***The Messiah - CA-009***

Someone asked a good question last time when we touched on the numerical value of names. Someone asked, just how do they do this? So I want to talk a little bit about that so that we will have a background, although it has very little to do with apologetics.

The Greek letters have a numerical value. Each letter has a numerical value. For example, the name Jesus in the Greek is Iesous, and each letter has a number associated with it. When you add these all up, the number of Jesus is 888. I'm sorry, I can't give you any type of reason or symbolism for this. Possibly God's perfect number is seven, so 777 could represent absolute perfection. Why Jesus' number would be 888 I don't know. But 666 definitely falls short of God's perfection of 777.

We have the same thing with the Hebrew. There are 27 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each one has a numerical value. Those numbers can be used as letters. And when you transliterate Nero Caesar into Hebrew letters; then you take each letter's numerical equivalent; and, you add it up, you get 666. It could be that the people who read Revelation in the first century said, "Aha, he must be the antichrist." There is something that we need to take into consideration when we interpret prophecy. That is that generally every passage (every Scripture) has one meaning, and one meaning only. It may have many applications and many significances, but it has one meaning.

However, when we come to prophecy, we find what we call the law of double reference. That is that sometimes the prophetic Scripture has a picture of a fulfillment. It's just almost the fulfillment, but it's just an image of what the true fulfillment is going to be like before the fulfillment. So this could very possibly be Antiochus Epiphanes, and then Nero as pictures of the antichrist – almost a fulfillment, but not quite.

So we could speculate on and on. One author says that you can take all the letters in the Roman alphabet that have a numerical value, and you know this from the Roman numerals (X is 10, and C is 100, and so on). If you add up all of those letters, you get 666. So someone said that this has got to be showing that the antichrist will be a Roman.

Another theory that someone said was that if you add all the numerals from 1 to 36, it equals 666. The word "beast" (in the evil sense) occurs exactly 36 times in Revelation. 36 is 6 times 6. So we could go on and on.

Some of the Jewish people have practiced (throughout the centuries) something that they call the "gematria." This comes from the Greek word for "geometry." The belief of people who practice this is that each Hebrew word in the Old Testament has a numerical equivalent, and that's where the hidden meaning lies. These people can really get way out with their symbolism. So my conviction is that we can't really make much sense out of the fact that the antichrist's number is 666. But then we're not going to be here when the antichrist is revealed. Some Christians seem to have a hobby of watching for the antichrist. We're told in the New Testament to watch for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the antichrist. So the antichrist will be revealed after the rapture. Those people who believe after the rapture, and they get to listening to Berean tapes, and they study Scripture, they'll say, "Aha, this is the antichrist. This is his number. It makes perfect sense. It adds up to 666," but they'll have a lot of other evidence to go on, too.

So I want to read a quote from John Nelson Darby. John Nelson Darby is one of the pioneers of the restoration of dispensational theology. He was the one who influenced Scofield, who influenced Lewis Sperry Chafer, who founded Dallas Theological Seminary. C. I. Scofield probably popularized dispensational theology more than any other man with his study Bible. He was influenced by John Nelson Darby. John Nelson Darby says about the number 666, and who it could refer to:

"I confess my ignorance as to the number 666, I cannot present you with anything satisfactory to myself. We find answering to the number 666, it means apostasy and tradition, but I cannot say anything else positively on that point." So if I tell you I don't have any idea what how we can apply the number 666 to a man who will be the antichrist, then I think I'm probably in some pretty good company.

So the point I wanted to make with the numerical thing was that in those days (in the days of the New Testament), it was nothing rare for everyone to have a number. And you would get that number by adding up the numerical equivalence of the letters of your name, whether it was Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. So when we read Revelation, where John says, "The number of the beast is 666," we can speculate on it, but the people then thought, "Oh, so you add up the numbers of his name, and you get 666." Whether it was Hebrew; Greek; or, Latin, or whether it referred in a partial fulfillment to a reference to Nero and then a reference to another man, I really can't say. Hopefully after the rapture, God will let us look over (if we're even interested) and see.

**The Messiah**

Now we'll get back to our study of Christian apologetics. In John 1:45, Philip told Nathaniel, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." We looked at some of the Scriptures last time in which we can demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament prophecy. We're going to go over some of these again in a little bit more depth. Cross-reference John 1:45 with Luke 24:27, and this was three years later, after the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus went over the Scriptures with them in verse 27, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets. He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

So the Old Testament very explicitly and implicitly predicts the coming of the Messiah. Those people like Philip and Nathaniel, who had studied the Old Testament, and were waiting for the Messiah, knew some of these Scriptures. Then three years later, the Lord Jesus Christ explained in greater detail.

Now, the Messiah couldn't have been just anyone. You're going to see that the requirements for being the Messiah were very strict. They were so strict that they could have only applied to one person. So we're going to start near the beginning and work our way up, and see how this could only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 12:3, God blessed Abraham and said, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so you shall be a blessing." Then he goes on in verse 3: "And I will bless all those who bless you, and the ones who curse you, I will curse. In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This is an early prediction of the Messiah, so we know that the man who would be a great blessing to all the families of the earth has to be a descendant of Abraham. So that could be pretty broad. How many sons did Abraham have? Well, we know he had many sons by his second wife, Keturah, as well as Isaac and Ishmael.

God told Abraham that his seed would continue through Isaac, and not through Ishmael (Genesis 28:14). The Messiah had to be a descendant of Isaac. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. In Genesis 28:14, God said to Jacob, "Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Again this is a Messianic prophecy.

Jacob had 12 sons. So theoretically, any of those sons could have been the ancestor of the Messiah. However, in Genesis 40:9, this is narrowed down even more: "The scepter (and the scepter is what a king has) shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes." So whatever kings that Israel is going to have will be descendants of Judah until the Messiah comes. He can't be a descendant of anyone but Judah. So Judah had some descendants, and the prophecy was very specific.

In 2 Samuel 7:16, God speaks to David. He said, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever. Your throne shall be established forever." So that has to be the Messiah – the Kingdom of God, the eternal kingdom. So He has to be a descendant of David.

The Old Testament has many references that the Messiah has to be a member of the royal family – a descendant of David. So Isaiah 11:1-5 says, "A chute will spring from the stem of Jesse. Jesse had eight sons, and a branch from his root will bear fruit, and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him – the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and strength; the spirit of knowledge; and, the fear of the Lord. He has to be a descendant of Jesse, who was David's father. We know from the previous Scripture that this descendant was David.

Then Jeremiah 23:3: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I shall rise up for David a righteous branch, and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land." So again, the Messiah will be a descendant of David.

Then in Amos 9:11: "In that day, I will raise up the fallen booth tent (or tabernacle) of David and wall up its branches. I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old."

Did you know that in the gospels Jesus is called the son of David something like 31 times? So this was very specific to the Jewish people that the Messiah had to be a descendant of David. Paul, in Romans 1:3, says, "Concerning God's son, who was born of a descendant of David, according to the flesh." So this was really extremely important to the Jewish people.

We looked some last time at the prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Here's something you might not have known. Did you know there were two Bethlehems? Both of them are very small. One is Bethlehem Zebulun, the other one is Bethlehem Ephrathah. The latter one is the one where David's family was from. This is the one that it was prophesied where Jesus would be from – where the Messiah would come from. Micah 5:2: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you will go forth for me to be ruler of Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." In other words, that means He is preexistent.

When you meet someone and they tell you they're from Washington, your first question is, Washington State or Washington, D.C.? That is because we have two Washingtons, and that's the way it was with the Hebrews. These were both little towns, but they were two Bethlehems, and Micah nails it down. He doesn't keep it general where he would have a 50/50 chance of being right. He nails it down to which Bethlehem.

David's family was from Bethlehem. In 1 Samuel 20:6, David said that he wasn't going to be there for dinner in the palace because Jonathan's father had been making attempts on his life: "So David said to Jonathan, 'Behold, tomorrow is a new moon, and I ought to sit down and eat with the king, but let me go that time I may hide myself in the field until the third day.'" Verse 6: "If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city," the city where David and his family were from.

Then in 1 Samuel 17:12: "David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah whose name was Jesse." So it is nailed down as to which Bethlehem. Nostradamus or Jean Dixon or someone like that would have left it very fuzzy, so that it could have been any city named Bethlehem, but not so in the Word of God.

Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ have to be a descendant of Abraham, a descendant of Isaac (not Ishmael or one of the other boys), he had to be a descendant of Jacob (not Esau). He had to be in the line of David. He also had to be the heir of the Jewish throne and the royal family of Judah. So we run across a man in the time of rebuilding. In Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zachariah, we keep reading about Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel seemed to be the leader who depended on Ezra and Nehemiah for counsel. Why did the pagan king choose Zerubbabel to be the leader?

Well turn to Matthew 1:12. This is the lineage – the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 12 says, "After the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel, and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel. So we see the reason they chose Zerubbabel be the head guy (the governor) was because if the Jews had been allowed to have a king, Zerubbabel would have been the king. He was the rightful heir of the Hebrew throne. There we see him right there in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if you finish reading on down to verse 16, you see that Joseph, the husband of Mary, is right in line. If the Roman Empire had allowed the Jews to make their rightful descendant of the royal family king, it would have been Joseph. Then Jesus, being the oldest "son" (legal heir) of Joseph, is the only man at the time who would have qualified to have been the heir to the Hebrew throne. Jesus had to be the king, and He was. He was the rightful heir of the Hebrew king. So He fulfilled that prophecy.

**The Separation of Church and State**

We like to think that the American people invented the separation of church and state. That is not so. The Hebrew people had that long ago. Their first King, Saul, violated it, and he got into some big trouble for having done it. 1 Samuel 13:4: "All Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal." And apparently Samuel told Saul just to hold everything, and not to do anything till he got there. Then he, as the priest and religious leader, would offer sacrifice.

Verse 5: "Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel: 30,000 chariots and 600 horsemen; and, people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance. They came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. When the man of Israel saw they were on a strait (for the people were hard pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling."

So people were deserting. People were telling their king, "You've got to do something. Do something even if it's wrong." And Saul was not the strong leader that he should have been. He should have said, "Now, I'll tell you what. I am going to do something. I'm going to wait for the man of God. I'm going to wait for Samuel to come like he said he would do in seven days, and offer the sacrifices. And we're going to have a meeting, and make sure that our spiritual lives are all what they should be. Then we're going to go into battle and just watch those Philistines fall." He could have really won the confidence of the people. And more importantly, he could have pleased God.

But on the seventh day, people started deserting and falling like flies: "Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' He offered the burnt offering. It came about as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering that, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. And Samuel said, 'What have you done?'" And of course, Samuel knew what he had done.

Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days." Well, he did come. He just came as soon as Saul finished with the sacrifice. "And the Philistines were assembling at Michmash. Therefore, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the Lord.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering." That was what the king was not supposed to do – to function as a priest. The king was supposed to be a believer and a godly man. He was supposed to have a copy of the law, and read it daily. He was supposed to listen to the prophets and obey them. But he was not supposed to take the role of priest.

Because of this disobedience, Saul suffered greatly. In verse 14, Samuel said, "But now your kingdom shall not endure." Again, the priest and the king were two different offices, and they were not to be filled by the same person.

Uzziah is another example in 2 Chronicles 26:16. Uzziah was a good man and a good king on the whole, "But when Uzziah became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the Temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah, the priest, entered after him, and with him 80 priests of the Lord – valiant man. They opposed Uzziah the King, and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful, and will have no honor from the Lord God.' But Uzziah, with the sensor in his hand for burning incense, was enraged. While he was enraged with the priest, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priest in the house of the Lord beside the altar of incense. Azariah the high priest, and all the priests, looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead, and they hurried him out of there. He himself also hastened to get out of there because the Lord had smitten him."

So here's another example of a man trying to be both priest and king. Now I've labored does this to say, "How can Jesus be the king of the Jews and be the Great High Priest? That's a good question. I thought you'd never ask it. The answer we see, first of all, in Psalm 110:4: "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. Thou art a priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek." This was not of the order of the Aaronic priesthood. This was the Order of Melchizedek. Now, who is Melchizedek? Well, remember, back in Genesis that he was the king priest of Salem. Abraham gave tithes of all that he had plundered in the battle of the kings when he was freeing his nephew Lot. We know very little about Melchizedek. The book of Hebrews says that he appears without father or mother. Of course he had a father and mother. They're just not recorded. He has no genealogy.

Or he may not have had a human father and mother. Some people believe that Melchizedek was a theophany, an Old Testament appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't know. But notice this about Melchizedek. He may have been a gentile king who was a righteous man who knew something about God who had become a priest of the most high God before the Aaronic priesthood. So he encompassed the whole human race. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ is – a priest not after the order of Aaron, the Levite priest, but the Order of Melchizedek.

Let me show you in Hebrews 5:6. Just as he says also in another passage (referring to Psalm 114:2), "Thou art a priest forever to the Messiah according to the Order of Melchizedek." Then verse 10: "Being designated by God as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek." Then Hebrews 6:20: "Where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." And just in case you might have missed that, Hebrews 7:17 says, "For it is witnessed out of him, thou art a priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek." And you might have missed it after all that. Just in case you did, one more time in Hebrews 7:21: "For they indeed (the Levites) became priest without an oath, but he with an oath, the who had said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. Thou art a priest forever.'"

So the Lord Jesus Christ met a requirement that no one else could have ever met; that is, that He was the rightful heir to the Hebrew throne. They asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" The answer was, "Yes." Jesus was absolutely the King of the Jews. And he was also a priest for all of mankind.

And there's another office that the Lord Jesus Christ was predicted to fulfill, which He did. And he does. That is as prophet – a particular prophet. In Deuteronomy 18:18, God told Moses, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen." So the Messiah, this specific prophet, had to be a Jew. "I will raise him up from among their countrymen like you." He would be like Moses. "And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

The Jews were looking for that prophet. That's one of the questions they asked John in John 1:19, "This is the witness of John." When the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem, all the theological guys came to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed, and he did not deny. He confessed, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." They said, "Are you that prophet?" And he answered, "No."

In Acts, when Stephen preached his sermon before being put to death, he plainly tells us in verse 37 that Jesus was that prophet: "This is the Moses (he was referring to Moses) who said to the sons of Israel, 'God shall rise up for you a prophet like Me from among your brethren.'" The whole gist of all of Stephen's sermon was that the Lord Jesus Christ had fulfilled this requirement. He was that prophet.

This is really amazing when you think about it. We've looked somewhat at the time element. We've seen that the Lord Jesus Christ was born at the time that those who were students of prophecy knew was time for the Messiah to be born. He was born in the place where He had to have been born. He was born of a virgin woman. That was one of the things the Jewish religious establishment threw at him. They said, "Well, we were not born in sin like You were." In other words, His mother was not married when she became pregnant, and they didn't know that this was a supernatural birth.

Also, they thought that Jesus was from Nazareth, since this had more or less been his hometown. When he was a baby, they went to Egypt, and then they came back and settled in Nazareth, and everyone thought that he was a Nazarene. And they even threw this at Him: "The Messiah can't come from Nazareth. We know the Messiah has to be born in Bethlehem. Nothing good ever comes from Nazareth." But Jesus was born in Bethlehem (in the right Bethlehem). He fulfilled the role King of the Jews. He was the only man who could have been the rightful heir of the Jewish throne. He fulfilled the role of King and High Priest which no one else could have ever done.

And then there is the spectacular role in Revelation 19:15: "From His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He may smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron, and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh, He has the name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords." He is the King of Kings. Jesus told his disciples before he left them, "All power has been delivered unto me. This is our Savior. This is the one we follow. This is our intimate friend – the king of the universe. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He's also our great High Priest. Isn't it wonderful to know that He is standing in the presence of Almighty God praying for us? He's also the prophet. He is *the* prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are the absolute words of God. No one else could have ever fulfilled all of these roles that the Lord Jesus Christ does, and they were all spelled out specifically in the Old Testament in prophecy.

The gospel is (1 Corinthians 15): "I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the Old Testament Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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