On the other hand, if they did not know that the **Donation** was a forgery, what does this say about their **infallibility**? It is significant that **Gratian's Decretals** (published in **1140** and deemed official by the Roman Catholic Church) incorporated the papal title from the Donation of Constantine:

*“Beatus Petrus in terris **uicarious Filii Dei** esse uidetur constitutus.”* (Aemilius Friedberg, **Corpus Iuris Canonici**, column 342, emphasis mine)

In more recent times the title has been applied to the pope by **Cardinal Edward Manning** in his book **The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ (1862)**. In the first statement, Manning **indicts** the Roman **Catholic nations of Europe** of his day for their **failure to defend** the temporal power of the pope:

*“‘See this Catholic Church, this Church of God, feeble and weak, rejected even by the very nations called Catholic. There is Catholic France, and Catholic Germany, and Catholic Italy giving up this exploded figment of the temporal power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.’ And so,*

*because the Church seems weak, and the **Vicar of the Son of God** is renewing the Passion of his Master upon earth, therefore we are scandalized, therefore we turn our faces from him.*" (pp. 140, 141, emphasis mine)

After mentioning the **growing temporal power** of the papacy under **Gregory I, Leo III, Gregory VII and Alexander III** Manning elevates the idea of the temporal power of the pope to the level of 'a dogma,' 'a law of conscience,' 'an axiom of the reason,' and a 'theological certainty':

*"So that I may say there never was a time when the temporal power of the **Vicar of the Son of God**, though assailed as we see it, was more firmly rooted throughout the whole unity of the Catholic Church and convictions of its members. . ."* (p. 231)

Manning explained **why European nations** enjoyed **stability** in the past as compared with the **disarray of Europe** in the times when he wrote:

*"It was a dignified obedience to bow to the **Vicar of the Son of God**, and to remit the arbitration of their griefs to one whom all wills consented to obey."* (p. 232, emphasis mine)

Lucii Ferraris in his prestigious encyclopedia, **Prompta Bibliotheca**, also applied the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* to the pope (1890 edition volume 6, p. 43, Column 2)

In his immensely popular book, **Crossing the Threshold of Hope**, p. 3, Pope **John Paul II** explained what he understood to be the **source of the power of his office**:

*"The leader of the Catholic Church is defined by the faith as the **Vicar of Jesus Christ** (and is accepted as such by believers). The Pope is considered the man on earth who **represents the Son of God**, who '**takes the place**' of the Second Person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity."*

Notice that John Paul II not only affirmed that the Pope is the **Vicar** of Jesus Christ who **"represents the Son of God,"** but he also explained what he meant by the word "represents" when he said that he **"takes the place"** of the Second Person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity." The expression "takes the place" is the exact English equivalent of the Latin word "***Vicarius***"

Professor **Johannes Quasten** one of the greatest patristic scholars of all time once affirmed:

*"The title *Vicarius Christi*, as well as the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* is very common as the title of the Pope"*

But is this title presently inscribed on the **papal tiara or miter**? Or even more pointedly, was it ever inscribed on the tiara or miter?



*“Rome endeavored also to **destroy every record** of her cruelty toward dissenters. Papal councils decreed that books and writings containing **such records should be committed to the flames**. Before the invention of printing, books were few in number, and in a form not favorable for preservation; therefore there was little to prevent the Romanists from carrying out their purpose.” The Great Controversy, p. 61.*

There is evidence, even from Roman Catholic sources, that the title was once on the papal tiara or miter. In the **November 15, 1914** edition of **Our Sunday Visitor** (the official organ of the **Archdiocese of Baltimore**) the following question was addressed to the Bureau of Information:

*“Is it true that the words of the Apocalypse in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, 18<sup>th</sup> verse refer to the Pope?”*

The answer was as follows:

*“The words referred to are these ‘Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man: and the number of him is six hundred sixty-six.’ The Title of the Pope in Rome is Vicarius Filii Dei. **This is inscribed on his mitre**; and if you take the letters of his title which represent Latin numerals and add them together they come to 666.”*

In the **April 18, 1915** edition of **Our Sunday Visitor** this information was confirmed once again. The question was:

*“What are the letters supposed to be in the Pope’s crown, and what do they signify, if anything?”*

The answer was explicit:

*“The letters inscribed in the **Pope’s mitre** are these: Vicarius Filii Dei, which is the Latin for the **Vicar of the Son of God**. Catholics hold that the church which is a visible society must have a visible head. Christ, before His ascension into heaven, appointed St. Peter to act as His representative. Upon the death of Peter the man who succeeded to the office of Peter as Bishop of Rome, was recognized as the head of the Church. Hence to the Bishop of Rome, as head of the Church, was given the title ‘Vicar of Christ.’”*

Roman Catholic apologist **Patrick Madrid** claims to have contacted **Robert Lockwood**, the editor of **Our Sunday Visitor** about this **1915 issue** and he was told that **the entire issue had been expunged from the archives** (although I personally have a copy of the column). This is an **interesting admission**. Even in modern times expunging is used as a method by the Papacy to delete information that is incriminating!

It is true that on **September 16, 1917** (and also again on **August 3, 1941**) **Our Sunday Visitor** did an about face and totally changed its tune:

*“The words Vicarius Filii Dei are not the name of the Pope, they do not even constitute his official title.”*

The question is: **which of the two versions of Our Sunday Visitor are we to believe?** Can we really trust the word of an organization that has majored in deception throughout the centuries?

Various other names and titles have been suggested as fulfillments for the name and number of the beast of **Revelation 13:18**. Some have suggested *dux cleri* (head of the clergy), *lateinos* (Latin man) or *ludovicus* (chief of the court of Rome). Even the name of pope John Paul II in Latin has a numerical value of 666: *Ioannes Paulus Secundo*. The problem with all of these suggestions is that none of them is particularly **blasphemous**. But there is a name which has been **officially assumed** by the bishops of Rome that is clearly and unmistakably blasphemous: ***Vicarius Filii Dei***.

The Bible makes it crystal clear that the **Holy Spirit is the Vicar of the Son of God**. Before Jesus left He promised His disciples:

*“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; **I will come to you.**” (John 14:16-18).*

Jesus made it very clear that the **visible Head** of the church (Jesus) would be **in heaven** while the **invisible Head** of the church (the Holy Spirit) would **take his place** on earth. Roman Catholic theology has **changed this around**. They affirm that the **visible head** of the church (the pope) is **on earth** while the **invisible head** (Jesus) is in **heaven**. Thus the popes not only usurp the place of Jesus but they also **usurp the place of the Holy Spirit!** This is the epitome of blasphemy!!

Amazingly, the Greek word *antichristos* has the same basic meaning in Greek as does *Vicarius Filii Dei* in Latin. Most people assume that the word antichrist means “**one who is against Christ**.” It is true that in Greek the preposition *anti* can mean ‘**against**.’ But it is equally true that this preposition can mean ‘**instead of**,’ or ‘**in place of**.’

In **classical Greek**, for example, the word *antibasileus* means ‘one who occupies the place of the king.’ In the New Testament, the name Herod *Antipas* means that Herod ruled ‘in place of’ his

father.’ (**Revelation 2:13**) The word *antitype* means ‘that which takes the place of the type.’ Christ is spoken of as having given His life as a **ransom in place of** (*antilutron*) all (**I Timothy 2:6**). Thus the word *antichristos* in Greek and *Vicarius Filii Dei* in Latin bear a very similar meaning!

Though I disagree with **Dave Hunt's futuristic interpretation** of the antichrist, I believe that he has given an accurate description of what the Biblical antichrist is like. He is not one who openly blasphemes Christ but rather one who seeks to supplant Christ:

*“While the Greek prefix ‘anti’ generally means ‘against’ or ‘opposed to,’ it can also mean ‘in the place of’ or ‘a substitute for.’ The Antichrist will embody both meanings. He will oppose Christ while **pretending to be Christ**. . . Instead of a frontal assault against Christianity, the evil one will **pervert the church from within** by posing as its founder. He will cunningly misrepresent Christ while **pretending to be Christ**. And by that process of **substitution** he will undermine and pervert all that Christ truly is. . . . If the Antichrist will indeed pretend to be the Christ, then his **followers must be ‘Christians’!** The church of that day will without dissenting voice, hail him as its leader.”* Dave Hunt, **Global Peace**, pp. 6-8.

