

frighten or to warn. It was to encourage. **So, how does 666 encourage the disciples?**

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Doomed to Failure

AP: The disciples might have felt they were **doomed to failure**—after all, **how could they dare stand against the power and wiles of the Roman government in all its power?** But in truth, encoded in their very DNA was the truth: they were the ones **doomed to failure**. In their strength—in their seeming victories—their loss was ensured.

RM 16.19-20 ~ *For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

CONCLUSION – What That Means to Us

ILL—Triskaidekaphobia Card (it’s a perfect recreation of a theme; it’s spooky; it’s frightening; and it seems powerful) But here’s the truth that the average person doesn’t realize in looking at it: it’s a bad card. It looks powerful, but it’s really not. It seems terrifying, but in the game, there are a thousand ways to make sure its abilities never trigger. It seems powerful. But in reality, it’s anything but.

“Hex-uh-koh-see-oy-hex-eh-kohn-tuh-hex-uh-fo-bee-uh”—the fear of the number, **“666”** is just like it. It seems frightening from the outside. It seems powerful to the naïve and the gullible. But God reveals the truth—like the Roman authority it represented, it appears powerful, but in reality, its power is non-existent.

So, what does 666 mean to us? It isn’t a sign of fear. It isn’t a sign of power. It’s a sign of failure. Those who would marshal against God and His people—even they be mighty as Rome, herself—are **doomed to failure**.

And we? We are guaranteed success.

RV 12.10-12 ~ *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”*

INVITATION

#666 [Top-NTH]
09/08/2025

Hexakosioihexekontahehexaphobia
PC __ Pchd _____

RV 13.18

QUESTION: What is 666? And what does it mean to the Christian?

TRN TO RV 13

INTRODUCTION

ILL—Triskaidekaphobia Card (one of my favorite cards; the art is amazing—filled with several items that are repeated 13 times in the art; rules text perfectly creates a **“fear of 13”** in the player) But there’s another reason I love it—which I’ll get to later.

FEAR/Triskaidekaphobia/Origin of the Word

FEAR/Triskaidekaphobia/Origin of the Fear

The fear of the number 13 is shown in many areas—Friday the 13th is still considered the unluckiest of days, and buildings often skip the 13th floor (going from 12 to 14—which I’d argue isn’t how numbers work).

FEAR/Triskaidekaphobia/Vehicle Registration Plates in Ireland

It’s amazing to me how afraid people can be of a simple number. And yet, while the number 13 may be the root of the common phobia, triskaidekaphobia, there’s another number, entirely that’s the source of another phobia: **“Hex-uh-koh-see-oy-hex-eh-kohn-tuh-hex-uh-fo-bee-uh”**.

BACKGROUND

RV is considered by many people to be one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand. There are thousands of people who preach thousands of lessons and have written thousands of books on the topic. Last year, our Wednesday evening adult Bible class was focused on the book—a deep dive into a deep topic.

When we turn to **RV 13**, we see a chapter filled with numbers: **“10 horns”**, **“7 heads”**, **“10 diadems”**, **“42 months”**, **“2 lamb’s horns”**, and one final number: the number **666**. The number’s made an appearance in movies like **“Pulp Fiction”**, **“The Phantom of the Opera”**, and likely most famously, in **“The Omen”**. In each case, the number stands as a sign of immense evil and demonic power and authority.

As a result, people who don’t even know the names of the four Gospels know **“the number of the Beast”**. But on this Sunday before Halloween, as we have our homes and cars decorated in ghouls, ghosts, and goblins, the question arrives: **why do so many suffer from “Hex-uh-kohs-ee-oy-hex-eh-kohn-tuh-hex-uh-fo-bee-uh”?** **What is 666? And what does it mean to the Christian?**

BD1: What it Isn’t – What We See in the Media

Before we can talk about what it is, though, we first must talk about **what it isn’t**. And I’m going to have to take this at speed, because more theories

and books have been written about the meaning of “666” than just about anything else in **RV**.

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Barclay, William

Being the number of the Beast, **should we be surprised that it's been twisted to be a reference to each person's own archenemy?** Be it Hitler, Ronald Reagan, Donald Trump, or the pope, the number of the beast has been used to lay blame and attack at the feet of people of every philosophy and stripe.

Some have argued that this “**mark**” or “**number of the beast**” is digital currency, the blockchain, barcodes, or the “**www**” in a website's URL. But all of these would have been sheer nonsense to the early Christians who were the original audience of letter. And as a result, they should all be abandoned. For the Mark of the Beast isn't **what we see in the media**

AP: It can be tempting to focus on these kinds of unique and interesting philosophies. But while they may sound interesting, they are foreign to Scripture, and are ultimately foolish and damaging—no matter how entertaining they may be in popular Christian fiction novels and movies.

1TM 6.20-21 ~ *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.*

BD2: What it Is – A Sign of Ownership

So, what is it? Let's do something audacious: let's look to the passage, itself, to see if it can tell us **what it is**. The chapter begins by looking at a “**beast of the sea**”—a terrifying and mighty creature of power and authority. Following the vision of this “**beast**”, John's vision turns to another.

RV 13.11-14 ~ *Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.*

EX: This second beast—the beast of the earth—is the topic for the second half of **RV 13**. The nation of Rome was considered to have two aspects: a nation with power over sea and power over land. It had power over all of the civilized world in the first century. And it used that power against the church: *And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right*

hand or the forehead,¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. (RV 13.15-17)

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Different Theories for the Mark

EX: The mark of the beast was a **sign of ownership**—of submission. To wear it was to show submission to the beast: to evil, anti-Christian Rome and her powers. It was a sign that a choice had been offered and made: **God, or Rome?** *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (MT 6.24)*

AP: We like to believe we can ride the boundary line—serve God when it's easy, and not when it's hard. But the Christians in the 1st Century had learned that wasn't the case. A decision had to be made. And that decision is before us today, as well: *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (RM 12.1-2)*

BD3: What it Means – Doomed to Failure

OK, but what did it mean? Even John makes it clear that it's going to take some extra thought to understand: *This calls for wisdom (RV 13.18a)* He's about to declare something that will take some thought to understand—to be able to see things the way that God sees them.

RV 13.18b ~ *let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.*

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Different Theories for the Number

EX: Others point to the word translate “**calculate**”—**ψηφισάτω** (*psay-phi-SAH-toe*). It's a word used in complex math and in voting. This has led some to point to the idea of “**gematria**”—where letters are used in place of numbers as a kind of code.

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Irenaeus' Opinion

His interpretation is but one of many. The problem with “**gematria**” is that, by choosing your own values for numbers, you can make almost anything total up to 666. If you take the letter “**E**”, and make its value be 74, “**L**”, and make it 178, “**M**” and make its value 192, and “**O**”, and make its value 222, what do you get? 666! But no one argues that Elmo is the beast.

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Nero

REVELATION/The Number of the Beast/Failings of Gematria

But is “gematria” the only best option for telling us what “666” means? I'd argue that it could be correct, but there may be a simpler meaning that doesn't require advanced degrees in math. Key to understanding the book of Revelation is understanding its goal: it wasn't to