



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Hidden Message of the Great Seal of the United States – Part 2

Guest(s): Michael Kanis

Air Date: July 17, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, America does have a rich Christian heritage. It's woven into the very symbols our Founding Fathers left behind. And few are more familiar than the Great Seal of the United States, but also few are more misunderstood as well. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're continuing Dr. Dobson's fascinating conversation with historical author Michael Kanis. On our last program, Michael revealed the subliminal imagery our founders purposefully placed within the Great Seal. On today's program, he'll uncover even deeper meaning, the providential care of God, virtue, unity, and freedom, and what these truths mean for our nation today. Here now is the conclusion of that conversation as we begin today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Michael Kanis: Dr. Dobson, as with all symbolism, there's often multiple layers of symbolism and in our seal is very much entwined the message of the covenant. And we began to talk about that a little bit when we were referring to the phrase annuit coeptis. But the olive branch is also referring to the coming branch. That's the Prince of Peace. And yeah, in an extended sort of metaphor, and without going into too much detail, there's a lot of depth and meaning there. But another way that we see that coming through is in that phrase, novus ordo seclorum, which many people interpret that as the new world order. But it doesn't mean that. It actually means new order of the ages. And it is taken from, again, from poet Virgil. And it's taken from his series of poems called the Eclogues. This is from the fourth eclogue, the fifth verse. And the poem goes like this. "Now is the final era of Sybil's song. The new order of the ages born afresh. Honored rule returns. Justice returns. A new lineage come down from high heaven. The boy rules what once was iron in a new golden age."

Dr. James Dobson: You'll have to interpret that for me.

Michael Kanis: Okay, let's take a look at that for just a moment. But first, you have to come with me on a little trip, if we could, into the Sistine Chapel. And there you and I, Dr. Dobson, will walk about halfway down and we'll look up at the ceiling. And there we'll see that famous fresco of Michelangelo Buonarroti with God creating Adam. Remember the one?

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness. I've stood there and gaped at it a number of times. It never ceases to inspire me.

Michael Kanis: Yes. And right there, kind of kitty corner adjacent to that fresco. Well first you have the prophet Isaiah and Daniel and right there near those two, there's a picture of a woman painted there, Dr. Dobson. And her name is Sybil Kumia. And you might think with me, why in the world would there be a picture of a woman painted there on the Sistine Chapel next to God and Daniel and Ezekiel? And she's there because the pope, Pope Julius, believed that she had given a Christological prophecy, 500 BC. And that was the prophecy that I just gave to you, that it was talking about the coming of the Son of God, the new lineage come down from high heaven. And so that was the reason that he commanded her picture to be painted up there. And so when you look at the phrase *novus ordo seclorum* in the context of the poem that was a prophecy from Sybil Cumia, you know right away that that new order that is being discussed on the seal is the coming kingdom of God and the righteous rule and reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you said in the beginning that the seal is an allegory.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Or a representation of an allegory. What are the two symbols here that it's referring to?

Michael Kanis: Okay. The allegorical message is a compilation of all of the 18 or 19, depending on how you count them, symbols in the seal. So there's four main strains in the allegorical message, and they are the providential care of God, virtue, unity and freedom. And those themes are expressed over and over again in different ways from different perspectives.

Dr. James Dobson: The complexity of this seal and of our money, of the dollar bill and the other currency is just phenomenal. That was not done primarily by artists. It was done by Founding Fathers.

Michael Kanis: Well, it absolutely was. That's exactly right. The seal, when the report was submitted to Congress, that first committee, that design was not adopted at that moment by Congress. It only took them two or three weeks to actually put that together. And the seal was continued and it was referred to another committee and another. And finally, in 1782, in May, the war was winding down and Congress was realizing that they were going to be needing this seal. for the Treaty of Paris and all the things that were happening with the winding down of the war. So they said, we've got to get this done. And Dr. Dobson, you know how it is that God seems to appoint men for just such a time? He has them in waiting. Well, his man for the hour was a man by the name of Charles Thompson. And he was the Secretary of Congress from the First Continental Congress in 1774, 15 years right through to the end, to 1789 when he retired from Congress, the only member of Congress to have served that entire period

of time. And he was quite an extraordinary individual, Scotch-Irish, and was an expert in Latin. He had memorized many of these Latin poems.

Dr. James Dobson: He doesn't show up in history much.

Michael Kanis: No.

Dr. James Dobson: I never heard his name.

Michael Kanis: No, sir. He's called the forgotten Founding Father, but perhaps one of the most significant figures in the founding of this new country. In fact, he served a pivotal role in the formation of the First Continental Congress. And our idea of a secretary today is sort of an administrative person. But that's not the way it was back then. The secretary of Congress was quite a significant role. As a matter of fact, the president of Congress was sort of the equivalent of the president of the country. You know, it's a completely different role but he served that role several times in the absence of the president in filling in the role. So quite an extraordinary man, but very steeped in Scripture. He translated the first English translation of the Septuagint, which if you'll recall, the Septuagint took 70 scholars years to translate from the original Greek into English. Charles Thompson did it single-handedly and not quite an extraordinary thing. He knew the Scriptures inside and out, backward and forward. And he infused all that knowledge of Latin and Scriptures into the seal.

Dr. James Dobson: Give me the bottom line of what you have discovered and why you're so excited about it. Because these are not just the thoughts of these great men saying, I think it would be a good idea to put 13 arrows in the claw of the eagle. There was significance to everything done here. What's the bottom line?

Michael Kanis: Absolutely. There's three very encouraging things. And I'm absolutely encouraged and just feel so positive about the fact that this is coming to light now. A, because it is coming to light now that God's timing is perfect, and He's revealing the truths that are in the seal, the call to virtue, the call to unity, at a time when it couldn't be more needed. I think you'd agree with me on that, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely.

Michael Kanis: The other thing that's so encouraging is that it's God our Father calling us back to Him, that original desire for Him, for intimacy with Him and to be an observer of the covenant and to do what's pleasing to Him. It's Father calling us to Himself for restoration and healing and wholeness for the country. That's very encouraging.

And then the third reason that I'm so excited about it is because of the call to virtue. The message for virtue is throughout the seal and continually and repeatedly there's this cadence of the call bringing us back to virtue. And it is a common theme in all the letters of the founders and that a republic requires

virtue in order to function. One of the authors that I've studied in conjunction of the seal is Montesquieu. And he taught that democracies and republics function on a motor or a spring that drives them. And for republics, that motor is virtue. And without virtue, a republic ceases to function.

Dr. James Dobson: Well John Adams said the same thing.

Michael Kanis: He did.

Dr. James Dobson: This is intended for a virtuous people.

Michael Kanis: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: It's wholly inappropriate for any other people or any other way of life, any other thought.

Michael Kanis: You are so right about that. In fact, the reason that virtue, Dr. Dobson, is so important is because people must be governed on the inside. Because if they're not, then they must be governed externally.

Dr. James Dobson: Michael, doesn't it sort of disturb you as it does me that we have leaders and maybe the majority of them who seem to want to walk away from this historical understanding of who we are and how we got here and of the faith of our Founding Fathers and deny that they even believed in God?

Michael Kanis: Well, there's a confusion here, Dr. Dobson, because virtue is a character of God, that ultimately all virtues are expressed by love. And somehow, we have, as a people, equated virtue with religion. And so because we've tried to separate the church really from all of society, not just the public sphere. You can't even pray at a football game, seems like anymore. We've done that without realizing that in one brush, we've included virtue together with religion, and we've banished virtue from the public square, which should never happen. It is the absolute wrong thing. It's going in 180 degrees the wrong direction.

Dr. James Dobson: And we do so at our peril.

Michael Kanis: Absolutely. Well, we see the effects of it. See, what happens is when we lose virtue, we lose freedom. So as we give up more and more virtue, we become a less free society. And you can see it measured on almost every level: economically, politically. Once we go down that road and we give up those freedoms, that something else will take its place. And then we have a government...

Dr. James Dobson: And nature abhors a vacuum.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: And you remove one way of thinking and something else will take its place.

Michael Kanis: Right. And the core of what is driving our values is really love and a loving God. So to divorce ourselves from that, what replaces it is not love. It's something else.

Dr. James Dobson: I would like our listeners to especially pay attention to what I'm about to say right now. This is not original with me, but it is available. It's a concept that we ought to all know about. The Constitution gives us the freedoms. The Bill of Rights resulted in these fundamental freedoms. And one of them, as a matter of fact, the first one is the freedom of religion. Freedom to believe what we wish. The Democratic Party have tried to change that constitution, not by changing the wording, but changing the meaning of it. And instead of freedom of religion, it's becoming the freedom of worship. It's a big difference because freedom of worship relates to what you do in a church. And so we're free to do that thanks a lot. We can go to our own churches and worship God and pray, but we can't do so in the public square. The difference between the two is night and day. And we have to be constantly alert to these efforts to undermine and erode this wonderful document that was provided, I think, under the inspiration of the Heavenly Father that provided the foundation for this country. And if we walk away from it, turn our back on it, and refuse to worship the God of the universe, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we will pay a price for it, and we will not survive. That's my belief. I'm no prophet. I don't know when that's coming, but I do believe we're moving in that direction, and that concerns me greatly.

Michael Kanis: Well, and I think also one of the Very important things to note about that, Dr. Dobson, is that you can't do things in a vacuum, that there are consequences for everything. And if individuals don't have the right of conscience and to express their heartfelt beliefs, then there's consequences that come along with that. I don't think we would want to remove the expression of religion, the right for individuals to express their consciences and their beliefs, because that's what drives so much of the good that's done in America. And you simply cannot remove the right of full expression of religion without removing the good that religion does in America.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's why I see it as somewhat sinister when people try to change the Constitution just by removing a single word and replacing it with one having different meaning. That's not accidental. That is saying, go ahead and worship. You're free to do so and do so on your own terms. But don't try to do it publicly. Do it privately. It's freedom of worship instead of freedom of religion.

Michael Kanis: Well, that was certainly never the intent of the founders. And if you read the letter from Thomas Jefferson in which he's talking about the wall of separation. That is the farthest thing from his mind. When you actually look, he's actually trying to protect.

Dr. James Dobson: The infamous letter to the Danbury Baptists.

Michael Kanis: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Creating the wall of separation. People really believe that. They believe that it is freedom from religion, not freedom for religion.

Michael Kanis: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And it is the government with the complete absence of moral integrity or moral principles. And it's a private or individual thing only and that's not the way the Founding Fathers intended it. Now, Michael, what is the essence of this message? Does it matter that we understand the seal of the United States?

Michael Kanis: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Does it make any difference that there is symbolism in there that has a spiritual integrity to it? What does this mean is what I'm asking you.

Michael Kanis: Thank you. Yeah, it's absolutely vital, Dr. Dobson, because the message of the seal is that we must walk in integrity, in virtue, to behave in a way that's not for our own purpose, to fulfill our own desires, but for something higher, for something more. We have to reject selfish motivation. That's also called corruption. For something that's higher and greater. And the more that we engage in our lives with each other and in our official capacities in whatever way that they are, the more virtue and integrity that we'll have, the less corruption and the better our society will function. That's number one. Number two, God's providential care of the nation is contingent on our relationship with Him. How do we behave? Because God can bless certain types of behaviors, and He has to withhold His blessing under certain other types of behaviors. So if we don't understand God's covenantal love and His providential care of us when we break the covenant, we break our relationship with God, and then we hinder Him from blessing us.

The third theme of the seal, I call them the four pillars. This is the third pillar of unity, means that when we use division for political ends, it weakens our country. Unity means that we pick that common core of values that we hold as Americans, and we champion those. We don't allow them to be trampled on.

Dr. James Dobson: But they are being trampled, and we are divided, and we're no longer e pluribus unum out of many one. We were intended for a nation to be unified, even though it had different values and different interpretations and different understandings. We were one people because of that spiritual common denominator and that is essentially gone. I hate to admit it, but it's gone.

Michael Kanis: But it doesn't have to be.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, where do we start? With a revival, right?

Michael Kanis: We do. We do. I think of the essential component of any change that's going to happen is the same that we all know that if my people, and those are...

Dr. James Dobson: Who are called by My name.

Michael Kanis: Who's He talking to? He's talking to Christians, isn't He? Believers. who are called by My name. Okay, that doesn't just mean do you call yourself a Christian. When we receive God's name, that means that we're part of the family, sons and daughters of God. "So if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves," what happens when we humble ourselves? We're willing to be taught. We're willing to be corrected. We're willing to change our course and do something new, and that something new has to be focused on God and what pleases Him. Then what will happen? "I will hear from Heaven and heal their land." So that's the beginning of it. I have no doubt, but we still live in a country, Dr. Dobson, where there's all different kinds of religions, all different kinds of backgrounds, all different ethnicities and belief systems. But that doesn't change the fact that we all share common values. Those are the virtues that we hold dear. And it's not hard to find those in common. They're out there all over the place. We constantly admire things in people when we see kindness and generosity. And so for us to forget that virtue does not have to be ejected from discourse and the public square and from the courthouse and anywhere else that shows up. But to embrace it, to me, that is probably the first step in the road back to being a country that pleases God.

Dr. James Dobson: The Declaration of Independence says "we hold these truths." Truths and virtues are pretty much the same thing, aren't they? "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Michael Kanis: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Man, what a statement. It comes from the mind of mortal man. It's amazing what they handed to us, and we're throwing it away.

Michael Kanis: Well, so true. And I noticed that with the preamble to the declaration that that word liberty is there, and that is a vital component of the seal. Remember I told you there was four parts. Well, that was the final one that I hadn't mentioned yet was freedom or liberty, and that without knowing the truth, it's truth that sets you free. An individual can't operate in freedom while being deceived at the same time. It's impossible to make a right choice if you don't know what's true. And so unless we operate in truth and make our decisions with the right mind and a reasoned eye toward what virtue is, then we can't make right decisions. And then those decisions get taken away from us. And then we're back into a situation where governance is imposed from the outside.

Dr. James Dobson: There's so much here, Michael. We could talk another year, I think, on this subject. You've spent two and a half years studying it, and I thank you for investing that effort. You've now got it in a book. What's the name of the book?

Michael Kanis: It's called *The Hidden Message of the Great Seal*, and then it has a subtitle, *How Foundational Truth from the Dawn of Liberty May Rescue a Republic in Peril*.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm asking our listeners to pray for you that that book will become widely read and that our discussion today will have motivated a lot of people to understand their own history as a nation by looking into the work of the Founding Fathers and especially in this context, the seal, Great Seal of the United States. Blessings to you, Michael. Thanks for coming and for sharing these thoughts with us. I've been inspired by it.

Michael Kanis: Oh, me too. What a great conversation. Thank you so much for having me.

Roger Marsh: You know, it's truly remarkable to think that the truths of providence Virtue, unity, and freedom were quietly woven into our nation's most enduring symbol. Today on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we heard part two of a conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and historical author Michael Kanis. Now, if you'd like to revisit today's program or share it with a friend, you'll find it along with a link for Michael's book called *The Hidden Message of the Great Seal* at jdfi.org. You know, just as our Founding Fathers understood that a free nation depends on people of virtue, this ministry depends on faithful friends like you as well. And right now, your gift goes twice as far through our \$250,000 July matching grant in honor of America's 250th anniversary. Every dollar you donate will be matched dollar for dollar through July 31st. To double your impact, give securely online at jdfi.org or call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to tune in again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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