

# End Times Prophecy 314: *the Mark of the Beast*



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## **Additional Insight into the Mark of the Beast**

In this study we will be considering some additional possibilities regarding Revelation 13:16-18's discussion of the mark of the beast.

**Revelation 13:**16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 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.

These verses convey a system involving purchasing and selling that is connected to spiritual acceptance. It is important to note that this main passage discussing the mark of the beast does not indicate that those who abstain from this system will be put to death. Rather, it is verse 15 which mentions putting to death, not those who don't receive the mark of the beast, but those who don't worship the beast or his image. Clearly, the establishment of worship of the beast and his image coincides nearly in time with the onset of the mark of the beast. After all both of the worship and the mark relate to the rise to prominence and authority of the beast and his image. A comparison of Revelation 14:9-13 and 13:7-10 supports this synchronicity of developments. However, while the beast, the image, and the mark of the beast are all related to one another and all involve some sort of false religion, we should note that Revelation 13 only specifically designates the death penalty for those who do not worship the beast or his image. It may be the case that those who refuse the mark of the beast are also killed, but this consequence is not indicated directly by the text. Instead, the passage introduces the mark of the beast only after prescribing the death penalty for those who refuse to worship the beast and his image.

The notion that Revelation 13 intends to convey the death penalty for those who don't receive the mark of the beast is dependent upon the idea that the mark of the beast system is meant to serve as a religious rite or gesture denoting one's spiritual allegiance to the beast and his image. Such a possibility is not very controversial, but it is important to note that this core connection emphasizes taking the mark of the beast as primarily a religious act conducted in the form of a financial one. The commercial limitations or capabilities would be secondary consequences imposed based on one's religious declarations.

With these foundational observations in mind, we can move on to perhaps more intriguing questions about Revelation 13's discussion of the mark of the beast. First, Revelation 13:17 declares that no man can buy or sell except those that have the mark of the beast, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

**Revelation 13:17** And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The next step in our investigation is to determine what may be meant by "the mark" which is received in the right hand or forehead.

As Revelation 13:16 explains the mark is received in the right hand or forehead. A comparison to Galatians 2:9 shows that the concept of being given something in the right hand corresponds with the idea of acceptance into fellowship and approval. It also can relay the notion of being sanctioned to teach including for the purpose of evangelism. Likewise, a comparison with Revelation 7:1-8, 9:4, 14:1, and 22:4 shows that having a name in one's forehead denotes being in spiritual allegiance with and under the protection of an authority. Additionally, it should be noted that Revelation 7:1-8 uses the idea of a seal rather than a mark. As passages like 1 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30 indicate, the concept of "sealing" represents the reception of the Holy Spirit by which we become part of the body of Christ. In the New Testament period, Christians normally received the Holy Spirit by having hands laid on them by an apostle or church elder. Acts 8:17 records an early instance of this practice. Another example can be found in Acts 9:12, 17-18 in which Paul is baptized by Ananias when Ananias lays hands on Paul and Paul receives the Holy Spirit. In verse 15, God tells Ananias that Paul will be God's instrument to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Because of this we ought to include Acts 13:1-4 (and verse 9) where the Holy Spirit instructs the prophets and teachers in Antioch to lay their hands on Paul and Barnabas to commission them for an apostolic mission to preach the gospel. To this list we can also add Acts 19:6, 1 Timothy 4:14, and 2 Timothy 1:6. Likewise, in accordance with Jesus' statements that the Holy Spirit would guide Jesus' followers into all truth (John 16:13), the Apostle John refers to receiving the Holy Spirit as "receiving the anointing which teaches them all things" (1 John 2:27). Here the Greek word for anointing is "chrisma" (5545) which relates to the old testament practice of anointing kings and priests with oil on their heads (Exodus 29:7, Leviticus 8:12, 1 Samuel 1:10, 1 Samuel 16:12, 1 Kings 1:34, 2 Kings 9:3, 6).

For comparison, the Greek word that is used for "mark" in Revelation 13:16-17 is "charagma" (5480). It refers to a stamp or imprinting of an image onto another object. It aptly parallels the idea of the sealing of God's people by the Holy Spirit both in Revelation and throughout the New Testament, which employ the Greek words "sphragis" (4973) and "sphragizo" (4972) to refer to a seal that is impressed on an object denoting royal authority or official approval. These concepts relate well to the ideas of "approved" or "reprobate" which are discussed in the New Testament in relation to accepted, correct teaching and apostolic

commission contrasted with false teachers and false doctrines. The words “approved” (“dokimos,” 1384) and “reprobate” (“adokimos,” 96) relate to the concept of coins denoting officially accepted and authorized currency in contrast to counterfeit, illegitimate currency. Officially authorized and approved coins had the seal or image of the king (Mark 12:16, Luke 20:24) and were solely authorized by the king for use in commerce, buying and selling.

These observations allow us to conclude that the mark of the beast is intended to be a counterfeit paralleling the spiritual significance and purpose of being sealed by and receiving of the Holy Spirit which was normally conducted through the laying on of hands while also paralleling the acceptance which was conveyed by giving the right hand of fellowship. These considerations lead us to think of the mark of the beast in terms related to religious devotion and acceptance into religious service and community. Both the mark of the beast and its godly parallel employ terminology related to monetary systems and currency (such as “dokimos” and “adokimos”). And yet, the application of such commercial terminology to the reception of the Holy Spirit and acceptance into church fellowship is nowhere taken to mean that Christians had their own system for purchasing and selling goods whereby outsiders were not allowed to participate.

These clear parallels to godly counterparts invite questions regarding the extent to which Revelation 13:16-18 intends for the mark of the beast to be understood as an economic institution. The key potential indicators of an actual system of commercial exchange come from the mention of “rich and poor” in verses 16-17 as well as the declaration that no man might buy or sell without the mark. Is it possible that these phrases should be related solely to religious and spiritual matters rather than to financial transactions?

Answering this question requires returning to Acts 8. Earlier we cited Acts 8 as an instance where new believers received the Holy Spirit by having the apostles lay their hands on them. It is important to note that this passage also contains the account of a man called Simon. Several details from this narrative are relevant to our discussion of the mark of the beast.

First, Acts 8:5-7 informs us that these events begin when Philip performed miracles among the people of Samaria by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of this the people all gave heed to Philip’s teaching. Second, Acts 8:9 and 11 introduce Simon to the narrative and denote that Simon was a man who used sorcery and bewitched the people of the area proclaiming himself to be someone great. Third, verse 10 states that the people, “from the least to the greatest,” had previously given heed to Simon and identified him as “the great power of God.” It is important to note that the terms “least” (3398) and “greatest” (3173) here in Acts 8:10 are the same exact Greek words translated as “smallest” and “greatest” in Revelation 13:16. Fourth, given his past, it is not surprising that verse 13 explains that Simon was particularly interested in Philip’s ability to perform miracles. Likewise, Acts 8:14-20 explains that Simon is intrigued that Peter and John had the power to give the Holy Spirit to people by laying their hands on them. Fifth, upon seeing this, Simon offers to buy this power from Peter and John

so that people could receive the Holy Spirit from him when he laid hands on them. We might also safely assume that Simon intended to likewise acquire the ability to do miracles just as he had seen Philip perform. (In contrast to Simon, the New Testament indicates that the Holy Spirit is a free gift from God that cannot be purchased, just as Peter himself states here in Acts 8:20. See also, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Acts 2:38, 10:45, 11:17, Romans 1:11, 1 Corinthians 1:7, Matthew 7:11 with Luke 11:13, Hebrews 6:4.)

Lastly, we should include that the spiritual ideas that Simon previously taught to the Samaritans are closely associated in the New Testament and early church with the religious system of the antichrist. Acts 8:9 uses the Greek word “mageuo” (3096) which is translated into the phrase “used sorcery.” This Greek verb means “to be a magician” and it comes from the noun “magos” (3097). It is necessary to recognize that this Greek term “magus” (3097) is the same as “magi” which is historically used to specify Babylonian or Chaldean wise men, sorcerers, and astrologers such as those mentioned in the Book of Daniel as well as in Revelation 17 and 18’s depiction of both the leading city of the False Prophet’s empire as well as his religious society itself. These chapters connect to the concept of the “magi” but their use of the imagery of the great harlot called “Mystery” and “Babylon the Great.” Earlier we looked at 1 John 2:20 and 27 which discuss the reception of the Holy Spirit. But, we should also note that John’s remarks come in the context of statements about antichrists who claim to have come from the apostles, but who didn’t remain in Christ’s teaching (1 John 2:18-24). Likewise, in his lengthy volume against Gnosticism, Irenaeus explains that the Simon of Acts 8 went on to be imminently significant in the origin of the beliefs and methods used by Greek mystics to dress their religion up in Christian terms and fuse them with Christian concepts.

In addition to Simon in Acts 8, there seems to be a wider historical trend in which heretical groups sold miraculous power and fellowship. We see hints of this trend in several early Christian writings, including a document known as the “Didache.” The title, “Didache” is usually translated to “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” and is dated to around 70 AD. According to the quotes below from the Didache, one of the marks of a false prophet is if they use their prophetic ability to bring about monetary gain for themselves. This idea of using supernatural ability for one’s own financial advantage is reflected in the two warnings that any prophet who asks for money” is a false prophet and any prophet who “ordereth a table in the Spirit” and himself goes on to “eat” of that table” is a false prophet. The author’s presumption is that in such cases the prophet has operated “in the Spirit” purely for his own material benefit.

**6 On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet...9 For instance, if a prophet marks out a table in the Spirit, he must not eat from it. If he does, he is a false prophet.** - ccel.org, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Commonly Called the Didache

And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges; but **if he ask money, he is a false prophet...And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit eats not from it, except indeed he be a false prophet.**" - newadvent.org, The Didache, Chapter 11. Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets

**Didache** – The Didache or **The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles** – is a brief early Christian treatise, **dated by most scholars to the mid to late first century.** – wikipedia.org

In addition, in Irenaeus massive work against Gnostic heretics, Irenaeus provides even more explicit evidence of this trend of trading spiritual acceptance and miracle-working power for financial gain.

CHAP. XIII.--THE DECEITFUL ARTS AND NEFARIOUS PRACTICES OF MARCUS. 1. But (2) there is another among these heretics, Marcus by name, who boasts himself as having improved upon his master. **He is a perfect adept in magical impostures**, and by this means drawing away a great number of men, and not a few women, he has induced them to join themselves to him, **as to one who is possessed of the greatest knowledge and perfection, and who has received the highest power from the invisible and ineffable regions above. Thus it appears as if he really were the precursor of Antichrist.**

Here Irenaeus speaks of "magical impostures" among the heretical Gnostic sects. Two paragraphs later, Irenaeus goes on to describe what these "magical impostures" were.

CHAP. XIII.--THE DECEITFUL ARTS AND NEFARIOUS PRACTICES OF MARCUS. 3. **It appears probable enough that this man possesses a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of whom he seems able to prophesy,** (6) and also enables as many as he counts worthy **to be partakers of his Charis themselves to prophesy.** He devotes himself especially to women, **and those such as are well-bred, and elegantly attired, and of great wealth,** whom he frequently seeks to draw after him, by addressing them in such seductive words as these: **"I am eager to make thee a partaker of my Charis..."**

In the two quotes above, Irenaeus describes the Gnostic leader Marcus who he regards as “adept in magical impostures” but also as having “a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of whom he seems able to prophesy.” According to Irenaeus, he “also enables as many as he counts worthy to be partakers of his Charis themselves to prophesy.” Here we see the ability to prophecy referred to using the word “Charis,” which is reminiscent of the New Testament Greek word “charisma” that is used in 1 Corinthians 12-14 to refer to miraculous gifts. However, Irenaeus goes on to identify just what type of people that Marcus “counts worthy to be partakers of his Charis” and he identifies them as “such as are well-bred, and elegantly attired, and of great wealth, whom he frequently seeks to draw after him” with “seductive words” saying, “I am eager to make thee a partaker of my Charis.” The fact that Marcus particularly sought to bestow

prophetic abilities on wealthy people unavoidably implies that Marcus was seeking financial compensation as part of the exchange.

We also find evidence for this trend in the writings of Asterius Urbanus around the year 230 AD, whose words are preserved as excerpts quoted by the fourth-century historian Eusebius. Below is the basic biographical information regarding Asterius Urbanus and Eusebius. Notice in particular, that Asterius Urbanus is writing against a group known as the Montanists, whose leader was a man named Montanus.

**Asterius Urbanus, Introductory Notice** – Lardner is quite undecided as to this author, though he accepts Tillemont's conjecture as probable; viz., that **the Asterius Urbanus mentioned by Eusebius is the author of the fragments, and that his work against the Montanists was written in the eleventh year of the Emperor Alexander, circa 232.** – <http://www.ccel.org/>

**Eusebius of Caesarea** – AD 260/265 – 339/340), also known as Eusebius Pamphili. – [Wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius_of_Caesarea)

The overall picture of the practices of Montanus is spelled out in several passages. In the passage below, we see that Montanus “appointed collectors of money; who contrived the receiving of gifts under the name of offerings; who provided salaries for those who preached his doctrine, that its teaching might prevail through gluttony.”

1 As the so-called Phrygian heresy was still flourishing in Phrygia in his time, Apollonius also, an ecclesiastical writer, undertook its refutation, and wrote a special work against it, correcting in detail the false prophecies current among them and reproving the life of the founders of the heresy. But hear his own words respecting **Montanus**: 2 "His actions and his teaching show who this new teacher is. This is he who taught the dissolution of marriage; who made laws for fasting; who named Pepuza and Tymion, small towns in Phrygia, Jerusalem, wishing to gather people to them from all directions; **who appointed collectors of money; who contrived the receiving of gifts under the name of offerings; who provided salaries for those who preached his doctrine, that its teaching might prevail through gluttony.**" (Chapter XVI. *The Circumstances Related of Montanus and His False Prophets.*)

Montanus' practices regarding financial gain are, of course, despicable enough on their own. But additional quotes from Asterius Urbanus show that Montanus also engaged in prophetic displays.

17 And those few who were thus deluded were Phrygians. But the same arrogant spirit taught them to revile the Church universal under heaven, because that false spirit of prophecy found neither honour from it nor entrance into it. **For when the faithful throughout Asia met together often and in many places of Asia for deliberation on this subject, and subjected those novel doctrines to examination, and declared them to be spurious, and rejected them as**

**heretical, they were in consequence of that expelled from the Church and debarred from communion.**<sup>18</sup> (*The Extant Writings of Asterius Urbanus*, From Book I.)

12 There, they say, one of those who had been but recently converted to the faith, a person of the name of Montanus, when Gratus was proconsul of Asia, gave the adversary entrance against himself by the excessive lust of his soul after taking the lead. **And this person was carried away in spirit; 13 and suddenly being seized with a kind of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to speak and to utter strange things, and to prophesy in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church, as handed down from early times and preserved thenceforward in a continuous succession.** (*The Extant Writings of Asterius Urbanus*, From Book I.)

**"But the false prophet falls into a spurious ecstasy,** which is accompanied by a want of all shame and fear. **For beginning with a voluntary (designed) rudeness, he ends with an involuntary madness of soul,** as has been already stated. **But they will never be able to show that any one of the Old Testament prophets, or any one of the New, was carried away in spirit after this fashion.** Nor will they be able to boast that Agabus, or Judas, or Silas, or the daughters of Philip, or the woman Ammia in Philadelphia, or Quadratus, or indeed any of the others who do not in any respect belong to them, were moved in this way." (*The Extant Writings of Asterius Urbanus*, From Book III. IX.)

From the three quotes above, we can see that Montanus was not only excommunicated by the church as a false prophet but also that he was often "carried away in spirit" and "seized with a kind of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to speak and to utter strange things, and to prophesy in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church, as handed down from early times and preserved thenceforward in a continuous succession." Consequently, like Marcus, here again we seem to have a heretical man who was strategically and systematically trying to use prophetic abilities to attract followers that would pay him for his prophetic ministry.

In light of these historical records, it is easy to see how the earliest Christians might have interpreted the description of the mark of the beast in Revelation 13 in terms of the trends that they had seen among heretics such as Simon and others who attempted to buy and sell supernatural ability and spiritual acceptance. These observations establish clear connections and parallels between Acts 8 and Revelation 13. Acts 8's record of Simon is identified with the false religious system that will be in full bloom in the end times and which is described in passages such as Revelation 13 and 17-18. Both passages are concerned with the idea of what people worship, their spiritual allegiance, false prophets, false religion, and the ability to perform miracles. Both passages (Acts 8:10 and Revelation 13:16-17) specifically denote the acceptance of false religion by the "least or smallest (3398) to the greatest (3137)" using the exact same Greek terms. And both passages mention the ability to buy or sell in the context of religious acceptance (receiving in the hand or the forehead, the laying on of hands) and the

ability to perform miracles. With these clear parallels in mind it is possible to consider that Revelation 13:16-17 may refer to persons who buy and sell the right to bestow miraculous abilities and buy or sell the reception of antichrist spirits from false prophets similar to those John warns about in 1 John 4:1.

We can now return to Revelation 13:11-18 and attempt an interpretation of the passages with these factors in mind.

**Revelation 13:11** And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And **he doeth great wonders**, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 **And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do** in the sight of the beast; **saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast**, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 **And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast**, that the image of the beast should both speak, **and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.** 16 **And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:** 17 **And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.** 18 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.

In accordance with our Prophetic Symbols study and Daniel's use of beasts, we can see that the passage begins by introducing a prominent figure over a great imperial power in the end times. However, as the passage depicts, this political leader will possess supernatural abilities. These abilities notably include being able "to make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men."

Several details indicate that this phrase can be understood to refer to angelic beings coming down from heaven for the world to see. First, the Greek word for "fire" is "pur" (4442). It is used in Revelation 4:5 where we find seven angelic spirits described as lamps of fire ("pur," 4442). Similarly, as we discuss in our Revelation Chronology study, the casting out of Satan and his angels from heaven is also presented using both figurative and plain language in the series of seven trumpets. The plain language version of their expulsion can be found in Revelation 12. The figurative language concerning their expulsion can be found in the seven trumpets. While the last three trumpets record their expulsion using plain language, the first trumpet uses the symbolic imagery of fire ("pur," 4442) mingled with blood being cast to the earth (Revelation 8:7). Likewise, the second trumpet marks the casting down of a great mountain burning with fire ("pur," 4442). Similar concepts are found in Hebrews 1:7 and Hebrews 12:18 and 22 as well as Psalms 104:1 and Deuteronomy 33:1-2. (For more information regarding the use of fire to describe angels, see addendum 2 to our Trinity Study.) Such

passages clearly indicate that angelic beings, whose substance can be compared to fire, can at times be referred to enigmatically simply as fire.

Furthermore, Revelation 13:15 declares that the False Prophet will be able to “give life unto the image of the beast.” Here, the Greek word translated as “life” is not “zoe.” Instead, it is the word “pneuma” (4151) or “spirit.” This language depicting “spirit” being put into an “image” is reminiscent of God’s impartation of spirit into the body of man when he created Adam in Genesis 2. And as we discuss in greater detail in our other eschatological studies, Revelation 13:15’s reference to “spirit being given to the image of the beast” is meant to describe the reception of the angelic figure (identified elsewhere in Revelation with the titles the beast, Abaddon, Apollyon, or Hell) by the human figure known elsewhere as the antichrist. In this way, we can see that Revelation 13:15 is providing a presiding and defining instance of the False Prophet giving an antichrist spirit to a human being. This is the pinnacle example of the devil counterfeiting the reception of the Holy Spirit by Christ’s followers. Even more directly this “giving of spirit” to the image of the beast parallels the point when the Holy Spirit visibly descended from heaven and rested upon Jesus at his baptism by the prophet John the Baptist. Here, the False Prophet anoints the human antichrist with the antichrist spirit.

(For the sake of clarity, it should perhaps be noted that although Revelation 9:11 explains that the specific angelic spirit who “anoints” the antichrist or, “image of the beast,” will ascend from a period of imprisonment within the earth, Revelation 12 also plainly attests in other places that a large body of satanic angels remain in heaven awaiting their expulsion.)

It is reasonable then to consider that Revelation 13:13 is informing us that the False Prophet will amaze men by performing an unprecedented display whereby he is involved in presenting angelic beings from heaven before men on earth. At the same time as these angels come down, Revelation 8:10-9:1-2 and 11 explain that other satanic angels will be released from their confinement within the abyss. One of these satanic angel kings will be given to (or anoint) the human antichrist as Revelation 13:15 describes. These world-changing developments will result in the promulgation of false religion through miracles and deception causing many to worship the satanic angels (as Colossians 2:18, 2 Corinthians 11:14, and Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 indicate). In other words, this satanic religious system will involve the devil and his angels coming down from heaven, the release of other prominent fallen angels from the abyss one of whom will be presented as the Christ spirit, a prominent political figure functioning as its chief prophet, another world political leader who is anointed by the False Prophet with the “false Christ spirit” so that he becomes the antichrist (or false Christ). People will be induced to worship these beings. As 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 informs us, even those who consider themselves to be followers of Christ will be deceived and enticed by the false miracles. In addition, these two political figures will have the authority to institute a law whereby those who refuse to worship the satanic angel and the human antichrist will be put to death. The geographic scope of this law will certainly at least include the empire of the antichrist, but it may also have

some worldwide expression as passages like Revelation 13:7, 7:9-14, and 14:12-13 may indicate.

This is the information that can be gained from Revelation 13:11-15. In verse 16 we are presented with statements about “small and great,” “rich and poor,” “free and bond,” receiving a mark in their right hand or foreheads so that no one can buy or sell except those that have the mark, or name of the beast, or number of his name.

We have already seen that Acts 8:10 uses the same phrase with regard to “small and great” who heeded Simon the Magus and regarded him as the “great power of God.” And we have seen that the ability to give and receive spirits to endow men with miraculous abilities was something that Simon’s experience with the mystery religion of the Magi led him to think could be bought or sold. With this precedent in mind, it is possible to understand Revelation 13:16-17 to indicate the establishment of a religious system wherein men use money or material goods to purchase for themselves the reception of an antichrist spirit, enabling them to both perform miracles. Conversely, this religious system would also involve those who already have an antichrist spirit to sell the dispensing of such antichrist spirits and miracle-working power to others in exchange for monetary or material gain. In this way, only those who have been inducted into this religious system will receive antichrist spirits and perform miraculous works. For many, if not everyone, whether rich or poor, small or great, bond or free, participation in miracle working power may be restricted solely to those willing to pay the monetary price just as Simon the Magus conceived. However, those who don’t pay may still be accepted into fellowship so long as they worship the beast and his image. Moreover, the requirement that this false anointing be purchased using money not only fits with Simon’s expectations, but it would sharply and appropriately contrast with the true anointing received through faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit who is given as a gift from the Father and not something that has to be bought or earned.

The establishment of such a religious system fits well with Revelation 17-18’s description of the False Prophet’s empire as comprised of the rich men and merchants of the earth, a group whose religious history includes the Babylonian magi who ruled over the ancient empires of Babylon, Persia, and others. Additionally, this interpretation of Revelation 13:11-18 would fit well with the proclamation in the Olivet Discourse of the appearance of many false Christs and false prophets in the final years of this age. Revelation 13 provides an explanation of the emergence of these men who are both anointed by antichrist spirits and who serve as false prophets and false Christs (anointed ones). Chief among them are the figure identified as the False Prophet and the Antichrist.

It is also possible that Revelation 13:17’s statement about the ability to buy and sell conveys both a real commercial power as well as the spiritual allegiance that alone authorizes the use of that economic system. As we discuss in our study on the Phoenicians and the 7th Empire it is clear from Revelation 17-18 that the False Prophet’s role will include actual political and economic authority. But,

given the nature of the clear parallels between the mark of the beast and the New Testament's treatment of the Holy Spirit and Christian fellowship it is possible that Revelation 13:16-18 may not be indicating the existence of any worship-based financial institution at all. Rather the economic transactions mentioned in Revelation 13:17 may only be concerned with entering into upper echelons of the religious community of the satanic angels, the False Prophet, and the Antichrist without any indication that there will be any regional or worldwide commercial or trade system restricted only to those who give allegiance to this false religion. In other words, it is reasonable and conceivable that in most or all of the nations of the end times all commerce and economic activities will remain entirely unaffected by these religious developments. And, purchasing and trade will not in any way be restricted or affected by the religious system presented in Revelation 13. This conclusion is further supported by strong and repeated indications that, for many, the end times will come without being noticed (Matthew 24:38). By contrast, the sudden establishment of a new financial system dependent upon religious devotion would certainly seem to cause suspicion and set off alarms, especially in cultures where the mark of the beast and 666 have become familiar icons and even caricatures in pop culture.

Additional support may come from Jesus' parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. In passages such as Acts 1, Revelation 1, Revelation 11, and 1 John 2 connections are made between the imagery of lamps lit by oil and Christians filled by the Holy Spirit. The parable of the ten virgins is directly stated to have eschatological significance. It is intended to provide instructions for Christ's followers as they await his coming. In the parable Christians are portrayed as ten virgins with lamps. All the virgins fall asleep, but when the call comes announcing the bridegroom's coming, they awake. However, only some of them have enough oil. Those who don't are told to go and buy some from those who sell. This fits with the interpretation that Revelation 13:16-17 presents people who, like Simon in Acts 8, will not have the Holy Spirit (oil, anointing), and so will resort to buying miraculous powers acquired from satanic (antichrist) spirits. The end result of the ten virgins is the same as those who accept the mark of the beast. They are refused entrance into the wedding feast.

In conclusion, Revelation 13:16-18 could possibly be intended solely to describe the establishment of a satanic religious community meant to parallel Christ's church. This religious system will be complete with the reception of supernatural powers enabled by spiritual beings counterfeiting the manner in which the New Testament apostles, elders, and larger church community received by the power of the Holy Spirit. This possibility is also supported by the fact that Revelation 13:11-15 are primarily focused not on economic transactions, but on men and angels preaching a false gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4 and Galatians 1:6-7), upon the giving of the spirit of Abaddon to the antichrist (Revelation 13:15), and the performance of miraculous works by a figure elsewhere identified as a False Prophet (Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10), a title which clearly conveys a religious and spiritual agenda. While the instituting of an accompanying financial system is not an unreasonable deduction, such an institution may not necessarily be

conveyed and may not be anticipated by the information contained in Revelation 13.

Within the greater New Testament precedent, Revelation 13 is presenting how first one man, the antichrist, receives the spirit of the antichrist thereby becoming the image of the beast. Here, the depiction parallels not only the creation of Adam but more directly Christians being recreated in the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:49, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:10). Moreover, Revelation is conveying that others likewise receive “spirit” in a similar fashion after the manner of the antichrist under a false religious system. In this way, we see that, having received the mark of the beast, people in the end times will become accepted within the false religion of the antichrist and false prophet (through the giving of the right hand of fellowship) and endowed with supernatural abilities (through the laying on of hands by someone who has purchased the right to sell this power).

Incidentally, besides Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10, the only time the Greek word for “false prophet” (“pseudoprophetes,” 5578) occurs in the singular in the New Testament is Acts 13:6. There Luke mentions a man who opposed (“anthistemi,” 436) Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel. Like Simon in Acts 8, this “false prophet” is identified as a “magos” (3097) or “sorcerer.” His opposition to Paul and Barnabas can be compared to Jannes and Jambres, two Egyptian wise men that 2 Timothy 3:8 likewise states opposed (“anthistemi,” 436) Moses (and Aaron). These texts provide further insight into the dynamic that will exist between the two witnesses (prophets) of Revelation 11:3-10 and the political leader known as the False Prophet who heads the mystery religion and also deceives people through false miracles just as the wise men of Egypt sought to oppose Moses and Aaron with their false miracles.

Having identified what the mark and its reception likely refer to we are left to consider further the significance of Revelation 13:17-18’s reference to the name of the beast, the number of his name, and the number of the beast.

We can begin by stating that the number of the name of the beast is not a secret. It is openly declared and well-known to be 666. It does not take wisdom to know what the number of his name will be. It takes wisdom to count his number using the practice of isopsephy whereby each name in Koine Greek has a total numeric equivalent based on the numeric value of the Greek letters used in the name.

Because the number of the name of the beast is identified and well-known it will not likely be used by the False Prophet or any subordinate false prophets working to spread deception and false religion. To use 666 as an identification method for their religious system would seriously undermine their deceptive effort by calling attention to the system as that of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13. From these considerations it seems extremely unlikely that the number 666 will be used (received or had) in the religion of the false prophet. Instead, it seems more likely that what will be used and promoted will be the name from which the number is produced.

John gives us the number so that by wise consideration we may identify the name even though we don't participate in the system and thereby we may avoid the man from whose name this number is produced and avoid being deceived by the religious system associated with him. By considering the purpose and outcome of Revelation providing the number, we have some basis for considering how the name of the beast and the number of his name will be used to promote the false religious system of the antichrist and its acceptance.

As we discussed earlier, there is good reason to conclude that having or receiving the mark of the beast refers to a sort of ritual of acceptance similar to giving the right hand of fellowship or the laying on of hands. We should note that in the Greek, Revelation 13:16 uses "didomi" (1325) meaning "to give" rather than a word meaning "to receive." However, in the four other cases in which Revelation refers to "receiving" the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9, 14:11, 19:20, and 20:4) it uses the contrasting Greek word "lambano" (2983) which refers to "taking hold with the hand" or "to receive, to accept" and "to take to one's self" or "make one's own." So, Revelation 13 seems to speak of those who can "give" the mark of the beast whereas subsequent verses refer to those who receive the mark of the beast. This may distinguish between the authorized distributors (such as false apostles and elders) and recipients (converts and ordinary believers).

What then does it mean to give the name of the beast or to have the number of his name? Or in the subsequent verses, what does it mean to "receive" the name of the beast or the number of his name? Why list the name of the beast and the number of the beast separately? Are the name of the beast and the number of his name to be distinguished from one another just as they are from the "mark" that is given in the right hand or forehead?

Though not impossible, it would perhaps be difficult to consider the name and the number separate from each other given that verse 18 directly conjoins them by referring to the "number of the beast" and then using isopsephy to indicate the name of a man. Here both the name of the beast and the number of his name seem to be referred to together using the combined term "the number of the beast." Likewise Revelation 15:2 lists the beast, the image of the beast, the mark of the beast, and the number of his name as separate items. Here we do not see the name of the beast and number of his name listed separately. Rather, the two terms mentioned in Revelation 13:17 seem to be subsumed under the single title "number of his name" which Revelation 13:17 first introduces after speaking of the "name of the beast" and then Revelation 13:18 replaces with "the number of the beast" which is a reference to a man's name. Revelation 15:2 then indicates a distinction between the mark of the beast and the number of his name, but no distinction between the name of the beast and the number of his name. These considerations allow us to take Revelation 13:17's references to the "name of the beast" and the "number of his name" and Revelation 13:18's "number of the beast" as different terms for the same thing.

The “number of the name of the beast” must be understood not simply as the number 666, but as the name of a man which produces this number. How then is the “number of the name of the beast” used to convey acceptance and participation in the false religion of the antichrist and false prophet under the satanic angels?

Here, it seems simple enough that they are using the name of the false Christ (perhaps alongside the name of the angelic antichrist spirit) in the “marking” (“laying on of hands” or baptismal process) in the same way that baptism in the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands was conducted in the name of Christ or in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (By extension, they could also be taking a name for their religion or religious society that is derived from the human antichrist’s name just as the term Christian is used to denote followers of Jesus Christ.) If this is the case, then Revelation 13 and other passages in Revelation which use these terms are not speaking of a financial system whereby the ability to buy and sell any kind of goods and services requires some kind of insignia or device held in (or placed in) the hand or kept in the mind (forehead). Rather, these passages speak of the religious rite whereby one comes to accept the false teaching of the false prophet and false prophets, receives another spirit (besides the Holy Spirit), and becomes part of a religious system and society that worships the satanic angels (Apollyon in particular) and the man who is the false Christ or antichrist. To be a member of or accept this religious system warrants God’s absolute and irrevocable condemnation.

Moreover, the inclusion of Acts 8’s account of Simon Magus into our discussion of this subject may indicate that even though the poor are also targeted and can be received into this community through a pledge of religious devotion, those with wealth to spend on buying into this power will be more likely to be susceptible to these temptations even as the bible elsewhere indicates that the poor will inherit the earth while the wealthy are not likely to do so. There is the real possibility that while God freely gives the gift of his Holy Spirit to all who believe, the false prophet’s satanic religion will require an actual monetary transaction at least for those who wish to have the power to possess and dispense real, supernatural power just as Simon Magus expresses in Acts 8.

While this understanding of the mark of the beast and Revelation 13 would lessen the chapter’s contribution to the conclusion that the False Prophet is the head of great commercial power, indications of his economic prowess and authority are still easily and clearly attested to in Revelation 17 and 18. So, the association of the False Prophet as both a political and economic authority remain intact and established by other clear passages. In addition, any individual who sits at the top of a religion that requires monetary payment in exchange for fellowship and spiritual power would certainly possess great financial influence by mere virtue of that system.