



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Hidden Message of the Great Seal of the United States – Part 1

Guest(s): Michael Kanis

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have you ever taken a look at a U.S. dollar bill, turned it over, and wondered about those mysterious symbols on the back? That pyramid, the eye, the Latin phrases. You know, most of us have seen them so many times in our lifetimes, but very few of us know what they actually mean. Well, that emblem is the great seal of the United States. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, you're going to discover the surprising message woven into its design by our nation's founders. Our guest is author and historian Michael Kanis. After an unexpected encounter with that seal during a family trip to Valley Forge, Michael spent the next few years digging through the National Archives and the Library of Congress to uncover its origins. And what he found may forever change the way you look at that dollar in your pocket. So now let's get into this powerful conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson to introduce today's Family Talk broadcast.

Dr. James Dobson: Today, we're going to talk about something that, frankly, I've never discussed on the air. It has to do with the seal of the United States, which apparently very few of you have taken the time to study. And I didn't know anything about it either of consequence. But my guest today was equally oblivious until something changed for him. And he began to study the seal. This is on the currency, especially on the dollar and I'm not sure where else. I'm going to learn a whole lot today, and I hope you are too. I think you'll be amazed by what my guest has discovered, and we're going to share that with you in a moment.

First, let me introduce him to you. I met him just a few minutes ago, probably 15 minutes ago, so we're just really getting acquainted and his name is Michael Kanis, and he is an entrepreneur who runs a small business that he founded in 2000. He and his wife Tina have four children. He describes himself as a student of history, that makes him of interest to me, and a seeker of knowledge and of the kingdom of God. He obviously loves the Lord. You can't talk to him without understanding that and I think that's where his discoveries about the Great Seal of the United States start to come together. Thank you for joining me today, Michael. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Michael Kanis: It's a delight to be here. Thank you so much for having me, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, I just made a mistake. I said we'd never met. Actually, you remember it. I really don't, but I was speaking in Holland, Michigan, which is your hometown.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: And that was last December, December the 3rd.

Michael Kanis: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And I was getting ready to speak to a room full of people, and you came up and introduced yourself to me, or we bumped into each other or something. We got in a conversation, and you told me about this project that you were writing a book, wasn't quite finished, but it was of interest to me because of my interest in history as it relates to the founding of the United States. And so I turned to a colleague next to me and I said, "Would you see if you can find out if we can get together sometime to talk about this?" We have, you're here, and that's what we're going to talk about today. So it's a real pleasure to have you here.

Michael Kanis: Oh, it's such a pleasure to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: How long have you been a believer in Jesus Christ?

Michael Kanis: Oh, since I was nine years old.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

Michael Kanis: So I was raised in a Christian home and just have been a seeker of the Kingdom really since I was 12.

Dr. James Dobson: How did you get interested in American history?

Michael Kanis: Well, it was by accident because I have four kids, and I wanted to spend some quality time with the kids individually. And so the first two kids. When I asked them, how can we spend time together, they wanted to go to an amusement park. And you can only ride so many roller coasters. And I'm not a roller coaster person. So the third one I told, his name is Christian, And I told him, "Christian, we're going to Philadelphia and we're going to learn about the founding of our country." He was not thrilled about that at the time. But afterwards, he wouldn't trade it for anything, I'm sure, if you asked him.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, we have two grandchildren and we went to Washington, D.C. His mom and dad and Shirley and me were there for the National Day of Prayer. And Ryan and Laura were taking Luci and Lincoln around to see the things you were talking about. And that is not very thrilling to a four-year-old. And after a full day of museum hopping and going and looking at the monuments and

everything, they'd been to the Air and Space Museum. And it apparently was not what she had in mind. And I asked Luci how she enjoyed the day and did she like the Air and Space Museum. She puckered her lips like this and said, "Boring." So they got to be more than four to really get a feel for this. How did your nine-year-old make it?

Michael Kanis: Well, we had a special privilege because we met up with a man by the name of Dr. Peter Lillback, who's president of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. And he gave us a personal tour. And it didn't hurt that Franklin's ice cream parlor was on the list. So that made some points. When the tour was over, Christian was just enthralled. And we had just a certain amount of time left. And he said, we have to choose. And the first choice was going to Valley Forge. And that Christian blurted out, "Valley Forge." I never even heard the second choice. So we went there. And wow, what a moving experience it was to walk among the place where those soldiers had encamped. And we saw the mill owner's house where Washington had used as his headquarters. And then after that experience, we went to the top of Mount Joy, and there at the top of the mount is an arc, kind of a smaller arc, smaller than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, say, for example. But in the interior of the arc was a bronze disc, and it had an image both sides of the national seal. And Dr. Lillback asked us, do you recognize that? And neither Christian or I knew what it was until he pulled out a dollar bill. So then we knew, and he started to explain to us about it.

Dr. James Dobson: And so you began to investigate what the background was, how it was prepared, who wrote it, who worked on it?

Michael Kanis: Yes. Yeah. The thing that I think triggered it for me was I have had an interest in the kingdom of God since I was young. My life verse is Matthew 6:33, which is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." And Dr. Lubeck explained to us that the top of the seal on the backside is the phrase annuit coeptis, which can be translated as, "We've begun to do what pleases God." And I knew from seeking that, the kingdom of God, the basis of that is doing what pleases God. Jesus said in John 8:29, "Do those things that are pleasing to him." And so that relationship and intimacy with God comes from a heart attitude of seeking to please Him. And here we had that statement on our seal. And I had to find out if that was an accident.

Dr. James Dobson: And you began going to the Library of Congress and to various documents. And you found out that the Founding Fathers were very intentional about that seal.

Michael Kanis: Absolutely they were.

Dr. James Dobson: Who were the men who were responsible for it?

Michael Kanis: Well, the resolution calling for the seal was first passed on July 4th, 1776.

Dr. James Dobson: On that day.

Micheal Kanis: On that day, the first act of the new nation. And Congress asked the same three men who had just written that Declaration of Independence to now write the seal. And they did that for the reason that they wanted them to be complimentary, that the same message that was in the Declaration was going to be entrained in the Seal of the United States.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. The men that were involved, as I understand it, were Benjamin Franklin.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Thomas Jefferson.

Michael Kanis: Yes, that's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And who was the third?

Michael Kanis: And John Adams. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.

Dr. James Dobson: Anything those three men put their hand to, I'm interested in.

Michael Kanis: It's significant. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And how did they go about doing their work?

Michael Kanis: Well, they reached an agreement and they decided to write a Seal that was allegorical in nature. That's kind of unusual because a lot of the seals will have symbols on them. It might be a lion for maybe courage. But they decided that they were going to kind of split up. Each proposed a different allegorical scene and then they met back together and chose one of them that they presented to Congress. And the surprising thing is that the scene that was chosen was one from Dr. Franklin. And it was a picture of Moses standing on the shore of the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his armies being engulfed by the waters, with Pharaoh with a crown on his head and a sword in his hand on his chariot, all symbols of authority, with a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud overhead with the radiant rays of glory shining down onto Moses. The report is indicating that those rays signify God's presence and command. And His command is His authority. And His presence only occurs when we do what pleases Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, are the things that you're describing now on our dollar bill?

Michael Kanis: Well, that was....

Dr. James Dobson: Or has it changed?

Michael Kanis: Now, it has changed. However, when you look at the seal now, you won't see anything like Moses standing on the red shore of the Red Sea.

Dr. James Dobson: I just took out a dollar as you were speaking so I could look at it. Which side is it on? Is the side with Washington or the other side?

Michael Kanis: So there's two circles. If you get out a dollar bill right now, you can look. And there's a pyramid with an eye in a triangle. That's the back of the seal. And then the eagle with the shield, that's the front of the seal. And there were four committees over a period of six years from 1776 to June 20, 1782, that took to write the seal. There were four different committees. The first committee was the three. And then it was finalized by the Secretary of Congress, whose name was Charles Thompson. But the thing that's important is that the same themes that were built into the seal from the very first design were carried the way through all the designs and are the message that's allegorically placed in today's seal. Same message, different symbols.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay, I'm going to ask our listeners if they have a dollar in their pocket, and if they don't, you're in bad shape. All right, take out a dollar and turn it over to the backside and look at the dollar along with us as we describe this. Now, I don't see anywhere Moses is depicted are things that you just described.

Michael Kanis: No, you don't see that because the allegorical message is expressed in different symbols. So we'd have to go and start talking about the symbols that are on the seal and we'll start doing that now and I can show you how the allegorical message is the same as from the first design.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, all right. Go ahead and describe it for those that don't have a dollar to look at right now.

Michael Kanis: Okay. Okay. So we'll start with the back of the seal. And there you have the phrase annuit cœptis over the top triangle.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the circle on the left.

Michael Kanis: The circle on the left with the pyramid and the eye and the triangle.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Michael Kanis: And so that phrase annuit cœptis, which means we've begun doing what pleases God or God favors what we've undertaken to do. And then the triangle.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that Latin?

Michael Kanis: That's in Latin.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Michael Kanis: Yes. And that's taken from a poem by the Roman poet Virgil, who lived in about 40 B.C. And then underneath that is a triangle with an eye and a radiant extending away from the triangle. And then a pyramid. And then underneath

that is a phrase *Novus ordo seclorum*, which means new order of the ages. So to begin to understand how does Moses relate to that scene, because those are both the backs of the seal. You have to begin to look at what that symbolism means. So let's start with that eye in the triangle, for example. The eye in Scripture, which I should point out first, that there's a lot of misunderstanding about what the seal is. And there's some theories that are related to, for example, the Illuminati or Freemasons or the Eye of Horus, for example. But we know that none of those theories are accurate because there's a specific description and explanation that's been written into the journals of Congress that tell us explicitly that, that I, stands for the eye of providence. It's referring to God and none other. So we know that the I is the eye of God.

Well, a lot of people maybe are familiar with the phrase, the all-seeing eye. And that's kind of associated with judgment or being aware of something that we've done wrong, that the eye will see us and we'll get in trouble. But really, in Scripture, that is not the case. In fact, if you were able to tell me an example, I don't know of one. The eye is always God's providential care and love for us, that He is protecting us and guiding us. It's never punitive in nature.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me quote a Scripture that may not quite be accurate. This is from memory. But it says, "the eye of God is sweeping back and forth in search of a righteous man."

Michael Kanis: Yeah, that's 2 Samuel.

Dr. James Dobson: 2 Samuel. How close did I come to?

Michael Kanis: Pretty good. He's looking for a heart who's turned towards God. Yeah. Yeah, that's exactly right. And so many other times that the eye of God is mentioned in Scripture, it is always to care and love and provide for. So this is the eye of God looking over the new nation.

Dr. James Dobson: But in search of righteousness, which has moral implications.

Michael Kanis: Well, exactly. Remember the phrase over the top, we do what pleases God, *annuit cœptis*. That's in the context. See, we have to take this all together because an allegory is a story told with symbols, okay? So because they're all part of the same story, we have to read them together. So we know that the I is for God and *annuit cœptis* is talking about what pleases God. And then the triangle itself, that is a symbol of the Trinity. In this case, it's referring specifically to God the Father. So in art, religious art through the centuries, when the triangle is present, that means that this symbol of God refers to God the Father. And so we have an eye in a triangle, and the other part of that symbol is the radiant. The radiant represents God's glory. And I'm going to remind you of another Scripture. It's called 2 Corinthians 6:16. And it says that "What harmony have the temple of God with idols? Touch not the unclean thing and I will be your God and you will be my people and I will walk with you and I will dwell with you." And that is actually just an amazing expression of God's

covenantal love. And He's giving us a promise of intimacy with Him when we do what's pleasing to Him.

Dr. James Dobson: What a gift.

Michael Kanis: What an amazing gift.

Dr. James Dobson: What a gift. David wrote in one of the Psalms, "I will set before mine eye no unclean thing." That's one of the Scriptures that I see you got a smile on.

Michael Kanis: Yes, I do, because he was a man after God's own heart, because he sought to please his father. And so when we look at that symbol, we know that that is an expression of God's, as it says in the congressional record, His presence, God's presence doesn't happen when there's things that aren't pleasing to Him. Now, He's omnipresent. He's everywhere at every time. But that specific manifest presence, that fellowship with God is a very delicate thing and can be interrupted by things that are not pleasing to God.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, if I understand this correctly on the back side, there are two circles. That represents both sides of a coin. It's not just a flat seal, but it is three-dimensional.

Michael Kanis: Yes, there's two sides. The first side was the only one that was produced as a three-dimensional engraving that was used for sealing documents. So Congress didn't commission the backside of the seal to be used because really typically you only seal a document with one seal. So it didn't really make sense to go ahead and make the engraving. And so that was not produced.

Dr. James Dobson: And we go over then to the right side of the dollar, and there's the other side of the seal. The left side is called the Great Seal. That's actually written below it. And then it's completed on the other side where it says of the United States. That makes sense. So the eagle is symbolic of the country. There are, I think, 13 stars in a circle up above the eagle.

Michael Kanis: Yeah, that's very interesting. Actually, that 13 is a part of a theme of 13s in the seal. There's 13 stars in the constellation, 13 stripes on the shield, 13 arrows in the bundle, 13 letters in the phrase *e pluribus unum*, 13 letters in the phrase *annuit cœptis*, there's 13 rows on the pyramid, and the phrase *novus ordo seclorum*, combined with the date, which has nine letters, combined to be 26 or two times 13. And the number 13, of course, stands for the 13 colonies of the United States. But that's not all that it stands for.

The number 13 is symbolic of new beginnings. For example, in the Hebrew language, the word love, *ahavah*, if you total the value of the letters, that totals to 13. So the word *ahavah*, love, can be said to have a quantitative value of 13. Well, the first word in the Bible is called *Bereshit*. And that word also totals to 13. And it is translated as *Genesis*. That's where we get our word for the first book of the Bible and it means beginnings. And creation, there were 13 steps in

creation. 13 stands for new beginnings. And if you look at the phrase novus ordo seclorum, that is a new order. It's talking about both the beginning of the nation, but as stated in the congressional record, a new era, an epic begun by the beginning of the American nation.

Dr. James Dobson: The eagle has in its claws. Two symbols. One looks like an oak tree or the leaves of some tree. And over on the right are arrows. Yes. Am I seeing that correctly?

Michael Kanis: Well, the leaves are actually olive leaves.

Dr. James Dobson: Olive.

Michael Kanis: Okay. If you will notice on the dollar bill, there's actually 13 leaves and 13 olives. That's nowhere in the congressional record, so that's not actually part of the story. The artist did that, and I'm glad he did, but it isn't official. But there are 13 arrows, and we're told in the congressional record that the arrows, which are in the eagle's left talons, mean that Congress has the right to wage war, to protect and defend the American people from all enemies. But the eagle's beak is pointed to the right in which talons are held the olive branch. And the olive branch is a symbol for peace. Now, all the phrases on the seal are taken from that Roman poet that we talked about earlier, Virgil. And so the olive branch is from a poem by Virgil called Ascanius. And it's a scene in which Aeneas holds out an olive branch to Pallas, indicating that he is coming in peace. He's seeking Evander. But the olive branch really goes back much earlier than that to Noah in the ark remember the dove goes out and flies over the water and first he returns and comes back with nothing but then he returns again and that means peace that that the storm has ended and shalom has returned. And in many cultures, we see that the olive branch has stood for peace. And it's on many Roman coins. The Roman Republic, which we modeled much of our republic after and our coins, has that as a symbol. So it was a well-known symbol of peace.

Dr. James Dobson: So a symbol for peace, but the arrows indicate a willingness to fight to defend it.

Michael Kanis: Defend peace.

Dr. James Dobson: And the oath taken by the president after the inauguration.

Michael Kanis: To defend the Constitution.

Dr. James Dobson: He takes the oath to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir. That's exactly right.

Roger Marsh: Who knew that the change in our pockets carried such a story? You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring Dr. Dobson's conversation with Michael Kanis. And to hear it again or to share it with a friend who loves history

and faith, visit jdfi.org. Earlier this month, our nation celebrated its 250th birthday, but we're celebrating all month long here at Family Talk during the month of July. There's no better moment to invest in the families who call America home. And thanks to some generous friends of our ministry, the historic July matching grant is in effect right now. That means your gift will be matched dollar for dollar through July 31st, or when we hit the ceiling on this gift, which is a \$250,000 match. Just as our founders built this nation on a foundation of faith, your gift today helps strengthen the families who will carry that legacy forward. Call a member of our constituent care team right now at 877-732-6825 and find out how easy it is for you to make a donation that will be doubled in size as well as impact through our \$250,000 matching grant. Again, the number to call is 877-732-6825. Or you can write to us. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk or just use those initials JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. Or if you'd like to give your gift securely online, visit us at jdfi.org.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for spending some time with us today. And be sure to join us again next time for part two of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Michael Kanis, discovering the hidden message of the great seal of the United States. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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