

What does the Bible say?

As you read this study, I encourage you to study the corresponding scriptures for yourself to develop a personal, confident understanding of biblical truth. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Study like the Bereans, who listened to Paul but did not take his word for it. They studied the scriptures for themselves so they would know for sure.

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” I ask that you do the same with this study. Please pray before you begin.

The Mark of the Beast (Daniel 3)

Today, we will explore an intriguing subject: the mark of the beast. What do most people believe this mark to be? (Answer: 666.) However, did you know the Bible indicates that 666 is not actually the mark? Let's examine this further.

Read Rev. 13:16, 17. Notice in verse 17 that those who can buy or sell have one of three things: the mark, name, or number. What is the two-letter word that separates these three items? “Or.” The punctuation mark is neither a name nor a number. These are three distinct items. What then is 666? Let's read verse 18 for the Bible's answer.

Read Rev. 13:18. It says, “His number is 666.” The mark of the beast is not 666 at all, despite some claims. That's why reading the Bible is so important—it's clear and straightforward. God doesn't make it hard for those who study the Bible. What is the mark of the beast? We can't cover this topic fully today, as we still need to learn who the beast is in a future lesson before we can identify his mark. However, we can explore several interesting insights about the mark itself. Let's start here in...

Read Rev. 13:11-17 discusses two beasts: the lamb-like beast that speaks like a dragon (verse 11) and the first beast described in verses 1-3. Let's chart what the Bible says before we ask what it means.

(Read the verses for each point.)

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| 1. Vss. 11, 12 | There are two beasts |
| 2. Vs. 14 | The lamb-like beast makes an image to the first beast |
| 3. Vs. 15 | He commands the world to worship the image of the beast |
| 4. Vs. 15 | Those who refuse to worship are threatened with death |
| 5. Vs. 16 | This is a worldwide event. “All” |
| 6. Vs. 18 | This is connected in some manner with 666 |

Here are the six points. (Read them again.) Now, we should ask, “What does this mean?” Let’s allow the Bible to reveal its own message. In Bible prophecy, what does a beast symbolize?

(Read Dan. 7:15-17, 23.) The Bible states that beasts symbolize kings or kingdoms. Using this key, we understand that the two beasts in Revelation 13 represent two kingdoms. These kingdoms create an image and demand global worship of it. Those who refuse will be unable to buy or sell and may face threats of death. This describes the mark's context. Building on this context, we now examine Daniel 3, which recounts an event closely resembling what is expected to occur at the end of time. This story in Daniel 3 holds prophetic significance. Let’s analyze it.

Read Dan. 3:1-6 — consider the parallels with Rev. 13:

- 1. In v. 1, a powerful kingdom is described: Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, the most dominant nation of that era.**
- 2. In v. 1, he constructs an image.**
- 3. The size of this image is based on the system of six: it stands sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, reminiscent of the number 666 in Rev. 13.**
- 4. In v. 4, he summons “all the peoples, nations, and languages.”**
- 5. In v. 5, he commands universal worship of the image.**
- 6. In v. 6, anyone who refuses to worship will face death.**

The six common features of the mark of the beast, as outlined in Rev. 13, are shown here. This demonstrates a key approach to Bible interpretation. In Revelation, God often conveys much in just a few verses by referencing Old Testament stories to depict end-times events. That’s why many OT words and names are used throughout Revelation. Out of 404 verses, 276 include OT quotations. These stories serve as illustrations for last-day scenarios. Therefore, when Revelation describes an image being erected by a kingdom and commands everyone to worship it, readers are encouraged to revisit the OT story for additional context.

Revisit verse 1. What metal did Nebuchadnezzar use for this image? It was completely gold from head to toe. Do you recall another story from Daniel we discussed earlier that also depicted an image? That was Daniel 2. What materials composed the image in Daniel 2? (Recall the metals.) What did the gold head symbolize? (Babylon.) What did the breast and arms of silver represent? The Medes and Persians. Was it good news to the king that his empire would one day be overthrown by a weaker nation? No. Let's return to Daniel 3.

One day, the king chooses to share his opinion on the image in Daniel 2. He plans to create his own image, completely made of gold from head to foot. Nebuchadnezzar proclaims, "I will not fall!"

Pay attention to the importance of this. Nebuchadnezzar repurposes a symbol from God, used in Daniel 2 to teach truth, and alters its meaning. He creates an image resembling the one in Dan. 2, complete with a gold head. However, while God used various metals to illustrate the existence of four major empires, Nebuchadnezzar misinterprets this by constructing the entire image out of gold.

So the first thing we learn here, from Daniel 3, is that the mark of the beast and the image involve taking a truth of God and altering it slightly so that it no longer teaches the truth but becomes a counterfeit.

In Daniel 3:1, we learn that the image is 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits wide. The Babylonians created the sexidecimal system, which divides a minute into 60 seconds, an hour into 60 minutes, and a circle into 360 degrees. This numerical system led them to attribute special significance to the number 6, believing it held magical properties. As a result, pagan worship often linked the number 6 to their deities. In fact, the number 666 has its origins in ancient Babylon, where it was associated with the worship of their pagan gods.

This underscores the fact that the king was basing this counterfeit image on pagan worship, not the worship of the true God. This indicates that the mark of the beast will take the truth of God and counterfeit it, and the counterfeit will be based on paganism, not the true worship of God.

Let's continue the story as recorded in Dan. 3. The king orders all his empire's leaders to gather on the plain of Dura, where he has erected a 90-foot-high image. He declares that everyone must worship when the music starts or be thrown into a burning furnace. However, three men refuse to bow. When they are brought before the king, they state that their trust is in the God of heaven. Let's pick up the story in verse 16.

Read Dan. 3:16-18. Their response, “We are not careful,” indicates they are not anxious or worried. If God chooses to save us, He can. If He does not, we still will not worship your image. Let’s examine why they wouldn’t bow before the image.

Read Ex. 20:4-6. The second commandment forbids such an act. From this, we understand that the mark of the beast is associated with a strong kingdom that enacts laws requiring worship that contradict God’s commandments. What should we do if we find ourselves in a situation similar to that of these three men?

Read Acts 5:29; it teaches us always to obey God rather than human authorities. Let’s look back at our story to see what happens next.

Read Dan. 3:19 describes how the king becomes furious. God’s three faithful servants are bound, as if they were a threat to society. This example shows how Satan often operates — making followers of the law seem like lawbreakers.

The three Hebrews likely faced intense temptation as they waited for the furnace to heat. I picture Satan whispering to them, “What’s the point of dying? How will you witness if you’re gone? Just ask the king for another chance. When the music plays, bow and tie your sandals this way, you stay alive and can still serve God’s purpose.” Despite the devil’s cunning temptations, they refused to give in. I want to be that steadfast, don’t you?

Maybe you already guessed what happens next. We find it in... Dan. 3:21-23. They are cast into the fire, which is so intense that it kills the guards who throw them in. I picture the king sitting on his throne, challenging anyone to defy him. But then, as he gazes into the furnace, he notices something moving within the flames. What could it be?

Read Dan. 3:24-25. They are not dead! God has sent His Son to save them.

Read Dan. 3:26, 27. The king commands them to emerge from the fire, and the crowd is amazed! The only things burned are the ropes that held them. Have you ever thought about what might have happened if they had compromised and bowed down? They would have missed the chance to meet the Son of God. It is in trials—when temptation to compromise arises—that we come closest to Jesus, provided we stay faithful to Him.

Read Dan. 3:28-30. Because of their faithfulness, people throughout the kingdom came to know the true God. Additionally, these three men received promotions. This shows that God honors those who honor Him. Isn’t this a motivating story of faithfulness? Let’s review its lesson about the mark of the beast by comparing it with Revelation 13.

Summary of the Mark of the Beast Issue

1. The mark is not the number 666. (Rev. 13:17, 18)
2. Powerful kingdoms will guide the world to accept the mark.
3. The mark is linked to worship of a symbolic “image” that mimics a divine truth.
4. This counterfeit worship will draw from ancient pagan rituals.
5. The entire world will be instructed to follow this false worship.
6. Such worship will go against God’s commandments.
7. Although most will compromise, a faithful few will remain loyal to God.
8. God will rescue them from the fiery furnace, and they will suffer no harm.
9. Through this, they will develop a meaningful experience with Jesus.

In a future lesson, we will explore this topic in greater detail, examining who the beast is and what the mark specifically entails.

Let me ask you a question before we finish this lesson. Where was Daniel during this story? He was still alive but not present. The Bible doesn’t specify his location. Maybe he was on a diplomatic mission. God providentially removed him from the scene, forcing the other three to stand alone.

None of us can be certain who will face the upcoming challenge until it occurs. However, I am committed to remaining faithful to Jesus regardless of the outcome. Don’t you feel the same? Let’s express this in prayer to God. I encourage you to study this on your own, as it is the best way to reinforce what you have learned.

Let’s prepare; I urge you to pray that the Lord will give you a love for His truth, amen! As you prayerfully consider this topic, I want you to know that we are here to help answer any questions you may have. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at <https://freechristianbooks.us/questions>