

Spirit, we have no answer that can affect our lives. The entrance of his word gives light. Let us wait on him that we may receive it.

## Postscript

### WWW

Finally we will consider an interesting fact: W is the 6<sup>th</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In other words W represents the number 6. So how do you write 666 in Hebrew? You've guessed it! WWW!

WWW or the Worldwide Web is a massive amalgamation of man's wisdom and knowledge on every imaginable subject, good, bad and neutral. With a few clicks of a mouse you can find information on just about any topic you choose. We have access to an almost infinite source of human knowledge.

We find something similar in scripture. Peter said to Jesus, "You know everything" (John 21: 17). John was present at the time and overheard this and he wrote similar words in his letter: "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know everything" (1 John 2: 20).

Neither Jesus, nor the readers of John's letter were users of the Internet. Their source of knowledge was not 666, but 888. They had the mind of Christ, not the mind of the beast!

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August 2006

# 666

"This is wisdom.  
If anyone has insight,  
let him calculate the number  
of the beast,  
for it is man's number.  
**His number is 666.**"  
Revelation 13:18.

# &

I	=	10
η	=	8
σ	=	200
ο	=	70
υ	=	400
ς	=	<u>200</u>
		<u>888</u>

# 888

κ	=	20
υ	=	400
ρ	=	100
ι	=	10
ο	=	70
ς	=	<u>200</u>
		<u>800</u>

κ	=	20
ο	=	70
σ	=	200
μ	=	40
ο	=	70
ς	=	<u>200</u>
		<u>600</u>

Numeric Values of Greek Letters

α	a	1
β	b	2
γ	g	3
δ	d	4
ε	e	5
ζ	z	7
η	ee	8
θ	th	9
ι	i	10
κ	k	20
λ	l	30
μ	m	40
ν	n	50
ξ	x	60
ο	o	70
π	p	80
ρ	r	100
σ,ς	s	200
τ	t	300
υ	u	400
φ	ph	500
χ	ch	600
ψ	ps	700
ω	oo	800

are part of family life and church life. Yet worse we can find their source in our own hearts.

Jesus was and is completely different. Everything he said and did was totally true. He himself was and is the truth. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth. Satan on the other hand is described as the father of lies.

What is the greatest lie? I believe the greatest lie is false witness about God. Jesus is described as the faithful and true witness. He was and is the perfect representation and description of God. Not only did he speak the truth, but he was the truth. The Pharisees, by contrast, were the ultimate false witnesses. They spoke of God and taught people about God, but their lives totally denied him. Man's religion today - modern Babylon - is the same. Its claim to represent God is the ultimate lie and the ultimate defamation of God's character. It is sinful and wrong to tell lies about natural things, and even there we must cultivate an attitude of truthfulness. It is much worse to tell spiritual lies, by being false witnesses to God.

Much of what has called itself the church down the centuries has been one great lie. It has claimed to be God's representation on earth, and the man in the street has believed it. When he thinks of God, he thinks of what he has seen and heard of and knows from the church.

The 144,000 will be wholly different from what we have known as the church. Like Jesus they will be faithful and true witnesses, in whose mouths and in whose lives there will be no lie. The world now is hungry to meet them.

## Conclusion

In this study we have looked at two kinds of people. We may call them the 666 people and the 888 people. The 666 people live their lives without God, wholly according to adamic fallen human nature. In doing this, willingly or unwillingly, they are in Satan's grip. The 888 people are a total contrast. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are wholly led by the Spirit and have entered the fullness of sonship. They have been redeemed from the earth.

Can we be among those 144,000? Is such a level of perfection possible? Can we obey the command of Jesus to "be perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect?" Did John's visions on the island of Patmos really come from God? Human words are inadequate to answer these questions. Unless we have an answer from God deep in our hearts by the revelation of the Holy

## Wisdom

These are the women with whom the 144,000 will not be defiled. They will be utterly free from the contamination of Jezebel and of Babylon. They will have understood by the revelation of God the nature and meaning of “Mystery Babylon” and from the heart they will have obeyed the injunction, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues”.

The meaning of this is clarified by the second and deeply significant statement of verse 4: “**They follow the Lamb wherever he goes.**” Jesus himself was totally outside the Babylon of his day. He had no part in its corrupt manmade religious systems. Like him instead, they will be wholly led by the Spirit.

What does it mean to follow the Lamb wherever he goes? Where did Jesus go? On this earth he went from conception (by the word of God) to birth. He went on through childhood and adolescence to manhood. He trod the path of obedience, rejection, suffering and death. He rose in victory from the grave and was exalted to the right hand of God. That in summary was the pathway of the Lamb of God. That also is the pathway of those who follow him wherever he goes. Nothing can be omitted.

Those who follow him must also be conceived and born by the word of God. They also must pass through childhood and adolescence to maturity. They also must experience rejection, suffering and death in their walk of obedience. For most this will not be a physical death, but a death experience. They also, if they suffer with him, will reign with him. They will be offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb, just as he was offered as the first of the firstfruits.

Many thousands of people were touched and blessed by Jesus in the brief three years of his ministry on earth. Only twelve were with him all the time and followed him wherever he went. The 144,000 are also a small minority made up of those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Beyond them, as described in chapter 7 of Revelation, there will be a great multitude wearing white robes and standing before the throne of God.

**v5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.**

The final characteristics of the 144,000 are their truthfulness and purity. Lying is a way of life that surrounds us. Direct lies, indirect lies, white lies and black lies are part of politics, business and social life. Worse still they

Most people know that 666 is the number of the beast. Who or what the beast is, or why he should have a number is less certain ground.

Not many people will have heard of 888. Surprisingly 888 occurs in the Bible verse immediately following the one containing 666. However it is hidden in the verse rather than clearly stated, as I will be explaining later.

The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and without the help of the Holy Spirit we can only understand them at the superficial level of the natural mind. We can understand their moral teaching and enjoy their stories and poetry, but we are in darkness as to their spiritual meaning.

Some things in Scripture are specifically described as mysteries. In various places in the New Testament we find such statements as “**He that has ears let him hear**”, or “**Let him that reads understand**” or “**Behold, I show you a mystery**”. Revelation 13:18 (quoted on the front of this paper) begins with the words “**This is wisdom.**” Such phrases indicate something hidden, which we must search out by prayerful study in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Our topic of 666 and 888 is in that category.

To understand Revelation 13:18, we will need to study the preceding verses. Most people would do this naturally here, as they are dramatic, and obviously part of the same topic. We will also need to study the verses following. Many people would not do this here, because they are in the next chapter, and at first sight don't appear to have any special connection. It is the verses following in chapter 14 that hold the key to understanding the number of the beast.

We will also need some knowledge of the subject of Bible numerics, without which it is impossible to understand the significance of 666 or 888.

## Bible Numerics

Numbers in the Bible have significance. Seven, for example, is regarded as the number of spiritual perfection and of God. Thirteen is often associated with rebellion and Satan. Six is particularly the number of man and his works.

How do we know the meaning or significance of a given number?

The significance of numbers is established by their use both in Scripture and in nature. God created man on the sixth day in the Genesis account, and on the seventh day he rested from his works. He appointed 6 days for man's labour. After 600 years Noah, whose name means "Rest", ceased from work and entered the ark. These, and other scriptures, make 6 the number of man and of man's works apart from God. The seventh day is the Lord's day. The Bible, especially the book of Revelation, is heavily patterned on the number 7. This indicates that 7 is the number of God.

The meanings of numbers are further illustrated and established by the study of "Gematria" or the numeric values of words. The Greeks and Hebrews did not have separate symbols, such as 1, 2 and 3, for numbers like we do. Instead, like the Romans, they used the letters of their alphabets. In Greek alpha represents 1 and beta 2 and so on up to iota, which is 10. After that kappa is 20, lambda 30 and so on up to rho, which is 100. Sigma is 200, tau 300 and so on up to omega, which is 800. These values are shown in the table facing page 1. (The number 6 was originally the letter digamma which later dropped out of use.) This means that you can take the letters of any word or name, and add them up to get a total value for the word. That value is called the gematria. The name Jesus ( Ἰησοῦς in Greek) adds up to 888, as shown on the front of this booklet.

Many of the titles of Jesus have the number 8 as a prominent feature or factor. Κύριος (Lord) has the value 800. Χριστός (Christ) is 1480 which has the factors 37 x 8 x 5. (888 is 37 x 8 x 3). ἀλήθεια (truth) is 64 or 8 x 8. Σωτήρ (Saviour) is 1408 or 8 x 8 x 22. ὁδός (Way) is 344 or 8 x 43.

Κοσμός (world) on the other hand has the gematria 600. The kosmos is the sphere of man's works apart from God. Many of the names and titles of Satan, such as δράκων (dragon) and ὄφις (serpent), have the factor 13.

Over the centuries much time has been given to the study of numbers. Both men of God and students of the occult have been involved. The number 666 has excited much interest and the 153 fishes caught in the net have probably had more than 153 different explanations. An excellent book on the subject, "Number in Scripture" by Ethelbert Bullinger was written at the end of the 19th century. His grasp of Scripture and Hebrew and Greek was scholarly. His ideas of science are of course not up-to-date now. However the multitude of examples he produces from Scripture of consistent meanings for various numbers are very convincing, and I recommend his book to those interested in pursuing the subject further.

Bible numerics and gematria are certainly not everyone's "cup of tea";

world - is to catch its fish. The fish must then be brought to land. Jesus used this picture to describe the initial conversion experience. He said to Peter, "I will make you fishers of men". The disciples were to bring people from the sea realm to the earth realm.

The book of Revelation clearly distinguishes between those who dwell on earth and those who dwell in heaven: "Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." The first part of this verse does not refer to those who have "died and gone to heaven", but to those who are seated with Christ in heavenly places. Heaven in the New Testament is a present reality rather than a future home. It is the realm of the spirit. Different terminology is used for what happens after we die. Paul, for example, speaks of departing and being with Christ, but not of going to heaven. Jesus speaks of "going to the Father".

Like every other member of Adam's race, the 144,000 were originally "of the earth". They have become dwellers in heaven. Their citizenship has changed. They no longer belong to the world and its systems, but to the heavenly realm. The fullness of redemption has been outworked in them, and now they belong wholly to God.

**v4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.**

What does it mean to "defile themselves with women"? Obviously we live in an age of sexual promiscuity and immorality of every kind. The servants of God must be pure and above reproach in all such matters. However this should go without being said. Also if this is the only meaning of this verse it appears to be a message for the male sex only, presumably with women excluded from the ranks of the 144,000!

What I believe is in mind here is the deeper question of spiritual purity. The book of Revelation speaks of two women, both of whom probably represent the same thing. In chapter 2 verse 20 we read: "You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols." Later in Revelation 17:5 we read of "Mystery Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth."

Thirdly their sound is like harpists harping on their harps. The voice of the 144,000 is like music. Not everyone has the ability to make music. Only those who have a natural gift. Also no one can make good music without training. Babies do not make opera singers! A musician must first learn to listen before he can play. He must learn to recognise major and minor scales and sound combinations and rhythms. He must then discipline his hands or his voice to reproduce those sounds. It all takes a lot of time and training as well as natural ability.

The result is twofold. Music can give great pleasure. It can be very beautiful. It also is a form of communication. It can impart a message.

The voice of the 144,000 will be like music. Like musicians they will have a God-given gift. They will have listened long and intensively to the voice of God. They will be trained by long discipline to reproduce that voice. The result will be that they will impart the true word of God and they will do so with great beauty. The crowds were drawn to Jesus for these very reasons. Their verdict: **“No one ever spoke like this man.”**

Like true musicians they will harmonise perfectly with each other. Poor musicians all try to sing the same tune, but can be out of tune and out of time with each other. They may enjoy themselves, but other people won't want to listen! Good musicians can all sing a different tune, but perfectly harmonise and blend together. Those who are only taught by man all speak the same message, but are out of time and out of tune with each other. They have no real unity. Those who, like the 144,000, are taught by God have a wonderful diversity and yet perfectly blend together. They are one in the spirit.

**v3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No-one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.**

People sing songs to express or describe an experience. People who know little or nothing of the experience will not be able to relate to the song. The distinctive experience of the 144,000 is that they have been redeemed from the earth.

The earth is the realm of the natural man. It contrasts with heaven, which is the realm of God and of the spirit. The book of Revelation refers frequently to three spheres: the heavens, the earth and the sea. The sea is barren and profitless. You cannot cultivate it or build on it or control it in any way. The only useful thing you can do with it - at least in the ancient

so don't worry if you feel they aren't for you. However, I believe some knowledge of the subject is necessary for anyone who wants to understand the book of Revelation. This is especially true for those wanting to understand the meaning of 666, the number of the beast and its contrast with 888, the number of Jesus.

## The Mark of the Beast

We read about the mark of the Beast in the two verses before the verse quoted on the front of this booklet. **“He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name”** (Rev 13: 16, 17).

These verses have given rise to a lot of thought and speculation. Many people no doubt have been worried or frightened by what they have heard and been taught. What is the nature of this mark? People have suggested that credit cards will be replaced by electronic marking of the hand or forehead. Your bank balance could be electronically written on your hand, and updated whenever you bought or sold! I once even heard that the central computer that was going to control it all was somehow designed round the number 6! (This last idea is very improbable, as all good computing people know that there are 8 bits to a byte, and computers are generally built around 2s and 8s and 16s rather than 6s!)

This literal view of Revelation chapter 13 clashes with chapter 14 verse 1: **“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.”** We must interpret consecutive verses consistently. If the mark of the beast is made electronically on people's foreheads then the name of Jesus must be written electronically on the foreheads of the 144,000. I have never heard anyone suggest that that is what is going to happen.

Can a physical mark somehow inscribed on our bodies really make us pleasing or displeasing to God? I don't think so. It is what goes on inside the forehead that really matters. Inside you can have one of two different kinds of mind. You can have the mind of the beast, or animal, to use the normal modern English word; or you can have the mind of Christ. Both minds are mentioned in scripture and we will now consider each in turn.

## The Mind of the Beast

In Daniel chapter 4 verse 16, we read: “Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.” Who was this man? Nebuchadnezzar, the great king and rebuilders of Babylon, was one of the most powerful men in ancient history.

In the pages of the Bible there are two great rival cities. We first hear of Babylon under its Hebrew name Babel in the well known story of Genesis chapter 11. It becomes prominent later in Old Testament history. Jerusalem is first mentioned in the book of Joshua, but is not important till the time of King David. He captures it from the Jebusites and makes it his capital. From then on it is prominent throughout scripture, and is seldom long out of the news today. The book of Revelation ends with the destruction of Babylon and the new Jerusalem descending from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband.

Egypt and Babylon were the two great empires of ancient times. Both are full of deep spiritual significance. The first great deliverance of scripture was from Egypt. The second was from Babylon. All God’s people Israel came out of Egypt. Only a minority of them returned from Babylon.

What do these two countries represent? Every Bible reader knows the story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt, the ten plagues, the first Passover, the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea and the bringing to birth of God’s people Israel. Everyone has at least a basic knowledge that Jesus is the new Passover Lamb who has brought us out of a spiritual Egypt and created us as a new spiritual people.

The deliverance from Babylon is less familiar. Babylon was the great home of false religion. The essence of false religion is that it is based on man and man’s works. It has no real reference to God. It promotes and exalts man.

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon when the Jews were there in captivity. Chapter four of Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar’s fall and restoration in his own words. His troubles began when he proudly said: “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” These words echo those of the first builders of Babel centuries before as they built their tower in total independence of and disregard for God. “Come, let us build ourselves a city,” they said, “with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” They also have the same spirit as the builders of countless spiritual babels from that day to this.

undergone the necessary training and preparation. Their minds have been changed from 666 to 888.

I believe the number 144,000 should not be taken literally (as the Jehovah’s Witnesses do). We should not expect that there will be exactly 144,000 people standing on a literal Mount Zion, or belonging to some human organisation. Rather we should again consider the meaning of the number. These 144,000 are 12,000 out of each of the 12 tribes of Israel. As well as there being 12 tribes, Jesus chose 12 disciples. Also the new Jerusalem in chapter 20 has 12 foundations and 12 gates. Israel, the disciples, and the city of Jerusalem were all especially chosen by God. Bullinger says that 12 is the number of governmental perfection. I believe that the number 144,000 means a large company of those whom God has chosen to reign with Christ.

**v2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists harping on their harps.**

In this verse we find three suggestive descriptions of the sound (or voice) of the 144,000. Firstly it is like the sound of many waters. The same description is used of the voice of God in Ezekiel 43:2, and of the Son of Man in Revelation 1:15. Water means life. Many waters means abundant life. Neither man, nor animal, nor plant can live without water. The 144,000 will possess abundant spiritual life in themselves. They will impart this spiritual life to others. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.” The words that he spoke were “spirit and life”. The 144,000 will be like him. The words that they speak will bring life to those that hear. This is true already to some extent of those who are following Jesus, but the time is coming when it will be true in fullness. It will be true in a far greater measure than we have yet seen it.

Secondly their sound is like loud thunder. Thunder suggests authority and power. The voice of God at Sinai was accompanied by thunder when he announced the most authoritative revelation that man has ever been privileged to receive. Moses delivered the ten commandments, and the law that followed with the full authority of God. The 144,000 will, like Moses, be backed by the authority of God. They will not be new recruits to God’s army. They will be those whom God has trained and prepared and purified and made ready to receive his authority. They will be wholly qualified by their character to receive it.

## The Mind of Christ

We have considered the mind of the beast, and can now move to the happier task of considering the mind of Christ. In chapter 14 verses 1 to 5, immediately after the “666” verse at the end of chapter 13, John describes a vision of the 144,000 servants of God. We are first introduced to them in chapter 7 where they are described as 12,000 out of each of the tribes of Israel who are sealed on their foreheads.

The great characteristic of this company is that they are like Jesus. They were born in the likeness of Adam, but now they are wholly changed. Their transformation is complete. 666 has become 888. They have become like Jesus. God has acknowledged them as totally his by sealing them with his seal. These are people who have the mind of Christ.

Let us read these verses slowly and prayerfully, that we may catch a vision of God’s plan. I believe he is fulfilling it in the days in which we are now living. His 144,000 servants are now in training and preparation.

**v1. Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.**

What a remarkable contrast between this and the preceding verse! The mind of the beast is represented by the number (666) of a name. The mind of Christ is represented by a name that has a number (888). Numbers are impersonal things, well-suited to computers, but unnatural to humans! If you have the mind of the beast, you are only a number. No doubt you will be part of someone’s statistics. If you have the mind of Christ, you have a name. You have become a person and an individual in the sight of God. Your name is in the Lamb’s book of life.

These 144,000 stand on Mount Zion. The significance of this is clear from Isaiah chapter 2 verses 2 and 3: “**In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**” Those who stand on Mount Zion are those who will reign with Christ. They are fit to reign with him because they are of one mind with him. They have his mind. They are not raw recruits off the street. They have

No sooner were these words out of Nebuchadnezzar’s mouth than judgment fell. In the words of scripture, “**He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.**” And the words previously quoted, “**Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal**”, were fulfilled.

An animal (a beast) can have no idea of God. Spiritual and moral values are of no meaning to it. The number six represents man without God. The number **six six six** means **man man man**, a system that is totally man-centred and man-dominated. Everything is based on man’s thoughts and plans and schemes. There is no room for God in it.

For seven years he lived as an animal and ate grass until his reason returned to him. His last recorded words have quite a different spirit: “**Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**”

Nebuchadnezzar’s earlier career had been marked by the number 6. He built an image 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. The Philistine giant Goliath was strikingly similar to Nebuchadnezzar. He also boasted of himself and was marked with the number 6. He was 6 cubits tall and had a spear with an iron point weighing six hundred shekels. He also had 6 pieces of armour. His fate was more drastic in that rather than just receiving the mind of a beast for 7 years, his head was cut off altogether!

We might have expected a number related to 13 rather than 6 to be the number of the beast, as 13 is more associated with Satan whereas 6 is the number of man. A well known incident from the gospels helps us understand. Peter had a wonderful moment of revelation when he said “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**” to Jesus, Jesus replied, “**Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.**”

Very soon afterwards in the narrative, Peter gave Jesus some wise human advice about avoiding the way of the cross. Jesus turned and said to him, “**Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**” 666 represents man without God. Peter’s advice was 666, but Jesus saw it as directly from Satan. The truth is that man without God is man with Satan.

You cannot be neutral. You cannot opt to live with neither God nor

Satan. Any system or any life that gives no place to God is actually controlled by Satan, because he is the prince of this world.

## Buying and Selling

Now we must consider Revelation 13 verse 17, “No-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.”

We immediately wonder how we are going to survive if we take this verse literally. Where will we get our food? Will God do the same sort of miracles for us that he did for Elijah?

When these words were first written, I don't believe they would have struck terror into the hearts of those who read them. In agricultural societies most people produce their own food and even clothes. People did not need to buy and sell to live.

I cannot say for certain that this verse will not have a literal, physical fulfilment. However I believe we do better to look for its spiritual meaning.

The beast of verse 17 is the beast that came up out of the earth (as we read earlier in this chapter). The earth, as I will explain in more detail later, is a picture of those, believers or church members, who are not dwellers in heaven. They walk according to the flesh rather than the spirit. The earth is distinct from the sea, and also distinct from the heavens. The sea is the multitude of unbelievers and heathen (see Rev 17:15). The heavens are those who are seated with Christ in heavenly places. We can say that the earth represents the carnal church.

The carnal church is full of buying and selling. It is described later in the book of Revelation as a prostitute. The sexual act is an act of deep and intimate communion between husband and wife. It pictures the communion we should have with God. A prostitute is someone who takes this act, and uses it in a totally wrong way - outside marriage - to make money. In different ways throughout history, the church has done exactly the same thing. It has taken the things of God, and sold them for money. In previous times, priests offered forgiveness of sin in return for money. The church became unbelievably rich through the services it offered and the taxes it demanded. In modern times, evangelists will offer their healing gifts for money. “Mail me your love offering for God's work, and I will pray for God to heal you.” In some developing countries “pastors” become much richer than they would ever have been if they had stayed in a normal job. Well-

meaning churches from the west pour in money to “spread the gospel” and support the “work of God”. Direct and less direct lies are told to keep the money flowing.

I don't believe the real work of God has ever suffered from lack of funds! God never starts a building project that he has not got the finances to complete.

When anyone, openly or in a more hidden manner, uses the things of God to build up his own position, reputation or bank balance, he is, in the sight of God, a prostitute.

Chapter 18 of Revelation describes the fall of Babylon. In verse 3 we read: “For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” The chapter goes on to describe the immorality of the kings of the earth and the massive wealth of the merchants of the earth, and their great sorrow at the fall of Babylon.

In Bible times money did not have the same implications as it does now. In these days certainly in western society people cannot live without money. Most people live in cities and earn salaries with which they pay for their food and clothing and other needs. In ancient times most people could produce their own food and clothes and had little need of money. Merchants were “unproductive” people who bought what others had made or produced and transported it to somewhere else where they could sell it for a profit. Many of the goods described in Revelation 18 were luxury items.

We can see a spiritual parallel to this in those preachers and teachers who have no real word from God of their own. They take what they have heard in sermons and on tapes, and what they have read in books. They pass it on as if it were their own. They use it to build up their own reputation and status. Such people are marked with the number 666. They buy and sell in Babylon, and they will weep greatly when their Babylons fall.

The way of God is very different. The Spirit and the Bride (chapter 22 verse 17) issue an invitation to “take the water of life freely”. Someone once said, “Heaven gives, earth sells, hell robs.” God, and his true servants will always give. “Freely you have received”, Jesus said, “freely give.”

Those who have learnt to live in the heavens with Christ will not wish to buy and sell the things of God. They have received freely from their heavenly Father. They will give freely to all who want to receive from them.