

The Name 666 Reveals

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Abstract

This paper explores the interpretation of “the number of the beast,” 666, as presented in the Book of Revelation 13:18, proposing that the name “Adonikam” uniquely aligns with the riddle. By examining the text through the lens of Janus Parallelism, an ancient Hebrew literary technique, the analysis suggests that John’s use of 666 was deliberately intended to evoke the only Old Testament name associated with this number: Adonikam. This study critiques the Gematria approach as insufficient due to its broad interpretative range, advocating instead for a textual analysis rooted in scriptural references and Hebrew linguistics. Additionally, it draws upon the scholarly work of Cyrus Gordon and E. W. Hengstenberg, who argue that the parallelism in Revelation serves to reinforce Adonikam’s symbolic alignment with the beast, marking him as a figure of power and blasphemy that challenges divine authority.

Introduction

The biblical text Revelation 13:18 provides one of the most enigmatic clues in religious literature: “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.” This has led scholars and interpreters alike to speculate on the identity symbolized by the number 666. The hypothesis that the name “Adonikam,” a biblical figure associated with 666 in the Old Testament (Ezra 2:13), could be the intended solution is a compelling one that contrasts with traditional interpretations reliant on Gematria. Instead, this study leverages a linguistic framework rooted in ancient Hebrew parallelism, particularly Janus Parallelism, to decode the meaning behind 666.

The Limitations of Gematria in Deciphering 666

Gematria, the practice of assigning numerical values to letters, is often used to derive names from numbers, but it encounters several challenges in this context. While Gematria can yield many names corresponding to 666, it lacks precision and leads to an overabundance of possible answers. This proliferation dilutes the specificity required by the text, as the riddle is intended to yield one definitive name. Furthermore, no scriptural precedent exists for applying Gematria to theological riddles, making its relevance here questionable. As such, this analysis dismisses

Gematria in favor of examining the text and its numbers in the context of Hebrew literary structures.

Understanding Janus Parallelism

Janus Parallelism is an ancient Hebrew literary device identified by Cyrus Gordon, in which a single term or phrase possesses dual meanings, linking both preceding and subsequent clauses. This dual perspective, akin to the Roman god Janus who faces two directions, allows the same phrase to serve multiple interpretative purposes. Several examples of Janus Parallelism appear in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Genesis 6:3, Daniel 11:35), enhancing the depth of meaning and connecting disparate ideas through wordplay. In the case of 666, this parallelism appears in the way John invites readers to “count the number of the beast” while evoking the only biblical figure, Adonikam, directly associated with this number.

By applying Janus Parallelism, the riddle suggests two interpretations of 666: as a numeric identifier for Adonikam’s sons (666 in Ezra 2:13) and as an emblematic reference that points both backward and forward to the name Adonikam, suggesting him as the symbolic “beast.”

Scriptural and Linguistic Evidence Supporting Adonikam

- Scriptural Clues:** Three textual clues in Revelation direct readers to Adonikam:
 - **Calculate the Number:** The act of counting or “calculating” could imply adding 1 to 666, which aligns with the textual discrepancy of Adonikam’s descendants in Ezra and Nehemiah (667 in Nehemiah 7:18).
 - **Number OF a Man:** The phrase suggests ownership, as the 666 sons are directly tied to Adonikam, the “man” associated with the number.
 - **His Number is 666:** This points to a singular figure with a unique association to 666, a characteristic only fulfilled by Adonikam.
- Janus Parallelism in Action:** Interpreting “count the number” as a Janus parallelism, we observe 666 both as a historical reference (backward) to Adonikam’s descendants and as a prophetic symbol (forward) of the beast. The “count” or “calculate” serves as a bridge between Adonikam and the beast, marking Adonikam as a foreshadowed figure of blasphemy and opposition to God.
- Theological Resonance:** The name Adonikam translates to “the Lord arises,” a phrase loaded with significance in Hebrew worship that takes on a sinister edge when applied to the beast. E. W.

Hengstenberg argues that Adonikam’s name, associated with vengeance and divine authority, would be appropriated by the beast as an act of blasphemy, positioning himself in opposition to God. Revelation’s description of the beast mirrors Adonikam’s symbolic appropriation of divine titles, presenting himself as a figure of worship and warfare against the saints.

Implications for the Identification of the Beast

If Adonikam indeed symbolizes the beast, the implications are substantial for the interpretation of Revelation. Rather than seeking a future historical figure, the text would be pointing to a theological archetype, a name symbolizing the qualities of rebellion, self-exaltation, and ultimate opposition to God’s authority. Adonikam’s appropriation of the Lord’s title, paralleled in Revelation’s description of the beast, reinforces the idea that the beast is not merely an individual but a representation of the ultimate blasphemy and counterfeit divinity.

Conclusion

This analysis concludes that Adonikam, and not a future historical figure, may represent the riddle’s intended answer. Using Janus Parallelism, we uncover how Revelation 13:18 draws on the Old Testament’s numerical association with Adonikam’s sons, making the name Adonikam the sole contender for “the number of the beast.” This interpretation is supported by linguistic and theological analysis, underscoring Adonikam’s name as a symbol of blasphemous power. By understanding Adonikam as the beast, readers gain insight into the symbolic nature of 666, as a number that represents not a future dictator, but an ancient archetype of rebellion and self-exaltation.

References

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