

Lake Cities Community Church
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Series: Bible Numbers – Making Them Count
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Six
The Curious Misadventures of the Number Six.

It is one of the most dangerous highways in the US running through New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. The beautiful countryside around this road is littered with little white crosses from frequent accidents and fatalities. Voted in 1997 as one of America's 20 most dangerous roads, it has elevations ranging from 1,600 to 11,000 feet and is referred to this day by many as: "The Devil's highway." Maybe some of you have driven on it? I am talking about U.S. Route 666.

The highway was named innocently enough in 1926 when by normal naming conventions the 6th spur of the parent road, famous route 66, was given the number 666. Its unfortunate name brought it unwanted attention through movies, heavy metal songs and books referencing it. In one of the books, Jonathan Rosenblum (*Copper Crucible*) wrote: "With some four hundred twisting curves in one sixty-mile stretch, the road has sent more than its share of travelers crashing off cliffs. If, as Nat King Cole sang, drivers get their kicks on Route 66, they take their risks on 666."

At an accident scene, one patrol officer said: "Triple 6 is evil. Everyone dies on that highway." When running for governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson promised to work to change the name of the cursed road and upon his election he worked with government officials from New Mexico, Utah and Colorado to submit a recommendation to change the name. The recommendation was approved and the name was changed to State Route 491

on July 30, 2003. A New Mexico spokesperson said: "The devil's out of here, and we say goodbye and good riddance." A Navajo medicine man was hired to bless the new road and remove any residual demonic presence.

And since the road was renumbered, strangely, fatality rates have decreased; though most rationale people point to long-overdue safety improvement that were finally made and that the road was widened from two lanes to four lanes.

Subject:

With that... we come now in our study on the theology of Bible numbers to the number six, which culminates in the most famous of all Bible numbers, 666. This is, the celebrity of all Bible numbers! And so what I want to do today is to treat it like a celebrity biography. First I want to look at the early years of the number – the origins, and then see what went wrong to turn it into such a negative number – we will call that its mid-life crisis. Finally we will look at the number's ultimate retirement and its destiny.

Number six: The Early Years.

To begin - in the early years, the number six was a good number. A nice number – the kind of number you would want to live next door. It was simply the number of man. The first occurrence of the number six is in Genesis 1:31; after creating all living creatures on the earth – including man and woman: **Gen. 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.** The sixth day was a good day!

The number six continued in a positive direction when God told the people they were able to work for six days. Work, remember, was not part of the curse – but part of the blessing: “The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” (Gen 2:15). Moses recorded later: Ex. 23:12 “Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor.

Another positive contribution of the number six back in the early days, is that it reminded Adam and Eve of their place before God. Six is man’s day and seven is God’s day. As high as six is in creation – it is *less than seven. Man is less than God.* For example, the Bible tells us that regarding King Solomon’s throne: “1Kings 10:19 There were six steps to the throne...” Six steps would have reminded the king that as highly exalted as he was – he was still less than God, and had to submit to God.

And so man was created on the 6th day and given six days of productive, fulfilling work. In the early years, six was very good – it was the melody of man’s song. On his soccer team, Hudson was the number six. No problem. No need to request a renumbering – six started out representing humanity and work.

The Number Six – Mid-Life Crisis

But then something went terribly wrong - a crisis developed. Satan said – “You don’t need to submit to God – YOU ARE GOD! And Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge and the number six changed – from representing humanity to representing *fallen humanity* – representing sin and the our enemy the Devil.

Because when we disobeyed God, our natures became corrupt and selfish: being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit,

malice... (Romans 1:29). It is like the worms we found in our peaches this year. At first I thought, "Wow that was an industrious worm, climbing all the way up the tree to find the fruit!" But that is not how it works. The fruit flies lay the eggs on the blossoms, so that the worms hatch inside the fruit and then eat their way out. That is what happened to our natures – sin got inside of us and has been working its way out ever since.

And with the fall, the number six takes on the ominous themes of sin and death. Let me share a few examples - with the caveat that it is not always easy to discern whether a number is being used symbolically or figuratively or literally. But I think these are worth considering.

It was compelling for me to read that in Genesis chapter four, Cain's (the world's first murderer) has his genealogy carried out to only six generations (Genesis 4:17-22) perhaps the first subtle nod to man's new fallen state. Often genealogies in the Bible are crafted to make a point. Consider that the sons of Noah (those saved by God) were clearly presented in groups of seven (Genesis 10) – but Cain only to six.

Pharaoh pursued Israel out of Egypt with 600 chariots. It is unlikely that the author counted hubcaps, but he was looking for an approximate number and perhaps this multiple of six seemed most appropriate to represent the hard-hearted Pharaoh.

Adding to this argument; several times number of men assembled for warfare is 600. The references are listed there: Judges 3:31, 18:11, 16, 17, 1 Sam 13:15, 1 Sam 23:13, 17:2, 30:9, 2 Sam 15:18.

You might recall that giant Goliath's height was "six cubits and a span" (1 Sam 17:4) tall and his spear weighed "600 shekels of iron" (1 Sam 17:7). A few other details are given regarding Goliath, but six dominates. Another enemy from Gath, years later, comes against

God and is interestingly described as having “six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot.” (2 Samuel 21:20). Again, it may be an intentional rhetorical commentary of his character more than on his birth condition.

You will recall the prideful King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of Gold and demanded all worship the image. We are told the height was “sixty cubits” and the width “six cubits.” (Daniel 3:1). The number six dominates.

The number six was not lost on one of Job’s friends Eliphaz, who argued that if Job was really innocent all these things would not be happening to him: “[Job 5:19](#) “From six troubles He will deliver you, Even in seven evil will not touch you.” Six represents trouble – and six moves to the number seven, perfect deliverance in this case.

In addition, Proverbs 6:16-19 reads: [Prov. 6:16](#) There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: What does the Lord hate? Six things – moving to seven things - God’s perfect hatred of sin.

It appears to me and others that in Scripture the number six takes on the tone of evil and sin. Perhaps like the one-day when an elderly woman came to her pastor and said, “Six days of the week you are invisible and on the seventh incomprehensible!” I hope that is not true of me – but you see the point. The number six reminds us that humanity is corrupt and broken from the inside out. The pleasant number six representing work and man, now reflects those opposed to God.

Midlife Crisis Part II

But the midlife crisis is not over – in fact it is just getting started – we now come face to face with the Anti-Christ or The Beast and his number 666. Turn with me to Revelation

13:18. The Apostle John says: [Rev. 13:18](#) Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

The identity of the Beast and the meaning of 666 have been the subject of debate for 2,000 years. And it is hard to blame people too much for speculation in this area because John says, “Let’ him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast.” It seems an invitation to unravel the mystery. The most popular conclusion held by many scholars is that this was a veiled reference to Nero, who was a Roman Emperor well known for his persecution of Christians. Using Hebrew Gematria (where letters are assigned numbers and then values added up) a certain spelling of Caesar Nero in Hebrew adds up nicely to 666. It is quite possible that John’s audience already knew this secret reference, just as they knew other secret symbols such as the Ichthus – the Greek word for fish which was used to identify Christians discretely. However, using Gematria - many other political and military leaders have been examined and proposed to fit the number 666.

But before we conclude that 666 can be translated into any particular name – consider these arguments against drawing such conclusions. First, the Bible nowhere endorses Gematria, and it is unlikely John therefore would have used it as a secret method of communication. Second, John’s audience was primarily Greek and would not have easily been able to apply Gematria in Hebrew. Third, the lack of consensus, even as early as the 2nd and third centuries comes as a warning flag. One writer said: “The sheer disagreement and confusion created through the years by the Gematria method should have long ago warned the church that it was on the wrong track.” – Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, chpt 5. Fourth, the context appears to be the identification of a future person, not someone known

at the time. Fifth, Scripture warns Christians against idle speculation and endless debate. (1Tim 1:4) and sixth, the text does not require that one come up with an actual name for the antichrist.

In fact, I favor the view that point here is not to identify an actual name, but the character of the antichrist. It could be the reference to 666 is not the answer to a math puzzle but a figurative use of Bible Numbers to make a point. If six is the number of corruption, and as we saw last week, and the three-fold repetition communicates perfection of completeness – then John is saying *the antichrist is going to be evil, evil, evil*. And this is a necessary point because the antichrist *is not going to look evil-evil-evil*, but good-good-good. He will deceive many people – don't you be deceived.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "The greatest evil is not done in sordid dens of crime but in clean, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices." Chesterton said, The Devil is a gentleman, and asks you down to stay; At his little place at What'sitsname (it isn't far away). They say the sport is splendid; there is always something new, And fairy scenes, and fearful feats that none but he can do. Jesus himself said: **For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible even the elect. - Matthew 24:24.** And when THE antichrist comes – it will be only those with wisdom and understanding who will recognize him.

The Number six: Retirement Years

Well how does all this end? The number six started out nice and pleasant enough, but with the fall took on the themes of sin and rebellion; culminating with the ultimate

expression of evil, the Beast or Antichrist with the triple repetition 6-6-6. Let's look now at the retirement years of the number six.

We cannot read too many times the beautiful scene where corruption and sin and pain are gone: [Rev. 21:4](#) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Sin and death and the corruption from within are all gone, because in Revelation chapter 20 they are retired permanently: [Rev. 20:10](#) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

One-day death and sin will be permanently retired. Gone forever! But what about today? What do we do with the number six today? I would like to close with these three exhortations or lessons from our study with the number six.

First we have to admit that we have a problem – we are sinful people. We have to confess what that Bible says that: ["All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."](#) [Romans 3:23](#). I saw a T-shirt in Kohl's a few months ago that read, "333 – Only half-evil." No – we have learned today we are in crisis and are fully corrupted. I think the fallen nature of mankind is the easily apologetic of the Christian faith, because the history of humanity is a history of warfare, bloodshed, unfaithfulness and injustice. At the core we are selfish and desperately want to give in to our number six tendencies.

The second step is to turn to Jesus for freedom. The great thing about Christianity is that you don't have to wait until heaven to have victory over sin today! Paul said, [for the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.](#) -

Romans 8:2. When Jesus died on the cross he bought your freedom from sin. We now can live a life pleasing to God. Not that life is perfect, but life IS possible in Jesus Christ.

And if you have given your life to Jesus Christ, then when sin and temptation comes your way, with His help, in the words of Monty Python the third step is to, “Run away! Run away! From sin!” Before you didn’t have the strength to do that, but now you do! Paul said, “Flee immorality.” (1 Cor 6:18). He said, “Flee idolatry,” 1 Cor 10:14 He said, “Flee youthful lusts” 2 Tim 2:22, He said of all sin’s temptations, “Flee from these things.” 1 Tim 6:11. Flee from it in your mind and discipline yourself to think about other things. Flee from it physically and don’t be around temptation in the first place. James said, “Resist the Devil and He will flee from you.” And the crisis of number six will disappear from your life. I trust there is a practical application from these three steps that can be made in our live this week.

Conclusion:

I appreciated your prayer for me and I know I was not the only one who was thinking about the number six and 666. One person from our congregation wrote to me: “ I had a car with the license number 666 follow me the other day. I must admit it creeped me out some, and I wondered why someone would pick that as a plate as I am assuming it was by choice.” That is a little scary – that, as I found, so many would choose this number to be on their cars. Also, this week I had a teenager in our church send me this photo they took while shopping for school supplies! (Pens selling for \$6.66).

It is true isn’t it – that when we see 6 and 666 in particular we are “creeped out” because they remind us of the devil and all that is wrong in this world.

But also remember that if you see and admit the problem we have with sin, and turn to Jesus for help – he will set you free from sin and give you the strength to live a pure life for Him! When temptation comes you will be able to have victory and run-away rather than running to sin.

Without Jesus we are victims of our own natures – and are deceived by worldly values that look so good. But in Jesus we have freedom and victory over sin, and death and the devil. Let's pray.