

## DON'T PANIC!

Timothy Berg

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PSA

To all my friends (there are too many of you to tag here), who I love dearly, that have posted something about the story of a US employer that will be offering microchips to be implanted into the hands of their employees. If you have seen in this announcement the dawning of, or precursor to, a prophesied "mark of the beast" that will be a microchip implanted into the hand or forehead as a symbol of worship to a coming antichrist, I would like to say a few simple words. Basically just two words;

*Calm thyself.*

I could point out here that the interpretative scheme that sees in Revelation 13:16 a prophecy of a coming figure who will cause the "beast" to be worshipped, is itself an exegetically dubious handling of the text, which largely departs from any kind of historically grounded exegetical starting point (and I'm agreeing with the vast majority of NT scholarship here, pop-level prophecy writings notwithstanding). But I don't intend to argue here about the various interpretive schemes concerning the most controversial book of the Bible. Let me instead, for the moment, simply presume, (for the purpose of this post only), the futuristic framework that takes the passage this way, and speak within it.

What would this "mark of the beast" be? Surely a chip implanted in the hand or forehead makes sense, does it not? Surely enough ink has been spilled presuming this that it has a tenable basis, right?

Actually, no.

The prepositional phrase John uses to describe this mark and its location (in the TR) is "ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς, ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν." (Upon the hand the right, or upon the forehead of him). The important preposition is "epi" (ἐπι). In Greek, the meaning a preposition has is governed by the case of its object(s) (Things can get more complex, but we will leave it at that for now).

The objects here are in the genitive case. Thus, "epi" here means "on, upon." The prepositional phrase means "on the hand/forehead," or "upon the hand/forehead."

It does not mean "in" in the sense of "inside of." It cannot mean this, lexically or syntactically. (To my nerdy friends, I realize prepositions can get more complex. And that BDAG 4 does list a possible sense of "in" for the preposition with regard to direction, and a few other cases can be found in other entires, none of which is applicable in this passage, which falls under BDAG 1, allowing an "in" sense only in the means of carrying "with/in the hands.")

Had John meant to convey a mark that would be "in" the hand (in the sense of "inside of"), then he simply used the wrong preposition.

He got the word wrong.

To convey that idea, he would have had to use ἐν, (in, on, among) or, more clearly, εἰς (to, towards, into). [Again, I'm setting aside here the exegetical difficulties of John writing at all about a computer chip for the purposes of this post, to say nothing of the literary absurdities of reading an apocalyptic text with such precision.]

Within the framework we are working with here (the kind of framework that could see a future computer chip at play in the text), if the mark of the beast is a computer chip that will be placed inside the hand or forehead, then John simply made a mistake in his choice of preposition.

Anyone who maintains that the mark of the beast is a computer chip placed inside the hand is forced into the position of acknowledging that John and his text made a simple mistake.

I prefer to think that John was correct, and that those who see a computer chip in the text of Rev. 13:16 are the ones who have made a mistake.

You can decide for yourself.

To my KJV Only and TR Only friends.

If you object that "the KJV translators translated the word as 'in,' and they can't make mistakes, so it must mean 'in,'" an additional word.

First, look up the word yourself in the tools you use. Strong's entry #1909 list the preposition as meaning "superimposition...as a relation of distribution (with the genitive case), ie, over, upon, etc."

He does not list "in" as a possible meaning of the word (which would violate his expressed idea of superimposition anyway).

But what about the word "in" in the text of the KJV? In the 17th century, English prepositions were rather fluid in their meaning, and were extremely interchangeable. (Even more so than today.) Simply pull out your handy Webster's 1828 dictionary. Look up the entry for "in." Only in his 5th definition for the word does he specifically identify what he considers common Scriptural usage. He notes,

"IN, in many cases, is equivalent to on. This use of the word is more frequent in the Scriptures [here meaning the KJV]; as let fowls multiply \*in\* the earth. This use is more frequent in England [where, we might add, the KJV was translated, disseminated, and is to this day copyrighted] than in America. We generally use on, in all similar phrases."

When John wrote "epi" he understood himself to be referring to a mark/stamp \*upon\* the hand, and his understanding would preclude any reference to an inserted chip. When the KJV translators translated the phrase, they understood John to be referring to a mark/stamp (see Strongs #5480/ Webster's 1828 #2) made \*upon\* the hand. (We won't mention the corollary fact here that if a computer chip was in view, John used the wrong word for "mark" as well, which refers to a surface mark/stamp/etching, and the KJV translators made a mistake in translating the word as a "mark" rather than as something that would allow for insertion.)

The only way the phrase could refer to an implanted computer chip is if John made a mistake (and the KJV translators did too). Don't go down that road. Throw out all the books you have that prophesy of a coming computer chip. Accept that those guys made the mistake, not John, not the translators. In short,

*Calm Thyself.*

## An Additional Note from Sam Storms

Sam Storms, in preaching his way through Revelation, just came to this difficult passage (almost a year after my original post), and I thought I'd add a brief note here from his sermon. He writes:

The "Mark" of the Beast (W. 16-17)

"I want to draw attention one more time to an issue that continues to inflame debate concerning the end times and contributes greatly to the overall hysteria that serves only to discredit the Christian community in the eyes of the world. I have in mind the belief by many that the "mark" of the Beast is a literal tattoo, or perhaps a clu/p implant, or imprint of sorts, or perhaps some other physiological branding by which his/its followers are visually identified. The popular notion among many Christians (usually of the dispensational, futurist school of interpretation) is that some such designation, whether "the name of the beast" or "the number [666] of its name" (Rev. 13:17) will be forcibly imposed on people living in the final few years prior to the coming of Christ. If one wishes to buy or sell and thus survive in the days ahead, he/she must submit to this means of identification.

Needless to say, this interpretation is entirely based on a futurist reading of Revelation, such that what John describes pertains largely, if not solely, to that last generation of humanity alive on the earth just preceding the second coming of Chn'st. If, on the other hand, as I have argued, the book of Revelation largely portrays events that occur throughout the entire course of church history, this view is seriously undermined. As I argued earlier in our study of Revelation 7, we should understand the 'mark' of the Beast on the right hand or forehead of his/its followers to be a Satanic parody (a religious rip-off, so to speak) of the 'seal' that is placed on the foreheads of God's people (Rev. 7:3-8; 14:1; cf. 22:4).

Many believe eve the reference to receiving a 'mark' (charagma; found in 13:16, 17; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) is an allusion to the ancient practice of branding or tattooing...I do not believe that the so-called "mark of the Beast" is a literal, physical mark on the bodies of unbelievers, either on their forehead or their right hand. All through Revelation we see Satan making every effort to copy whatever God does. So, for example, the three persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, find their evil counterpart in Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet. Just as Jesus died and rose again from the dead, the Beast is portrayed as dying and rising to life again."

Feel free to peruse his whole, excellent sermon, "666" [here](#).

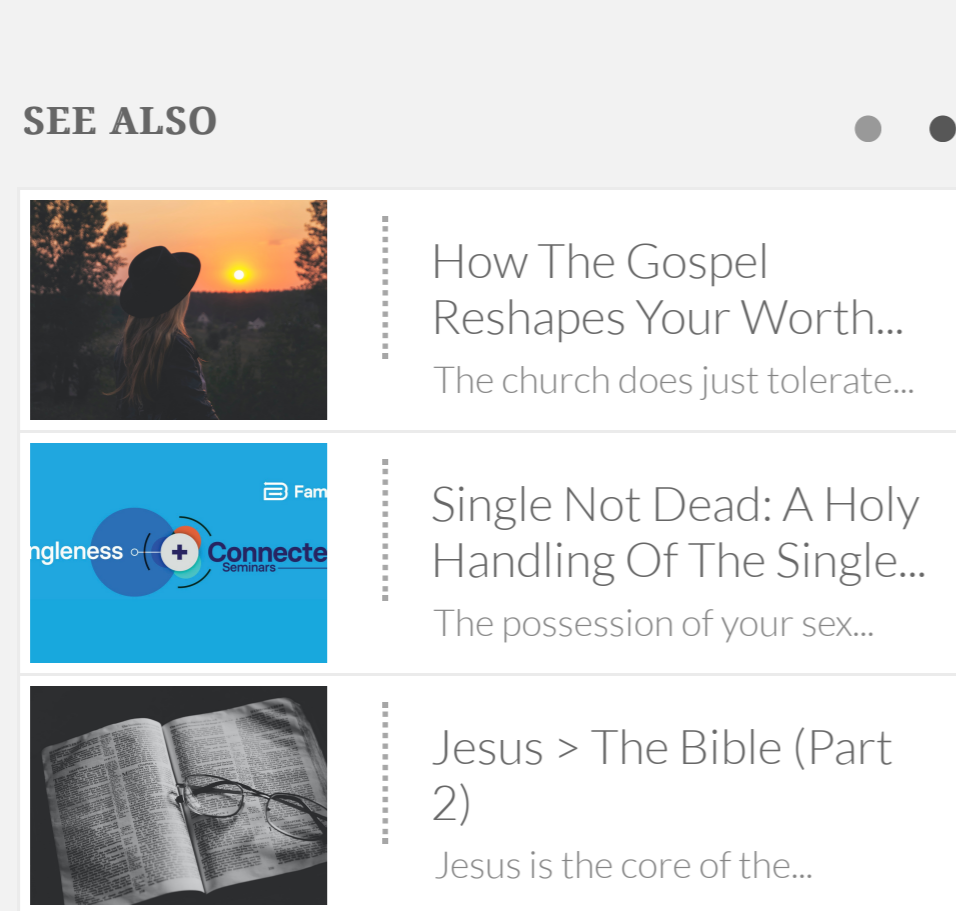
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