



**Forest Hill
Church of Christ**

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VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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Truth for the World
Words of the Master (Memphis
Time Warner Cable ch17)

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**THE PLACE OF SAFETY
BARRY GRIDER**

[Editor's Note: The following manuscript was published in the 2006 "Truth in Love" Lectureship Volume. This lecture program, directed by Paul Sain, and hosted by the East Hill congregation in Pulaski, Tennessee, is always superb. You would be edified by ordering this year's book by calling (931)363-6905.]

The Psalmist wrote, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makes me dwell in safety" (Psa. 4:8). In the midst of a world smitten with sin man needs a place of safety, security, and refuge. Such can only be found in the Lord. God has always provided such a place for those who love Him.

No one could have enjoyed peace and safety any more than Adam and Eve while living in the Garden of Eden. Not only was the garden a paradise on earth, it was also a place where the first couple had constant communion with God (Gen. 3:8). Wherever God dwells, those who live with Him are safe. After man sinned, he lost the peace and security that he once had with God. Yet down through the centuries a loving and gracious God would provide a safe haven for those who desired a relationship with Him.

According to Genesis, because of man's wickedness, God determined to destroy man from the face of the earth. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

Hence, God would save Noah from the devastation of the deluge. An ark was prepared according to God's specifications. This ark provided a place of safety for Noah and his family when the floodwaters raged. As a child, I was blessed to have a mother who read to me from the Bible. Whenever she read the account of Noah and the ark, she would conclude by reminding me that God has an ark of safety today. This ark of safety is the church of Christ.

Those who identify themselves as Christians acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Savior. However, most fail to realize what it means to be in Christ and in His church. Hence, such individuals remain in their sins. It is amazing how many scriptures speak of the necessity of being in Christ.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:3,7).

Paul would add, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). So the place of safety for all men today is in

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Christ. Free from sin, the Christian no longer has to fear its penalty. *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23). To be in Christ is to be free from the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:1). Many religious people speak of their eternal security. However, only the New Testament Christian, one who has obeyed the gospel of Christ, can really be secure. In Him, nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:39).

But what does being in Christ have to do with the church of Christ? The church is comprised of those who are saved (Acts 2:47). Likewise, God’s marvelous wisdom for saving man includes Christ and the church He purchased with His blood (Eph. 3:10-11).

Those who are saved are found in the body of Christ, which is His church. Paul exhorted, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Eph. 5:25). How does one get into the church, God’s ark of safety? He does so the same way he gets into Christ. *“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body”* (1 Cor. 12:13).

The church is a refuge from the world. It provides security from the devil and sin. Isaiah spoke of this safe place when he wrote,

The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters that cover the sea (Isa. 11:6-9).

Such is a highly figurative and symbolic language denoting the peaceful nature of the kingdom of Christ, which is the church.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear (Heb. 12:28).

Since the kingdom or the church is eternal in nature (2 Pet. 1:11), and only citizens of the kingdom or members of the church will be saved (1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23), let us implore all men to enter quickly into the fold of safety.

“GOOD NEWS” WE CAN UNDERSTAND

DAN WINKLER

“...by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ...that the Gentiles are...fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:3-6).

Paul’s word *mystery* referred to a secret that had been revealed. God told Paul a wonderful secret and, then, guided him in writing it down.

The secret? God offers salvation to Jew and Gentile alike. But look. When we read what Paul wrote, we can understand what this secret is all about. Isn’t that wonderful? Such is true because of the gospel’s:

“Source.”

It comes from a merciful (Luke 6:36), just (1 John 4:7), and loving (1 John 4:7) God. It smacks at God’s goodness to think that he would give us a message to live by (cf. John 12:48) only to make that message too hard to understand.

“Structure.”

It is a message of “good news” (1 Pet. 1:25), designed to be an instruction manual for life (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and a sword for fighting the devil (Eph. 6:17). If it cannot be understood, it is a guide that cannot be followed and a weapon that cannot be unsheathed. Is that “good news?”

“Suitability” to man.

Man’s heart consists of intelligence (Prov. 4:23), emotion (Mat. 22:37), and a will (Rom. 6:17). The gospel consists of facts to be believed with the heart’s intelligence (Heb. 11:1,6), promises to be enjoyed with the heart’s ability to feel (2 Pet. 1:4), and commands to be obeyed with the heart’s will (1 John 5:2-3). The gospel and the heart of man are made for each other, a thought that implicitly underscores its understandable nature.

The secret to understanding the gospel is as simple as the gospel itself. READ it. Spend time with it. Think about it. Do what it says...and be blessed (cf. Rev. 1:3).

“WORDS FROM THE MASTER”

Forest Hill Church of Christ

5:00-5:30 P.M.

Time Warner Cable - Channel 17

(continued from Forest Hill News, July 11)

666: IMPENDING DOOM, OR MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING? (part 4)

Matthew Martin

Having exhausted every possible idea *surrounding* the notion of 666, and having answered several of the more prominent *false* ideas concerning the text (Rev. 14:11-18), lets now turn our attention to what “666” really means.

As already noted, the book of Revelation uses symbolism to convey its message. One symbol is the use of numbers. Often in the book, the number seven is used to convey the idea of being complete (or perfect), for example, the seven churches, the seven horns, seven eyes, and seven spirits. “Six” would then represent that which is imperfect, or destined to fail.

It is even said, that to the Jews, the number six was an omen of failure. When tripled, as in Revelation 14, “666” would then represent a complete and total failure of whatever John was talking about. Since it has already been shown that the number represents a *quality* of man. It can then be assumed that the number “666” represents, as Homer Hailey put it, in his commentary:

...the complete and total failure of all human systems and efforts antagonistic to God and His Christ—all are doomed to ultimate and complete defeat and failure.

How many misunderstand God’s book, specifically Revelation? Even more specifically: How many misunderstand the number 666? If you want an illustration, observe someone at the local Chic-Fil-A. When their total rings up at, \$6.66, see if they don’t order an extra Dr. Pepper, just to change the total. As if, eating a sandwich that cost \$6.66 would end up choking them. It’s all a bunch of superstition and nonsense.

To the first-century Christian, the number 666 represents *hope*, not doom. Hope, because all of their *enemies* are doomed to fail. For someone to read 666 as an omen for their *own* destruction, it would imply they are on the *wrong* side of God’s judgment.

To the twenty-first century Christian, the number means the same thing. Looking to the past we see that the Roman Empire, which persecuted first-century Christians, was ultimately defeated. So too will all others who possess the *character* of the number 666.

Everyone wants to look at “666” as an omen for impending doom. But to the Christian it is not a scary number at all, but one that is filled with hope that all of God’s enemies are doomed to fail.

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