Conformity Is A Choice — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 13:11–18 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 20, 2022 · *Kingdoms in Conflict*

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So we are very fortunate. If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Revelation, chapter 13. If you're new today, you need to know as our church, as a church. We've been in this book of the Revelation, the last book of the New Testament since Easter of last year, or really March of last year. So we're coming up on a year and we typically do that in our church. We pick a book of the Bible, we preach through it line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter.

Some people love that, some people hate that. One of the reasons that I'm committed to it is because I think that the Holy Spirit doesn't inspire my words. He inspires God's words and God's words are in the scripture. And God's word says of God's word that it is inspired by God. It is profitable for teaching and training and righteousness. So, you know, I can come up with a cute outline or maybe some cute idea and use some Bible verses to support it, but that at the end of the day is not going to change your life.

Because I'm just a man just like you're a man or a woman. What God will change your life is the Spirit of God using the Word of God or God's truth to confront you and transform you. And that's one of the reasons I'm committed to what's called expository preaching. But the goal, my goal this morning is to just repeat what God says in his word. That the main point of my sermon will be the main point of this text. And then God through that will instruct your life. The problem with expository preaching is you don't get to pick and choose what you're going to be speaking on week to week.

You just whatever's next is what you're speaking on. And as we've gone through the book of the Revelation, some of these sections that we've come up on are very complicated, very challenging to teach and preach. They're very challenging just to understand, period. They're the kind of passages I said last week that people make YouTube careers out of because

there's so much conjecture and so much you know speculation that s anybody who speaks with certainty seems like an expert and people are drawn to them and there's all sorts of division and debate and just flat out craziness on some of the issues that we're looking at today.

So if you're new to church, first know that about our church. That's how we do it. We just expository preaching. Two, today's sermon is not a normal sermon. Okay, so if you hate the sermon. Just come back next week. I should probably wait three weeks, then come back. And then I'm kidding, not three weeks, but for sure wait till next week. This is going to feel a little maybe feels a little bit academic even. I'm going to try my best not to make it academic, but it may feel like what does this have to do with my day-to-day life?

And so just hang with me, it does have to do with your day-to-day life. But the book of Revelation deals with the future, at least from my point of view, we're dealing with yet to have happened events. Some people think that happened in the past and they have good reasons for believing that. But my particular perspective and the way I've been preaching it is that these are future events that have yet to happen. But just because they're future doesn't mean they're not relevant. And some of the ways that we're going to see Satan and the world work in the future are the ways that Satan has worked in the past and really the way that the world has gone.

From the very beginning. And you we've seen this throughout this series. In chapter twelve we started this new series called Kingdoms in conflict. Because chapter twelve and thirteen are talking about this spiritual conflict. That's at work in the world. And a lot of the reasons you struggle in life are not just because your boss is mean and you didn't get you didn't get a break when you were sixteen, thirteen, fourteen years old. A lot of them, the opposition that you sense in your life is spiritual opposition because there's a spiritual war raging on all around you and you're on the front lines of that spiritual warfare.

And particularly if you consider yourself a Christian person, so much of the difficulty that you face in life is not just the world being difficult, it's that you are in the midst of a battle. What we saw in chapter 12, for those of you who weren't with us the last couple of weeks, is that ultimately through the cross, Jesus Christ defeated Satan and demons and ended the war. And so this kingdom conflict is not really a conflict in the traditional sense. It would be like Britney Spears going up against Muhammad Ali in a boxing match.

I mean there's no contest. Muhammad Ali's going to knock her out. That's kind of a weird thought anyway, to the man hitting a girl, but it's the first name that came to my head. But it's the point is there's there's no real contest but because Satan knows he's a defeated foe and he knows his time is short, his goal is to do the most amount of damage as he possibly can before his time is up. And that time up being when Jesus returns. To the earth. And so what we've tried to do last week and what we'll do again this week is to study the playbook of

Satan and demons, that evil spiritual kingdom that is opposing God and his people in the world.

And we saw last week and what we'll see again this week is that Satan has two primary tools or two primary agendas to squash what God's doing in the world and to thwart. God's people advancing his kingdom on the earth. And it's the two things that your mama or your mother-in-law told you to never bring up together at the dinner table or Thanksgiving or Christmas. What's the two things they said? No, don't bring this up at the dinner table. What was it? Number— politics and religion. Politics and religion. Exactly. Has anybody ever broken that rule before?

Yep, me too. It was so fun to watch, but it was not ultimately good for our family. So they have reasons for saying do not bring up politics and religion. But during the end of days, that's exactly what Satan's going to do. He's going to have an unholy mixing. Of politics and religion. And we looked at this last week. Really, in chapter twelve, Satan is presented as this dragon. In chapter 13, the dragon who is Satan has two other beasts. That carry out his will. The first one is this evil end times government that is headed by a figure.

We're just going to, for sake of argument, we're going to call that figure the antichrist. That's how the Bible refers to him in other places like 1 John and elsewhere. So you've got an antichrist in his kingdom. That's the politics side of things. And then what we're going to see today in chapter 13, verses 11 to 18, is the religion side of things. And we're going to call this guy the false prophet. Or false religion. And Satan the dragon is using those two pawns to advance his agenda in the world.

Now he's doing that now, in our day and age, but my thinking, what Revelation is talking about is that at the end of the day, at the end of days. That final time period before Jesus comes again, you could even say a literal three-and-a-half-year time period of this great tribulation on the earth, there will be so much suffering because Satan is using government and religion to crush God's people and advance his agenda. Alright, so let's read, let's read chapter 13, verses 11 to 18, and then we'll just go through it line by line like we always do.

So chapter 13, verse 11, John says, then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. Remember the first beast in chapter 13, verse 1 came up out of the sea. So this is that second beast, the false prophet. This beast had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf. And he compels the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast whose fatal wound was healed. So everybody's got to bow the knee to this end times empire.

This evil government. It also, verse 13, this false prophet also performs great signs. He is even able to cause fire to come down from heaven. To the earth in front of people. It deceives those who live on the earth because of the signs that it's permitted to perform in the

presence of the beast and telling everybody who lives on the earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. It was permitted, this false prophet was permitted, to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could both speak and cause.

Whoever would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. So it makes everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand and on his forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark. The beast's name or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom. So let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, because it is the number of a man or the number of a person, and its number is 666.

I think I've said this the last three weeks, but if anybody else would like to come up and share the message, that'd be fine. This is the stuff like I said YouTube careers are made out of. Especially that last part about the number of the beast, 666. You can talk to people who are not even believers, have nothing to do with the church, but they know deep down, like, oh, I've heard of that. I've heard of the mark. They may not want anything to do with Christianity or the church, but they'd be like, I ain't taking the mark of the beast, I ain't having none of that.

Or I'm not all about the 666, like 666 is bad mojo for them. Because there's just been so much discussion about it. So it may be tempting to try and do, and this may be what you want me to do, but I'm not going to tell you who the antichrist is. Or who this false prophet is today. Because they may not exist today. And all the conjecture and theories that are around that are ultimately there's not enough evidence to say with certainty. I may do it next week, but I'm not going to do that today.

So don't look for that out of this sermon. What I do want to show you is how this false prophet and how this false religion operates in the world. And it's not just that false religion at the end of days. This is how every false religion that I think Satan uses to thwart God's people, how it always works. And once you know how it works, you can kind of have discernment to know how it may be at work in your life or in the world and your surroundings. If you're taking notes, this false prophet needs to be understood alongside of the dragon and the first beast.

And I think you should think of them as an unholy trinity. I mentioned this last week, but in the Holy Trinity, the biblical trinity, you've got God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, right? God the Father sends God the Son to the earth. God the Son, Jesus the Christ, he glorifies the Father. And then when Jesus dies and ascends to heaven, he sends the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to point people's attention to Jesus. Okay? That's the biblical trinity. This trinity, this unholy trinity, Satan is in the place of God.

Satan raises up this antichrist figure, this false Christ who makes false promises and does terrible things. That antichrist brings glory to Satan. That's his main goal. To deify Satan, to make Satan's agenda cool. He'll probably not say, I'm all about Satan. He'll probably say something very attractive and winsome. But that's his ultimate goal, is to make Satan's agenda awesome. And then this false prophet is kind of like the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the false prophet in your notes. Is like a minister of propaganda. His goal is to point people's attention to the antichrist, to make the antichrist look awesome, to make his agenda look reasonable.

And persuasive, and many people would be led astray because of their having been persuaded by this false religion. So it's an unholy trinity with this false prophet as the minister of propaganda. And here's how the propaganda works. Number one, if you're taking notes, it's duplicitous in nature. It looks a certain way on the outside, but it's not that way on the inside. Has anybody ever had that experience where looks were deceiving. You went in to, you know, maybe you had a Tinder date, looked a certain way on the profile, and then you showed up in person.

Not at all what I thought I was getting into. Or maybe you're like, what's Tinder? It's you know, this some kind of experience in your life where. What looked good on the outside, when you finally got a taste of what it was really all about, it was not at all what it looked like on the outside. And that's exactly how this religion works. It says it looks like a lamb. But it speaks like a dragon. So it has a duplicitous appearance or a duplicitous nature. So it's a reminder, just because something looks good doesn't mean it is good.

Just because somebody says this is how we end injustice. Or this is how we end racism, or this is how we make America great again, or this is how we save our country. Just because they say things you may resonate with and be on board with doesn't always mean. Every motive is pure or everything is what it seems to be. Now that's not to point out particular things in our day and age. It's just to say that one of Satan's primary ways of being effective is by masquerading as an angel of light.

He's not going to say the antichrist is not going to say, hello, I'm the antichrist and I'm all about making Satan awesome. He's not going to say that. It's not going to be anything like that. He's going to seem persuasive. He's going to seem like something reasonable. It's going to seem like an agenda you want to participate in, but he speaks like a dragon. So duplicitous appearance, number one. And then secondly, it's a destructive agenda. We saw this last week. The main goal of the antichrist is to dominate the world and to destroy the saints.

That's his political agenda. This false prophet, verse 12,[1] says his whole reason for existing is to serve the purposes of the antichrist. So anything this false religion can do to justify the antichrist, to justify his slaughtering of people. Just like in Hitler's Germany, they used religion, I believe they used Christianity, to justify why we should hate Jews and why we

should murder the Jews and why it's okay that we're killing a whole class of people and it's justified because God is on our side. That whole thing, that is a evil, satanic, satanically inspired thought process, that's exactly what this unholy religion, this false religion, is going to do.

It's going to serve the agenda of the antichrist. And many people will buy into it because it seems reasonable and the ends justify the means. And if we got to kill people, We got to get rid of those Christians and their unfashionable ideas, then so be it, because this guy is our salvation. This movement, this government is going to fix all of our problems. And so he's got a deceptive, he's got a duplicitous nature, a destructive agenda. It's just like Jesus said in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, to be on your guard against false prophets.

And he says, the false prophets are not going to come to you like wolves, they're going to come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're ravenous wolves. And this is the way it's always worked. And the most dangerous kind of false prophets are the false prophets in the church. It's the false prophets on your side. It's the people who maybe in externally, culturally, socially advance the causes that you're most sympathetic with. Like, man, I can get on board with that. I'm all about that. We need that in our country.

We need that in our schools. We need that in our families. If they get everything else right, but they get Jesus wrong, and they get the gospel wrong, they're a false prophet. It doesn't matter what else they get right. Doesn't mean they're not wise. Doesn't mean they're not smart. Doesn't even mean that you can't read them or benefit from them or even support the certain things that you are that are worthy of support. But be careful of hitching yourself to that wagon. Be careful of identifying yourself with movements that do a lot of things right and do a lot of things good, but they get Jesus wrong and the gospel wrong.

There's a lot of social causes out there. There's a lot of influential people out there. There's a lot of good movements, but not every movement is a Christian movement. And there are movements who will appear Christian, maybe sound Christian, maybe advance Christian initiatives and goals and ethics. But at the end of the day, when you listen to them, they get the gospel wrong. They get Jesus wrong. They don't talk about sin. They don't talk about repentance. They don't talk about grace. They don't talk about the cross, they don't talk about the need.

For salvation through Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. And those people are the most dangerous kind of people. When it comes to this kind of thing. So be on your guard. I'm not saying, you know, be a lock yourself in a closet. That is not my kind of style. I think you should expose yourself to everything, but be discerning. Because there's a lot of false prophets. Jesus said they're going to be more and more as the end draws near. So he's got a duplicitous appearance. He's got a destructive agenda.

And then he's going to advance that agenda through deceptive acts. And I've talked a little bit about the deception with his kind of duplicitous hypocritical stump speech. But it's not just that he's going to have a powerful stump speech that makes you want to jump on board. It's also, it says here in verses 13 and 14 that he's going to be a master of deception. And much of that deception is going to be through miraculous signs and wonders. Now I may lose some of you on this part because you're like, I don't believe in miracles and all that mumbo jumbo spiritual stuff.

But this is what the passage says. Look at it again, verses 13 and 14. This false religion or this antichrist, or I'm sorry, this false prophet. It also performs great signs. And he says it he causes fire to come down from heaven to earth in front of people. I don't know exactly what that means, if it's literal fire or lightning or if it's symbolic. Either way, it's pretty cool, pretty impressive. And because of those amazing signs, verse 14 says, he deceives those who live on the earth, or this religion deceives those who live on the earth.

Because of the signs that it's permitted to perform in the presence of the beast. So it may be only when this religion is, or this false prophet's in the presence of this antichrist or this government. That these signs are performed, thus validating the claims of this antichrist. And then it says this religion or this false prophet tells those who live on the earth to make an image of the beast or a little icon who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. We'll get into the icon language later. But it's just a it's just a thing to think about that this end times religion or this satanic agenda will be validated by supernatural signs and wonders.

Just because something is miraculous doesn't mean it's from the Lord. It reminds me back in the Old Testament, you guys remember Pharaoh and Moses, and Moses was able to do these miraculous signs. To persuade Pharaoh, God is on my side and let my people go. You remember he threw the stick down and it turned into a snake? But at the same time Pharaoh's Egyptian magicians, they also came in and they threw their sticks down and they also became a snake. Of course, Moses' snake ate their snake, but they were able to do miraculous signs and wonders.

When Elijah was calling down fire from heaven, the other ones

[called on Baal all day and got no answer at all]

.[2] It's just a it's just a reminder for you and me. There is a supernatural evil world out there. That's why so many people are drawn to the occult. The Ouija boards, the dark magic. That stuff is legit. There's some crazy weird stuff goes on through that whole world. Satan is a powerful supernatural being. And he is going to not only endow this antichrist with satanically inspired political savvy. He's going to inspire this antichrist with the ability to do supernatural signs and wonders.

And so do not be deceived. Paul said it this way in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. He said that the coming of the lawless one will be based on Satan's working with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie. So he's indwelt by Satan, which gives him supernatural power to serve the lie, not the truth. And with every wicked deception among those who are perishing, they perish because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved I listen to some commentators, they say this false prophet's not going to have true supernatural abilities.

It's just going to be like Vegas magic. When we went to Las Vegas, there were signs for what's the big famous guy? Chris— not Chris. Criss Angel. Yeah, Criss Angel, and there's another one real famous. And we watched this magician at Vegas. We did the cheap show, the variety show. You get a little bit of everything, but there was a magician. It was unbelievable. He could pull parrots right out of his pocket. It was crazy. But it was sleight of hand, right? That was not a real supernatural pulling of a parrot.

At least I don't think it was. So some people would say that's what's going on here. It's just a sleight of hand. It's just Vegas magic. That is not what this passage says. It's true signs and wonders, true miracles, but they serve the lie. And so just because something is supernatural, there's a lot of Christians today who have this craving for supernatural manifestations. There's whole denominations who, because of their belief in the Holy Spirit and the belief in the supernatural through the Holy Spirit, can sometimes be misled and invite in some bad spirits.

That do some bad damage because they're supernatural. Not everything that's supernatural is worthy of receiving into your life. He will deceive and one of his primary mechanisms for deception is signs and wonders. So it is a false prophet who has a duplicitous appearance, a destructive agenda, and he advances that agenda through acts of deception. Now with all that being said, the way to sum all that up, in my opinion, is to think of this false religion like you think of the Holy Spirit, except counterfeit. He's a counterfeit Holy Spirit. Remember, God the Father sends God the Son.

God the Son glorifies God the Father. But the role of the Holy Spirit is through signs and wonders and supernatural things and through convicting the heart and through persuading the mind, he points people to Jesus. When you became a Christian, you became a Christian because the Holy Spirit acted on your heart. It's amazing. No one comes to faith in Christ, in my opinion. No one comes to faith in Christ without the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit. Now that doesn't mean you don't have a choice. I believe you have a choice, but the Holy Spirit acts on your heart.

That same dynamic that happens in Christian conversion is going to happen through this counterfeit, Holy Spirit. And for whatever reason, God is going to allow it. He's going to allow Satan to satanically inspire this antichrist government. That government is going to be

brought to power by this religion which persuades people and acts on their heart and convicts them that Jesus is wrong, this guy's right. The gospel is false, this gospel is true. And there will be a mass deception that goes over the world. And you need to know that. When you see false religion or when you see some kind of civic religion or you see some kind of government.

Amassing all kinds of power, maybe not even a government, maybe it's a religion with political aims. Or a religion with political ambitions, and you see it getting more and more and more and more influence. That's exactly Satan's MO. For how he's going to crush God's people during the end of days. Because ultimately it's the government who has the biggest gun and if he can take a government, he can crush the Christians. He's a counterfeit Holy Spirit, not just in that he resists God, if you're taking notes, it also it's also because he attempts to replace God.

The role of the Holy Spirit it's not just to fight against Satan and demons. It's to cause you to put Jesus on the throne of your life, to make Jesus the priority of your heart. This false prophet, this false religion is going to do the opposite. He's going to say, take Jesus out of the number one spot in your life and put this guy instead. Put the state instead. Put this promise instead. It happens today with things like work. You don't need church. You don't need Jesus. You just need to make enough money to buy a big enough house to have nice enough things.

That you'll be set in life and then you'll be secure then you'll have everything that you need or you know use the gospel use jesus he can be a great addition to your main purpose in life which is to raise your children. And to have wonderful little boys and wonderful little girls that make wonderful little citizens that make you look like a wonderful mommy or a wonderful daddy. So that's your main goal in life. It's idolatry. It's always been idolatry. It's always been his MO from the very beginning. This at this time.

He's just going to make a global idolatry out of this end times leader, this end times government, at least from my perspective. So he's not just resisting God, he's trying to replace him. Once he gets enough influence and enough power, I think what Revelation 13 is suggesting is he's going to be again coercing the people who don't get on board. Not everybody's going to get on board. Some people preach the book of Revelation like there's this one figure who's head of a single one-world government, and that literally everybody on the earth worships him like they're in some kind of a daze.

I worship the antichrist. That is not what it's going to be. Okay, it's got to be somewhat realistic. But there will be a figure enabled by some government that maybe has tentacles throughout all the earth. And those people who are committed to that worldview willingly bend the knee. I'll toe the line, I'll say what needs to be said, I'll disassociate from these

Christians. I'll have the opinions you want me to have. You even feel it today with the whole, you can't think certain thoughts, can't say certain things. It's already present.

But it'll get stronger and stronger and stronger. And once he gets enough power and enough influence, what this figure is going to do is what every totalitarian government ever does. And he is going to coerce the people who won't get on board. And so this end-times antichrist does that, verses 15 to 18. It was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast. So that the image of the beast could both speak and cause whoever would not worship the image of the beast to be killed, and it makes everyone small and great, rich and poor, slave and free to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead.

Once you get the mark, if you don't have the mark, no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, the beast's name or the number of its name. And that calls for wisdom because the calculation of the number is 666, the number of a person. So this end-times antichrist, once the prophet's gained enough influence, he's going to coerce submission. He's going to coerce submission to the antichrist and his evil empire. How's he going to do that? Well, according to those verses, he's going to do that through people's fear of death and some kind of economic sanctions.

Where people cannot participate in the system unless they bend the knee. Totalitarian governments have always done this You see it right now in communist China. In communist China right now if you don't pass the social credit score or if you don't meet a certain threshold, then there's certain things you don't get to participate in. Like you don't get to take train trips or you don't get to travel places. Because your credit score isn't high enough. Something along those lines, this end times government will coerce submission through totalitarian, authoritarian means. Now, what about this breathing on the image?

What's all that about? Well the word image is where we get our English word icon. Think of it as, like, an idol. You know, back in the day when they would worship idols, the little idols represented a real God, right? Like think of Buddha today. We have Buddhas all over the place, right? So people who follow the Buddha. Buddha's not in your house, it's a little statue of Buddha that's in your house. It's the image of Buddha. And you rub the little fat man's belly and you have good things happen in your life, right?

That's the icon, that's the image. But throughout history every idol or every image of an idol was breathless, lifeless, inanimate. It was just a piece of furniture that you put in your house to remind you of the true God. Somehow in this end times government, this end time setup, the image of the antichrist is going to be able to speak. Now don't ask me how it works. Maybe it's just a literal structure with a speaker on it. Okay, maybe that's what John saw. A call to prayer. Everyone calls and you know bow down to this.

End times a religion, this end times government. It could be as simple as that, could be more complicated, I don't know. But the people who refuse to bow the knee and to kiss the ring, those people have a death sentence put on them and they are marked. And how are they marked? Everybody who doesn't have the mark of the beast is against the beast, and therefore we got to get them out of the system. It's the way it works in every totalitarian regime. You other the people you don't want as part of your society.

Once they've been effectively othered, you just let the masses do the work. Starts with social alienation, and then the government gets the gun out and does the dirty deeds. Done dirt cheap. Now, all of those particulars and the debates, it really boils down to two questions in my mind. The two questions are to whose message am I going to conform my life and whose mark am I going to wear? We'll talk about what the mark exactly is maybe next week, maybe a little bit today. But the question that matters is the conformity.

Conformity is a choice and you will be forced to conform one way or the other. You know, in our day and age, you kind of get a you kind of get misled that you can kind of ride the fence and there's this mushy middle, and I don't have to decide whether I'm with Jesus. Or against Jesus, I can kind of go to church and toy around with it but never really go all in. I can kind of do this middle dance where I can be loved by the culture and loved by the church.

And kind of skirt the middle. You can't do that in this day and age. You really shouldn't do that in this day and age. But in the future you certainly won't be able to do it because he's going to force you to conform one way or the other. And your decision on that front will determine whose wrath you face in life. So much of this talk about the mark of the beast comes from a vision that Ezekiel had in Ezekiel chapter 8. Chapter 8 through chapter 11, Ezekiel has this vision of Jerusalem being saturated in idolatrous worship.

And God says, because they have worshipped idols, I'm going to destroy the city. And he does. He sends the Babylonians in. They destroy the city. They destroy the temple. But in Ezekiel's vision, God says to this person who's dressed in linen. He says, I want you to go and mark the heads. How does it say? I want you to go pass through the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan. Over the detestable practices committed in it. So he's not just talking about men with body aches.

He's saying men who are disgusted with the evil men who are disgusted with the idolatrous worship, I want you to mark those men. That way when the Babylonians come in, I'm going to protect the people with the mark. And God did. He protected a remnant of a believing remnant because they were marked with the mark of God. John's taking this story, he's reversing it. He's saying now at the end times. It's not God marking his people only. The antichrist is going to mark his people, except he's not marking the people who are disgusted with evil.

He's going to mark the people who are infatuated with it. The people who are on board with the antichrist, the people who are on board with this false anti-gospel religion, they're going to receive the mark. And anybody who doesn't have the mark, they're the other. They're the one who needs to be alienated. They're the one who need to be marginalized. They're the ones who can't participate in society. They're the ones that have the unfashionable opinions. They're the ones who can't be on YouTube or social media or however it's going to go.

They're going to be ostracized from society. And John is saying, you better decide conformity to whom? Conformity to the antichrist means you will face the wrath of the lamb. Conformity to the lamb means you're going to face the wrath of the antichrist. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have your cake and eat it too. Pick whose kingdom you're going to be in. Pick which king you're going to bend the knee to. And in John's case he would say bend the knee to Jesus because he is Lord. And though this antichrist may rage and seem as though he is invincible don't fear the one who can destroy the body only.

Fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. That's the point. Now, how do you get your mark? Your mark is determined. By whose wrath you want to face, it's also determined by the confession you make. So many people, when it comes to this mark of the beast, they get so wrapped up in the 666 part of it. And you know, that's understandable. It's crazy that he says 666. Most people say that's a practice, ancient practice known as gematria. Anybody heard that term before? Gematria. It's think of grammar like letters plus math, gematria.

So in the ancient world they didn't have a numerical system like we do today. That took

[the Hindu–Arabic numerals, which Fibonacci helped bring to Europe,]

to come up with all that.[3] But before that, they would attach a number to a letter. So like a Greek alphabet, alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon, on and on you go. Well, alpha would be the number one, beta would be the number two, gamma, and so on. Each letter had a number. So what they would do in the ancient world is they would take that practice of a letter having a number, and then they would communicate through the numbers instead of the letters.

So there's like this ancient graffiti. I tried to find a picture, I couldn't find it, but there's this graffiti on this tunnel that says, I love her whose number is 545. It would be like me going into a bathroom stall and scratching into the stall. A T plus W T equals heart for life or something like that. Except they were using the numbers instead of the letters, because the letters represented numbers. Well a lot of people say that's what John's doing with the antichrist. It's 666, and people have used conjecture and all kinds of things to try to identify the antichrist by the spelling of their name.

And so a lot of people believe this is Nero, Caesar. And those people who think the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century, they have a lot of good reasons for believing that. One of them is that Nero Caesar's name can spell out to 666. My problem is you've got to use a Hebrew transliteration of his Latin name spelt in Greek with a defective Hebrew spelling for that to work. So it doesn't quite get all the way there for me. Other people have said no it's not Nero. It's symbolic.

It's figurative. It's, you know, seven is the divine number. Seven is the number that represents God. So seven, seven, seven is like the epitome of godness. Well, six is a deviation from divinity, so that's the number for man, and it is. In the book of Revelation, six represents man. So six six six is like the epitome of manness. So you've got divinity and you've got humanness. So secular humanism is like this worldview, this belief that man is the measure of all things, he's the beginning, middle, and end of everything that matters.

And so some would say this antichrist is not a human, it's not a religion, it's just secular humanism writ large. Or some some mixture of those two things. And that's a possibility as well. Some would say no it's Hillary Clinton. Look, spell out her name, H I L and they'd add it all up or Donald Trump. I think that actually does if you do Donald Trump, I think it does add up to 666. And so people say it's got to be Donald Trump and he's the end times government. And usually what happens is whatever political platform you don't love You think the leader of the opposite platform could be the antichrist.

And I see Christians do it every political season. But the math doesn't always work. And that's English, not Greek or Hebrew, or you don't even know what this 666 number, even if it's gematria, whether it's applied to the Greek alphabet, the Hebrew alphabet, or whether John somehow foresaw the English alphabet. I think it's just dangerous. So I would not get lost in that. Do not miss the main point. The main point of the mark of the beast. Don't miss the mark of the mark. The main point of the mark of the beast is what confession you make determines whose mark you will bear.

This nonsense about the vaccines being the mark of the beast, it cannot be the mark of the beast. You know why? Because taking the mark of the beast means confessing faith in the antichrist. It's a theological act. You cannot receive the mark until you confess. Just like you cannot receive God's mark until you confess Jesus Christ as Lord, you will not receive the mark of the beast until you bend the knee to the antichrist in his kingdom. So it's not going to be snuck under the radar. You're not going to accidentally take the mark.

It's not the little chip on the end of your credit card. Okay. Or we're all messed up, right? It's not it's not any of that. It's theological in nature. Now some people would say it's only theological and there is no actual technology behind it. I don't know that I'd go that far. There's got to be some kind of technological side to it to prohibit access to the system. Okay.

You're going to be cut out of the system. But you're going to be cut out of it for theological reasons, based on the confession you make.

So how do you prevent yourself from taking the mark of the beast in the future? You prevent yourself from taking the mark of the beast then by confessing Jesus as Lord today. By making your confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and by realizing at the end of the day, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. To the glory of God the Father. And so no matter what it's going to cost me, no matter what it may mean in the future, as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord.

And that's what I'm committed to. That's what this church is going to be committed to. And we will be committed to it no matter what it costs. And if we are in the end of days, which there's some eerily weird things going on that make you think we're there. But even if we're not, let's say that we were. The worse it gets out there, the better it's going to get in here. For churches that are committed, for churches that will stand, for churches that will not bend the knee, based on social pressure and being socially ostracized and alienated.

For those who say I don't care what they say, I don't care what they think. I believe what God says and I'm going to stick with the Lord no matter what. If you have a church full of those kind of people I'm telling you, every single church service will be awesome. Because the price for admittance into a church service will be, I don't care if I die. I don't care if I'm alienated or ostracized. I'm not in this for the popularity points. I'm not in this for the business connections. I'm in this because I believe Jesus is Lord.

And imagine a church full of people who are just waiting on the Lord. In a world that's falling apart, they're waiting on the Lord to supernaturally deliver them and protect them because they believe, because God said, I will protect you and I will deliver you. Because you have my mark. That's a church I want to be a part of. That's a community of faith that I cannot live without. And that's what, you know, God willing, we can create through this local church. But it begins not by waiting until it's too late, not by waiting until the pressure's on, but by deciding today.

This is who we are, this is who we're going to be. And so in your life, have you made that confession that Jesus is Lord? And if you haven't, then why are you waiting? It's only going to get more difficult. It's only going to get harder to make that decision. If the Holy Spirit of God is acting on your heart and saying he's drawing you to a place of salvation. He's saying you need to repent of your sin. You need to trust in Jesus as Lord. Then make today the day when you trust in Christ.

Josh is going to come up and lead us through a time of response. The altar will be open. If you want to come down to the front, you can do that. Some people don't come down to the front because they say somebody may think I have something wrong with me. Well,

everybody's got something wrong with them, right? We just don't all come down to the front every week. But every week everybody's got something wrong. And also every week every person decides. Every person responds to the Word of God every single week.

You respond by hardening your heart. Or by pressing into what God wants you to do. And so as Josh plays, I want you to wrestle with what is God calling me to do? Is there some kind of public demonstration of faith that I need to make? You can do that this morning. You may say, I don't want to do it this morning. I want to talk to somebody in the week. Maybe God's calling you to be baptized or join the church or more firmly commit. To the local church or more firmly commit to what you believe about Christ.

And you've got some questions and some doubts and some struggles and you need to work through that, then there'll be a QR code. Just scan that QR code, give us your info, and we'll follow up with you. Later this week. But do not leave without responding to the Lord. Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you for your word. And even though it sometimes gets a little bit crazy on us and difficult to understand, and people debate about this and that. We don't want to miss the main point.

We don't want to miss the fact that your word, it's promised to us that your word is inspired by God. These are not just the opinions of a crazy person locked on an island because he got in trouble with the government. This is spirit-inspired truth. That we need to wrestle with. And so would you help us to reason together and to wrestle with what you're calling us to do in our individual lives. Anything that I said that was unhelpful, unfruitful, not of the Holy Spirit, pray it would be disregarded. But that those things that were true, that are from the Holy Spirit, that those would be.

That those would remain and that we would respond to that truth and bring glory to our Lord, who is worthy. He is so worthy. We are so prone to not give him what he is due. So prone to be attracted to lesser lovers, lesser deliverers, lesser saviors. Because we think that's going to ultimately satisfy when they don't. They never do. Only you can satisfy. Only you can save. Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. And so as we respond, help us to find our way back home, find our way back to a true saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "This antichrist, verse 12"; in Revelation 13:12 it is the second beast (the one Wes calls the false prophet) that "exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf." Source: Revelation 13:11–12 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "the other ones were able to do some supernatural signs and wonders. They just didn't do as many or as big or anything like that"; at Mount Carmel the prophets of Baal called on Baal from

morning through the afternoon, "but there was no sound; no one answered, no one paid attention," and only the Lord answered Elijah with fire. Source: 1 Kings 18:26–29 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩

3. Transcript note: spoken as "That took a guy named Blaise Pascal to come up with all that"; our numerals are the Hindu–Arabic system, developed by Indian mathematicians, adopted by Arab and Persian mathematicians, and introduced to Latin Europe through Fibonacci's *Liber Abaci* (13th century). Source: Wikipedia, "Hindu–Arabic numeral system." ↩