

THE MARK OF THE BEAST VERSUS THE SEAL OF GOD

Suppose one day you find a small sack of grain on a shelf in your house. You wonder if it would be good to eat. But then you see a label on the sack that says, “Danger! Contains rat poison. Do not eat!” You’d be thankful for that label, wouldn’t you?

Warning signs serve a purpose. They alert us to danger! They are there for our good. The Bible has a warning sign for us. In fact, this warning may be the most fearful and consequential one in the entire Bible.

“And 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, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb . . . and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11) We certainly don’t want to receive this “mark of the beast!”



The final issue centers on true and false worship.

KEY POINTS

When the Bible uses the term “beast,” it is not a negative term. We’ve studied how God uses lions and bears and dragons to depict kingdoms and spiritual forces. That is how the term “beast” is used here in Revelation 13 and 14. Let’s read about it: “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy... and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Revelation 13:1-2)

Notice five characteristics of this beast power:

1. It was a power that would arise out of the sea. We have learned that in prophecy water often represents peoples. (Rev. 17:15) In other words, it wasn’t to grow up in a newly-settled part of the globe such as the United States.

2. The dragon gives this beast its power and authority. What does that mean? Revelation tells us that the dragon is a symbol of Satan who works through other powers to do his work. Revelation 12:3-5 speaks of the early church and how Satan used pagan Rome to persecute Jesus and his disciples.

So this beast power received its authority from pagan Rome. So what does that mean?

Listen to this statement from Professor Labianca, a well-known historian from the University of Rome.

“To the succession of the Caesar’s [that is, pagan Rome] came the succession of the pontiffs of Rome. When Constantine left Rome, he gave his seat to the pontiff.” Here’s another: “The popes filled the place of the vacant emperor at Rome, inheriting their power...” Stanley’s History, (p.40)

Are we then saying that this beast power is papal Rome? We don’t need to because the Bible and all of history are saying it. As you reflect on this, please remember that we’re dealing with a system here. We love our Catholic brothers and sisters and pray that many of them will be saved in God’s eternal kingdom. Our concern here is with the papacy.

3. This beast power has “on its heads the name of blasphemy.” It is a blaspheming power. We have seen this in our previous lectures. The papacy says that the church can forgive sins. That it can change the commandments. This is blasphemy.

4. The Bible says that one of the beast’s heads was “wounded,” but that its wound would be healed when the beast would resume great power and authority. The power of the papacy was wounded when the pope was taken captive in 1798. Today that power has returned in a mighty way.

5. It would continue for forty two months. Using the year-to-date principle we have used before, this would equal 1260 years. (Num. 14:34; Ez. 4:6) How many religious systems have lasted this long? There is only one – the Papacy. History validates this prophecy. The Papacy rose to power in 538 A.D. Add 1260 years and you arrive at 1798, the year that the Pope was taken captive by the French General Berthier, ending the political power of the papacy. During this time period this power would persecute the saints – which it did with a vengeance.

But the prophecy said this power would have a “mark” of authority. So, what is that mark? This is actually not a difficult question to answer. Let’s let Rome speak for herself: When asked about the Roman Church’s authority to institute certain festivals, look at the response from a Catholic source: “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.” (A Doctrinal Catechism, pg. 174)

So what is the “mark” of this rebellious power? Listen: The Catholic Record, September 1, 1923—answering this question—said, “Sunday is our mark of authority. The church is above the Bible. And this transference of the Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.”

In contrast, now, can you see how the Sabbath, which points directly to God as Creator, becomes God’s seal or mark and Sunday worship the mark of the beast power? The keeping of God’s Seventh-day Sabbath is a sign, a mark, that a person acknowledges and worships God as Creator. It’s an outward sign that we have decided to obey God rather than man.

The mark of beast will be placed on those who bow to Sunday worship when it is finally enforced. And the seal of God, during this time, will be symbolized by Sabbath observance by those who love God and keep His commandments. Please understand, no one has the mark of the beast now. Many faithful people go to church on Sunday with little awareness they are ignoring God’s fourth commandment. But the time is coming when all these issues are going to come to the forefront. All the world is going to have to make a choice one of these days.



The Sabbath, God’s memorial of Creation, tells us why we should worship Him.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

The issue with the mark of the beast will center around worship and the Sabbath, the one commandment that points directly to God as our Creator, and tells us why we should worship Him. Will we obey God rather than the traditions of man? In the end, God will have a people that love Him and keep His commandments. (Rev. 14:12)

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

At the heart of this study lies this question – do you love Jesus enough to fully surrender to Him your opinions and will and wholeheartedly keep His commandments? (John 14:15) We must choose to love and obey Him today and every day, no matter what!