

REVELATION – SERMON 54

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Revelation 13:16-18

INTRODUCTION

- There are many who claim to be Christians who are not truly what they claim to be
- It can be very difficult to discern which are the true born again believers, and which are mere professors – the wheat and the tares can look very similar
- This is especially the case when Christianity is accepted in a society and there are no great costs for identifying as a Christian
- It is when the followers of Christ are subjected to the persecution of the world that the genuine believers are more clearly distinguished from the counterfeit
- But there is a day coming in the near future when the contrast between believers and unbelievers will be seen in a way that has never been seen before
- That distinction will be in the form of a *mark* – the unbelievers will receive the mark, while the true believers in Christ will refuse the mark.
- Revelation 13 describes two men, depicted as “beasts”, who will be prominent actors during the seven-year tribulation period
- The Antichrist will be the political ruler while the False Prophet will be the religious leader, deceiving the world to worship the beast
- In verses 16-18 we are shown more of the False Prophet's diabolical activities on behalf of the beast.
- The “mark of the beast” and its associated “number of the beast” is the most well known part of the Revelation
- Unbelievers who may know nothing else about the Bible know about the number 666
- While the world embraces this mark and number, Christians avoid it
- *Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia* is the fear of the number 666

Consider three characteristics of this *mark of the beast*:

I. THE MARK EXHIBITS A COMMITMENT TO THE BEAST (16)

A. The nature of the mark

1. The word for “mark” is *charagma* meaning a brand, impress, identification marker (cf. Acts 17:29)
2. It can mean a brand with a specific design that is easily identifiable
3. This *marking* of unbelievers corresponds to the *sealing* of God’s servants in ch.7
4. Branding of slaves and sometimes of soldiers was common in the ancient world and identified ownership and authority over the branded person
5. Receiving the mark will be an act of worship of the Antichrist and a declaration of submission to him as God
6. Like cattle receiving the brand of their owner, the unbelievers will willingly give themselves to the beast as his possessions
7. In pagan Rome, when a person offered a pinch of incense in worship of Caesar, they were issued a *libellus*, a certificate of sacrifice as proof, and allowing them to live
8. The mark of the beast will serve a similar purpose

B. The scope of the mark

1. Small and great, rich and poor, free and bond
2. This encompasses all groups of people all over the world
3. This has never happened in history, and remains to take place yet in the future

C. The placement of the mark

1. The right hand or forehead
2. These are prominent parts of the body which are clearly seen
3. The right hand indicates strength and service, while the forehead denotes the mind
4. The Israelites were commanded to keep God’s commandments upon their hand and between their eyes (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

II. THE MARK IS ESSENTIAL FOR COMMERCE UNDER THE BEAST (17)

- A. No buying or selling without the mark
 - 1. This shows that the Antichrist will have control of the global economy at this time
 - 2. The overriding desire to survive will drive many to yield to the beast and take the mark, including professing Christians
 - 3. Many believe the mark may incorporate a microchip implant which is already being used in some parts of the world for financial transactions
 - 4. True believers will not take the mark and will suffer because of it
 - 5. Though many will be martyred at this time (Revelation 20:4), many will survive and will enter alive into Christ's kingdom (Matthew 25:31-46)
 - 6. The promised benefits of receiving the mark will prove false as those who bear it will suffer God's wrath in this world (Revelation 16:2) and the next (Revelation 14:9-11)

III. THE MARK ENUMERATES THE CHARACTER OF THE BEAST (18)

- A. The call for wisdom and understanding
 - 1. This tells us that the cryptic words that follow require spiritual wisdom to discern the meaning
 - 2. In a similar way, Daniel's prophecy was sealed till the time of the end when only "the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:9-10)
- B. Counting the number of the beast
 - 1. Verse 17 tells us that it is "the number of his name"
 - 2. The Biblical languages' alphabets also function as numbers, and the practice of *gematria* (Hebrew) or *isopsephy* (Greek), where the numerical value of a name is calculated, has long been used to attempt to identify the Antichrist
 - 3. Countless figures throughout history have been calculated to be 666
 - 4. Yet until the Antichrist appears, the name that this number points to will not be evident
- C. The significance of 666
 - 1. This number is associated with Solomon (1 Kings 10:14) and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4-7)

2. Nebuchadnezzar's image was 60 x 6 cubits (Daniel 3:1)
3. It is the number of a man
 - a. Man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:27,31) and is to work six days a week (Exodus 20:9)
 - b. Seven is the number of divine perfection which man falls short of (Romans 3:23)
4. A person's "name" is much more than a mere appellation—it describes the very nature of the person (eg. Proverbs 18:10), hence 666 is the number that represents the character of the beast
 - a. The threefold repetition of something indicates its fulness and comprehensiveness (cf. Revelation 4:8)
 - b. 6 is the number of sinful man, but the antichrist is not merely a sinful man, he is *the man of sin* (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
 - c. The whole of rebellious humanity reaches its climax in the beast
 - d. 666 indicates the highest that man can attain to independent of God

CONCLUSION

1. Though the choice to receive the mark of the beast is in the future, each one of us today has a very real choice as to whose "mark" we carry; who we belong to—God or Satan
2. Paul bore in his body "the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17)
3. Have you suffered for the cause of Christ? Are you willing to suffer for his sake?
4. The Christian has been purchased by Christ, and has crucified the flesh (Galatians 5:24), is conformed to his image (Romans 8:29), follows his steps (1 Peter 2:21), has love for the brethren (John 13:35), and glorifies God in body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:20)
5. Those who are Christ's must have their right hands of strength marked and devoted to the service of their Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 2:10)
6. Those who are Christ's must have their minds consecrated to the purity, humility and love of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:5-8; 4:8)
7. What is it that marks and characterises your life—this present evil world, or Jesus Christ?