



19. The “Mark of the Beast”: the Enemy's Mark of Ownership

The enemy's seal, or the "mark of the beast," is no trifling matter. The Lord seldom raises His voice and shouts; but He shouts His loudest, His most urgent warning, about this.

To be good all your life and then to accept the "mark of the beast" in the last hours of time--this would be a terrible tragedy. The "mark of the beast" is the final step in worship of self. Every person who chooses to be selfish will at last receive the "mark of the beast," unless something happens to change him in the meantime. "The third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:9, 10).

The only thing that will make us immune to receiving that "mark" is to receive the "seal of God" (see Study Guide Fourteen). Revelation says that all who do not receive the "seal of God" will program themselves to receive the "mark of the beast." It is time to be sure that we understand what this is, and how to steer away from it.

1. To understand what is the mark of the beast, let us first identify the "beast" of Revelation 13.

The beast is the religio-political power that dominated history for 1260 years.

The books of Daniel and the Revelation fit together as a lock and key, each one explaining the other. For example, Daniel describes four great beasts he saw in vision--a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a strange one more like a dragon than anything else. The lion was a symbol of Babylon, rich and majestic; the bear was Medo-Persia, cruel and blood thirsty; the leopard was Greece, clever and swift--Daniel describes these three by name (Daniel 2:38; 8:20, 21); and the fourth beast, all-powerful, was a symbol of the empire which followed Grecia, the pagan Roman Empire. The "beast" we see in Revelation 13 combines the characteristics of the four preceding world empires.

(a) "The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:2.

This is not difficult to understand. He receives his power, his seat, and great authority from "the dragon," a symbol of the devil (Rev. 12:9), who worked through the Roman Empire.

But a new thing happened to the Roman Empire which had never before happened in history. Midstream in its history, it abandoned its official pagan religion, and its character changed from a political to a religious power. As the emperors became weaker and weaker, they moved their capital from Rome to Constantinople. This left an empty place which the Bishop of Rome was quick to fill. Soon he began to lord it over the other bishops, and to take to himself the prestige which the former emperors in Rome had exclusively enjoyed. This is how the "dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority." One writer says, "Out of the ruins of political Rome, arose the great moral Empire in the 'giant form' of the Roman Church" (A. C. Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church*):

Dragon: Roman Empire used by Satan

Power: Army under Belisarius Seat: Rome

Great Authority: Letter of Justinian recognizing the authority of the Roman Bishop as pope--A.D. 533.

(b) One of its heads was "wounded to death." Revelation 13:3.

In the time of Napoleon, the French had come to believe that the Roman Catholic Church was their enemy. His

army marched into Italy, determined to put an end to the papacy. Berthier took the pope prisoner in 1798. Thus the papacy which had led others into captivity was itself led into captivity.

(c) "His deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after ... and ... worshiped ... the beast." Revelation 13:3, 4, 7, 8.

The healing of the papacy's deadly wound has been a gradual one; but the most significant step was taken on February 11, 1929, when Premier Mussolini restored to the papacy its temporal power. The pope again became a king. An official who witnessed the signing of the agreement between Mussolini and the papacy said, "We are now witnessing the signing of this document. As the ink flows from these pens it is healing the wound of fifty-nine years."

Although the Roman Church once was "wounded," the wound is being healed today. Pope John Paul II's great popularity was seen in his unprecedented visits to America, visits "impossible" two or three decades earlier. A commission of Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians recommend the union of the two churches, to heal their 450-year separation. This plan would unite 760 million Roman Catholics and 65 million Anglicans, including 3 million American Episcopalians. Baptist Dr. Billy Graham has said that he sees the Pope of Rome as the one who should head up a union of all the churches.

Today the papacy is making a remarkable comeback in world power. Through all the new nations of the Third World and in the Western nations, her tremendous rising power is plain to be seen. In many countries she controls education. She is building lofty and massive cathedrals, opening her arms to welcome millions of converts to her faith.

And other churches outside the Roman fold are looking to her for leadership. The Rt. Rev. John Moorman, Anglican leader, said that if there is to be a final unity among the churches, "there will have to be a central head of the church, and that head will clearly have to be the bishop of Rome."

(d) The beast spoke "blasphemies." Revelation 13:5, 6; Daniel 7:25.

When Jesus forgave people their sins, the Jews accused Him of blasphemy, saying, "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). A Roman Catholic writer says, "The priest holds the place of the Savior Himself who, by saying, 'Ego te absolvo'" [Latin, 'I absolve thee'], he absolves from sin. ... To pardon a single sin requires all the omnipotence of God. ... But what only God can do by His omnipotence, the priest can also do by saying, "Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis."

The same writer says further: "But our wonder should be far greater when we find that in obedience to the words of His priests--HOC EST CORPUS MEUM [Latin, 'This is my body']--God Himself descends on the altar, that He comes whenever they call Him. ... They move Him as they please, from one place to another; they may, if they wish, shut Him up in the tabernacle, or expose Him on the altar, or carry Him outside the church; they may, if they choose, eat His flesh, and give Him for the food of others. ... The priest may, in a certain manner, be called the creator of his Creator" Alphonsus de Liguori, *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, pp. 26-36.

A Roman Catholic encyclopedia says: "The pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the Vicar of God. ... The pope is as it were God on Earth" *Prompta Bibliotheca*, Article "Papa," Vol. VI, pp. 26-29. As late as 1894 Pope Leo XIII said: "We hold on this earth the place of God Almighty."

(e) The "beast" makes "war with the saints." Revelation 13:7.

During the time when the papacy was supreme in Europe, historians tell us that millions of people were put to death because they would not acknowledge the papacy as God's true church on earth. Pope Martin (A.D.1417-1431) said to the king of Poland regarding the Christian followers of John Huss: "Make it a duty to exterminate the Hussites. Remember that these impious persons dare to proclaim the principles of liberty. ... They hold that Christ came on earth to abolish slavery; they call the people to liberty. ... Burn, massacre, make deserts everywhere, for nothing could be more agreeable to God, or more useful to the cause of kings, than the extermination of the Hussites."

(f) "Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Revelation 13:7; Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:6. (A day in Bible prophecy = 1 year. – Eze. 4:6, Num. 14:34)

The Roman Emperor Justinian made a decree that the bishop of Rome, the pope, should be the head of all the churches. This decree went into effect in the year A.D. 538 when the Arian Ostrogoths were driven from Rome. In that year began the temporal power of the papacy, which continued unabated through the struggles of 1260 years, until the fateful year A.D. 1798 when the French general, Berthier, entered Rome, proclaimed a republic, and took the pope prisoner.

2. How many shall worship the beast? Revelation 13:8.

ANSWER: "And _____ that _____ upon the _____ shall worship him, whose names are _____ written in the book of life of the Lamb. ..."

This time is very near. But as we see the great masses of people turning toward Rome, we must not imagine that everyone is following in that direction. God has a people who will remain loyal to Him. There will be only two classes on earth: those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and those who yield to "the beast."

In recognizing these prophecies, we honor the many sincere adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. It is neither fault-finding nor bigotry to recognize the plain truth of God's word in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. The prophecies identify the papacy as a system. But it is the outworking in history of a principle that operates in every human heart--the natural desire for exaltation and power over our fellows.

In case there may be some lingering doubt whether we have truly found the "beast" and his "mark," God will give the "number" of the beast so that all can be as sure who he is, as though he had a passport or tax number.

3. To help us identify this power, what is the number of the "beast"? Revelation 13:18.

ANSWER: "His number is _____ (write it in figures)."

The Romans of John's day spoke and wrote Latin. This language uses Roman characters for numbers. The Roman Catholic Bible (Douay version) has a note on this verse: "Six hundred sixty-six. For centuries the title of the Pope of Rome has been understood to be Vicarius Filii Dei, which means, 'Vicar of the Son of God.' In view of the fact that the Son of God Himself declared the Holy Spirit to be His Vicar on earth (John 14:16-18), this title appears rather presumptuous."

"The letters inscribed in the Pope's miter are these: 'VICARIUS FILII DEI' which is the Latin for 'VICAR OF THE SON OF GOD' Catholics hold that the church, which is a visible society, must have a visible head. Christ, before His ascension into heaven, appointed St. Peter to act as His representative. ... Hence was given the title, 'VICAR OF CHRIST.'" Our Sunday Visitor, (Catholic Weekly), "Bureau of Information," Huntington, Ind., April 18, 1915.

The papacy does claim to be the Vicar of the Son of God, "Vicarius Filii Dei," in her own language.

V I C A R I U S F I L I I D E I
5 1 100 0 0 1 5* 0 0 1 50 1 1 500 0 1

Total = 666 (* U = V = 5).

4. The prophet John saw another beast in Revelation 13:11. Where did this beast come from?

ANSWER: "... Out of the _____."

The "sea" represents large populations of people. The "earth" must therefore be the opposite--an uninhabited part of the world out of which a new nation was to "come up" about the time that the papacy was being led into captivity by its "deadly wound" in A.D. 1798.

What great nation was rising to prominence and power about the time when the 1260 years of papal supremacy ended in 1798? Only one arising in a largely uninhabited part of the world, and that was the United States of America, which declared its independence in 1776, and which was experiencing its early beginnings by 1798. This nation arose in the New World, a vast continent of largely uninhabited land.

5. Describe the beast that came out of the earth. Revelation 13:11, 12.

ANSWER: "He had _____ like a _____, and he _____ as a _____. And he exercises _____ the _____ of the _____ before him, and causes the _____ and _____ which dwell therein to _____ the _____, whose deadly wound was healed."

"Two horns like a lamb" suggests the youthful and peaceful character of the young America, and its twin principles of civil and religious liberty which helped so much to develop the nation into a prosperous world power. (The United States is still a "young" nation.)

Unlike the horns on the other beasts or kingdoms, these two have no crowns on them. The founders of America determined to learn a lesson from Europe's past history, by creating a new nation without a king.

But what a pity that its character changes from that of a "lamb" to a "dragon [that] exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him. America will yet become a persecuting power, and will reach out to grasp the hand of the papacy. So close will be the union between the two that it will cause "the earth and those which dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

6. What does this lamb-like beast say "to them that dwell on the earth"? Revelation 13:14.

ANSWER: "That they should make an _____ to the _____, which had the wound by a sword, and did live."

The image to the beast is a copy of what made the papacy supreme in the Dark Ages--a union of church and civil government, so that the church had power to enforce its dogmas through the magistrates and police.

The nations of the world have generally broken away from any form of domination by the church. Civil government should be free from religious control. Jesus commanded that church and state should be separate: "Render therefore unto Caesar [the government] the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). The American Constitution guarantees the complete separation of church and state, enabling the people to obey this command of Jesus.

But Revelation says the time is coming when America will repudiate the principles which have brought her success, and will induce other nations to follow her example of enforcing religious belief and practice. Then will come a revival of the oppression and persecution that was so common during the Dark Ages.

Does this seem unlikely? Man's boasted progress is only skin-deep. Underneath, human nature is still evil. As wars, bloodshed, riots, and natural disasters increase, the world's rulers will be at their wits' end to know what to do. Very easily in crisis they can turn to the Roman Church for moral and spiritual leadership. The fulfillment of these closing verses of this chapter is only a step away from us.

7. The papacy claims that changing the "Lord's Day" from the seventh to the first day is the supreme sign of her authority, which Protestants are content to follow. How will almost "all that dwell upon the earth" become willing to accept "the mark of the beast"? Revelation 13:16-18.

ANSWER: "He causeth all, ... to receive a mark in their _____, or in their _____. ..." (New International Version: "... He forced everyone. ...").

The keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath distinguishes the "saints" who keep the commandments of God. The mark of the beast is the counterfeit of God's true mark, to deceive as many people as possible. Many may receive the mark of the beast while they presume that they are safe in following the majority in religious practice.

Daniel 7:25 reveals how the papacy tried to change God's law by substituting another Lord's day than the day chosen by God. It would not be fair to accuse the papacy of this crime unless she herself were willing to admit its truth. Catholic authorities openly admit that they alone are responsible for the change of God's holy Sabbath.

"Question: Have you any other way of proving the [Roman] church has power to institute festivals of precept?"

"Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her--she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, p. 174. "Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act... and the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things." Cardinal Gibbons, by Chancellor H. F. Thomas.

"There is no proof in Scripture that God willed the Sabbath to be changed from Saturday to Sunday, so that those non-Catholics who do not accept the value of (Catholic) Tradition as a source of Faith, should logically still observe Saturday as the Sabbath." Francis J. Ripley, *This is the Faith*, p.178.

"Nothing is said in the Bible about a change of the Lord's day from Saturday to Sunday. We know of the change only from the tradition of the [Catholic] Church. ... That is why we find so illogical the attitude of many non-Catholics, who say they will believe nothing unless they can find it in the Bible and yet will continue to keep Sunday as the Lord's day on the say-so of the Catholic Church." Leo J. Trese, *The Faith Explained*, p. 243.

Those who receive "the mark" "in their foreheads" will believe that Sunday is the Lord's Day even though the Bible says differently. Those who receive the "mark in their right hand" will know fully that it is false, yet for fear and security will go along with the majority rather than stand on God's side.

8. How important will the Lord regard this matter of "the mark of the beast"? Revelation 14:9-12.

ANSWER: Those who line up with the enemy of the Ruler of the Universe, "The same shall drink of the _____ of the _____ of God, which is poured out _____ into the cup of his _____." ..."



The Mark of the Beast

Those who refuse the "mark of the beast" are in the minority. They endure the scorn and opposition of relatives and friends. Some have to lose a precious job because of the Sabbath. But all the hardships they bear are nothing compared to the assurance of God's favor upon them.

But please note: no one yet has received the mark of the beast. Not yet have the final issues been made plain to everyone. The Lord has many faithful people observing the false sabbath in ignorance, and they will be enlightened.

The Issue is Loyalty and Obedience to God.

The "beast" appeals to the love of self. Those who bear the cross with Christ will gain the victory over the beast and his image and his mark, which is opposed to the cross of Christ; and the true Sabbath of the Lord thus becomes the sign of bearing the cross.

9. This will be a severe test to "all that dwell upon the earth. "How only will we get strength to say "no" to this terrible pressure? Revelation 13:8.

ANSWER: Through faith, a heart-appreciation of the sacrifice of "the _____ slain from the _____ of the _____." And Revelation 12:11: We will overcome "by the _____ of their _____; and they loved not _____ unto the death."

10. Do we really "have to live" at the cost of rebelling against the Lord? Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:5.

ANSWER: "For if we have been planted together in the _____ of his _____, we shall be also in the likeness of his _____." ... "

11. Did Jesus plead "I have to live!" when He faced the cross where He died for us? Philippians 2:4-8.

YOUR ANSWER: _____.

Now is the time to yield ourselves fully to the Lamb who was slain for us. The crisis that is fast developing will test to the utmost the patience and faith of the saints, but God will have a people who stand loyal to His truth in the face of the opposition of the world.

12. Do you ask for the grace of Christ to enable you to stand firm against the mark of the beast? _____.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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