

666 WRONG NUMBER **OF PROPHETIC BEAST?**

Newly examined Scripture fragment lends credence to
argument it's 616

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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I am making this a handout so that you can be aware of this issue that is sure to come up at the work place and family get-togethers. If and when I am asked what I think, my response will be:

The Lord Jesus is called the Word of God and He was ever present during the collection of Greek texts used to give us the New Testament that has been used for the last 400 years. It is a fact that there are variant readings even in the collection of Greek texts used to give us the King James Version, but they are very few and so very minor as to have no affect on the meaning of the passage.

The variant reading alleged in this article could be considered the most significant ever found in any Greek manuscript since it changes what millions of people in the future will be looking for in the Antichrist's name. But this reading comes from a manuscript that was not used to give us the King James Bible.

If it is a fact that this newly studied text reflects what was penned by the Apostle John when he was given the words of the Book of Revelation (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), then the Antichrist's name (when he comes) will add up to 616 rather than 666 and the King James only debate will have been won by those who believe the Egyptian texts are more reliable than the Greek texts used to give us the King James Version.

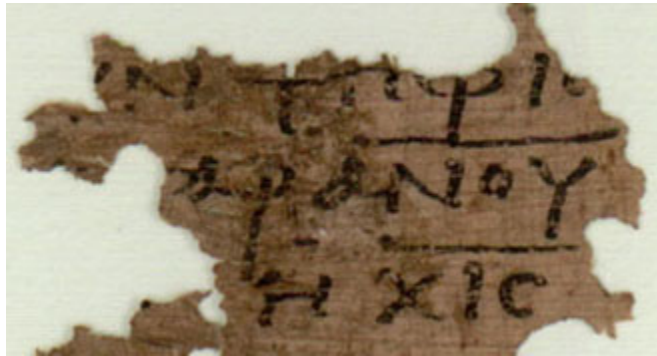
However, it is much more likely that 666 will stand (and the texts that provided it) since it is unlikely the Lord Jesus would have allowed this kind of error to affect so many for so long. Time will tell, and until then, I am looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus for

His church, rather than the Antichrist, whatever his name adds up to be.

For centuries, people have been intrigued by the number 666, the "number of the beast" from the Book of Revelation in the New Testament.

Not only is it mentioned in the Bible, it has been associated with the Satanism, universal price codes and the game of roulette, as the numbers on the wheel add up to 666.

Now, the legendary number is getting a fresh look, as researchers are re-examining evidence the number may actually be 616.



Fragment from Book of Revelation mentions 616 in the third line - chi, iota, sigma (courtesy Egypt Exploration Society)

In the King James Version of the Bible, the well-known verse of Revelation 13:18 reads:

"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."

While many Bible have footnotes saying the number translated from the original Greek could be 616, experts say new photographic evidence of an ancient fragment of papyrus from Revelation indeed indicates the number is indeed 616, instead of 666.

Scholars in England have been using modern technology to scour some 400,000 bits of papyri which were originally discovered in 1895 at a dump outside the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus. Many of the sections have been damaged and discolored, but an imaging

process is shedding new light on the sacred text, believed to have originally been penned by John, one of Jesus' 12 apostles.

"This is a very nice piece to find," [Ellen Aitken](#), a professor of early Christian history at McGill University, told Canada's National Post. "Scholars have argued for a long time over this, and it now seems that 616 was the original number of the beast."

The papyrus in the spotlight is believed to be from about 300 A.D.

"This is very early confirmation of that number, earlier than any other text we've found of that passage," Aitken said. "It's probably about 100 years before any other version."

The main researcher promoting the 616 claim is [David Parker](#), professor of New Testament Textual Criticism and Paleography at the University of Birmingham in England.

"This is an example of gematria, where numbers are based on the numerical values of letters in people's names," Parker told the UK's Independent. "Early Christians would use numbers to hide the identity of people who they were attacking: 616 refers to the Emperor Caligula."

Many commentators have gone with later copies of text which assign the number 666 to "the beast," believed by some to be the End-time world power.

Some have also linked 666 with Nero, the ancient Roman emperor known for persecuting Christians.

Parker points out the possibility of 616 was considered by the second century church father Irenaeus, who rejected it.

Regarding this new text, Parker told Britain's Church Times, "This adds weight to those who believe that it is a reference to Caligula's attempt to desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem, by having his statue erected there as part of the cult of emperor worship.

"There may be a reference to it in Mark [13:14], where he refers to the 'the abomination of desolation.' But this was overlaid by the Neronian persecutions. People believed that you could get from '666' to Nero because in Greek he is the emperor Neron Caesar. And 666 is

one number less than the perfect 777. The text [showing 616] is quite legible to the naked eye. It was published in 1999, but it has taken people time to catch up."

The National Post quotes Elijah Dan, professor of philosophy and religion at the University of Toronto, as saying the new number won't likely have an impact in the popularity of 666.

"Otherwise, a lot of sermons would have to be changed and a lot of movies rewritten," he said with a laugh. "There's always someone with an active imagination who can put another interpretation on it. It just shows you that when you study something as cryptic and mystic as the Book of Revelation there's an almost unlimited number of interpretations."