

What Is the Mark of the Beast? #1

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 13:16

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Though there may be controversy among professing Christians over the true meaning of the Mark of the Beast, there is no controversy over the fatal consequence that will befall one who receives the Mark of the Beast, according to the sobering words in Revelation 14:9-11:

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 the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

One cannot imagine a warning more likely to awaken us from our apathy and indifference to these prophetic enemies of Christ, who the faithful witnesses of Christ face. We are not engaged in a light discussion about certain controversies of prophetic literature, which have little or no consequence. Dear ones, these are life and death issues (heaven and hell issues) that we have been considering from Holy Scripture and continue to search out this Lord's Day.

The identity of the Mark of the Beast has filled the imagination of many within the Church to a greater degree than perhaps many other prophetic subjects (due to the terrible everlasting consequences that will fall upon those who receive it). The problem, I dare say, is that so many well-intentioned Christians do not clearly understand what the Mark of the Beast is that they are not to take or to receive. How can you avoid this Mark of the Beast, if you do not accurately interpret what the Mark of the Beast is? Thus, it is our goal (by God's grace) in this sermon today to clearly and biblically present to you what the Mark of the Beast is, so that you may avoid it and lead others by your prayers and testimony likewise to avoid it altogether. Like careful and credible investigative reporters, we are going to examine the subject of the Mark of the Beast by asking two questions today: What and Who? (1) What is the Mark of the Beast? And (2) Who Requires that the Mark of the Beast Be Taken? Next Lord's Day we will continue our examination of the Mark of the Beast.

I. What is the Mark of the Beast?

A. A little review is in order before we proceed to the immediate subject under consideration.

1. In Revelation 13, the Lord Jesus reveals to His beloved Apostle, John, three earthly enemies that Satan will inspire to war against Christ and against His faithful witnesses, who stand firmly and immovably upon Christ, upon His imputed righteousness in the Gospel, upon His sound doctrine, upon His pure worship, upon His faithful church government, and upon all His holy commandments (no matter how despised they may become by the vast majority in church and state).

2. These three enemies of Christ have been discussed in great detail in previous sermons, and I refer you to those sermons if you are just now joining us. By way of a brief review, the three enemies of Christ revealed in Revelation 13 are the following.

a. **The First Beast that arises from the sea with seven heads and ten horns**

(Revelation 13:1-10)—this is the Civil Beast of a Revived Roman Empire of Europe (that proceeded from the ten horns or ten barbarian kingdoms that divided the former united Roman Empire), and the head of this Civil Beast that is wounded to death and comes alive is that of a Revived Roman Emperor. For you will recall that the Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor arose from the ashes in 800 a.d., when after 324 years without a Roman Empire in the west or a Roman Emperor in the west, Charlemagne (who was called the “Father of Europe” by Pope John Paul II in 2004 [Papst Johannes Paul II (2004). "Ansprache von seiner Heiligkeit Papst Johannes Paul II". Internationaler Karlspreis zu Aachen]) was crowned Augustus and Emperor of the Roman Empire by Pope Leo III in Rome, December 25, 800.

b. **The Second Beast that arises from the earth with two horns like a lamb and speaks as a dragon** (Revelation 13:11-14)—this is the Ecclesiastical Beast of the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy (under its cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests). This Beast comes with all deception to mislead the masses; pretending to be a lamb (like Christ), it speaks like Satan, the dragon.

c. **The Image of the Beast** is the Papacy (i.e. the Papal Antichrist) who is given life and made to speak with an alleged universal authority by the Lamb-like Beast (as the Cardinals of the Romish Church gather to elect each new Pope and give to him the worship of absolute obedience, which belongs only to God). We also saw in recent sermons that the Image of the Beast (in Revelation 13) is the Antichrist revealed by the Apostle John (in 1 John 2:18-19) and is the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition revealed by the Apostle Paul (in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

B. But now let us turn to our text in Revelation 13:16, as we seek to answer the question, What is the Mark of the Beast? There are those who believe the Mark of the Beast is the outward keeping of a first-day Sabbath rather than a seventh-day Sabbath (Seventh Day Adventists). There are those who believe the Mark of the Beast is the sign of the cross that is applied with ashes during Lent or with water in baptism to the forehead in the Church of Rome by the Papal Antichrist and his priests. There are those who believe that the Mark of the Beast is a laser mark upon the forehead or upon the hand, or a microchip that has the number, 666, and is implanted beneath the skin of the hand. And there are many other interpretations that have been alleged to be what is meant by the Mark of the Beast in Revelation 13:16. However, I submit that all of these suggested interpretations fall short of what is taught when we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. For the essence of the Mark of the Beast is not that which is outward, but rather that which is inward (and then the inward essence of this evil Mark of the Beast manifests itself outwardly in the life and conduct of those who receive it, as we shall see). This Lord’s Day, I will focus my attention upon the scriptural identity of this Mark of the Beast, and next Lord’s Day (God willing) we will demonstrate why some of these other interpretations of the Mark of the Beast fall short of the biblical testimony.

1. First (as we set out to understand what is the Mark of the Beast), it is important to identify which of the two Beasts is this a Mark for—the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor, or the Ecclesiastical Beast of the Romish Church and its hierarchy? After all, it is specifically identified as “the mark of THE beast” in Revelation 16:2 and Revelation 19:20, rather than simply the mark of A beast. This is the Mark of THE specific and particular Beast. I submit that the context in Revelation 13 makes it clear that it is the Mark of THE First Beast (i.e. the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor), just as the phrases, “the name of the beast” and “the number of his name” also refer to the First Beast or Civil Beast (Revelation 13:17). In fact, I submit that all the references in Revelation 13 to the word “Beast” (except one) are references to the First Beast or Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor (Revelation 13:1,2,3,4,11[“another beast”],12,14,15,16,17,18). Thus, we should understand that this Mark of the Beast (just like “the name of the Beast” and just like “the number of the Beast”) belongs to the First Beast, i.e. to the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor.

2. Second, as we consider further what is this Mark of the Beast, we need to ascertain whether this Mark of the Beast is a literal, visible Mark that is placed upon the body or implanted beneath the

skin of those who receive it, or whether this Mark of the Beast is a figurative and symbolic Mark that essentially represents what is true within the mind and conscience of a person? Is the Mark of the Beast literal or figurative, essentially in the body or in the soul of those who take it?

a. First, the Greek word used here for “mark” (*charagma*) is used all but one time exclusively for the Mark of the Beast in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 13:16,17; 14:9,11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). The only time the Greek word, *charagma* (mark), is used outside of the Book of Revelation is in Acts 17:29 (where it refers to idolatrous images as gravings or marks of man’s art, which are worshipped, in contrast to worship of the invisible God, who is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth). Thus, the use of the word “mark” (*charagma*) has in its New Testament usage an association with idolatry (whether it be the religious worship given to idols and images, or whether it be the worship given to the Civil Beast, by way of absolute obedience, which belongs only to the Triune God revealed in Scripture, cp. Revelation 13:16,8).

b. Second, there are clear references in the Scripture to the Lord sealing and marking His faithful witnesses upon the forehead and upon the hand, and in none of these cases does the Lord intend that we understand the seal on the forehead or hand to be literally and visibly imprinted upon the forehead or the hand or beneath the skin. Consider the following passages of Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-8; Ezekiel 9:3-4; Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4 (these sealed and marked are the redeemed of the Lord, whose consciences and souls belong to the Lord Jesus Christ by way of creation and redemption). Just as the faithful Church of Christ has the name of God and of the true Church (the New Jerusalem) written upon her forehead (Revelation 14:1; cp. Revelation 3:12), so the Harlot Church of Antichrist has the name of abominations and her apostate church written upon her forehead (Revelation 17:4-6). Dear ones, in none of these instances just noted in Scripture does the Lord intend us to interpret the writing that appears upon the forehead as something that literally applies to the outward body of a person, but rather as that which figuratively applies to the conscience and soul of those who receive the Mark.

c. Third, just as the Beast, whose mark it is, is a figurative and symbolic Beast that represents an immoral civil institution (and not a literal Beast with seven heads and ten horns), so likewise the Mark of this figurative and symbolic Civil Beast is a figurative and symbolic Mark that represents the absolute submission of the conscience in servitude to the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Emperor. In other words, since the Beast is not literal (but rather figurative), so like the Mark of the Beast is not literal (but is rather figurative as well).

d. Fourth, carefully note that the Mark of the Beast is placed figuratively upon the forehead and the hand, which represents the absolute submission of the conscience (the Mark upon the forehead) and the subsequent obedience of works and life (the Mark upon the hand) to the Civil Beast. For those who take the Mark of the Beast upon their forehead, the Beast becomes the lord of their conscience (rather than God alone being the Lord of the conscience), and this lordship of the Civil Beast over the conscience of his servants and slaves, leads to an outward conscientious obedience to all of the unlawful authority and laws of the Civil Beast. In the ancient world, slaves were visibly marked on their foreheads or hands by their masters as belonging to them (as were soldiers to their Commander and as were worshippers to their false gods). Thus, the heart of the issue (i.e. the essence of the matter) is one of lordship. Who is the master and lord of one’s conscience? Is it the Beast or is it the Triune God of Scripture? The works of the hand and one’s outward obedience will make clear who is your master and lord. Note that those who are sealed in their foreheads by the Lord are His servants (as opposed to the Beast’s servants) in Revelation 7:3; Revelation 14:1,4; Revelation 22:3-4. Thus, I conclude that by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we are led by Scripture itself to interpret the Mark of the Beast as essentially representing what is true in the mind, conscience, and heart of a man, woman, or child.

3. One last question that I would like to briefly address before moving on to the next main point is this: Does the curse that is uttered against those who take the Mark of the Beast (in Revelation 14:9-

11) fall irrevocably and unchangeably without any subsequent possibility of faith and hope in Jesus Christ? Do those who have taken the Mark of the Beast (for a minute, an hour, a day, a month, or a year in submitting their consciences to the Civil Beast) necessarily commit the unpardonable sin, so that having taken the Mark of the Beast there is absolutely no room for God's forgiveness or for sincere repentance?

a. First, let us be clear about the state and condition of those who are represented as taking the Mark of the Beast. This is not viewed as being a temporary taking of the Mark of the Beast or a one-time taking of the Mark of the Beast. To the contrary, the language that is used would indicate that this is a permanent taking of the Mark of the Beast, so that one's entire life is characterized by way of submitting his/her conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast. This is indicated by the use of the Greek present tense in Revelation 14:9 (where the Greek verbs for "worship" and "receive" are in the present tense—which does not convey a temporary condition or a one-time event, but rather conveys a permanent worship of the Beast and his Image by way of absolute obedience to their laws and commands, and a permanent receiving of the Mark of the Beast by way of submission of one's conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast).

b. Second, by way of illustrating the grammatical point just made, note the use of the Greek present tense by the same Apostle John in 1 John 3:6: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Now is John teaching that if we at any point in time sin after our conversion, it demonstrates that we are not Christians (that we do not abide in Christ and have not seen Christ by faith and do not know Christ as Savior)? Is the Apostle John teaching perfectionism? Absolutely not, for John has already made it clear that Christians sin and continue to look to their Advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1). Thus, when John teaches in 1 John 3:6 that Christians do not sin, he means that Christians do not live permanently in sin and are not characterized by a life of sin (the Greek present tense conveys this meaning in 1 John 3:6). However, those who do not look by faith alone to Christ and His righteousness as their only ground to be justified before a Holy God, there is no forgiveness of sin and there is no overcoming sin in their life by the power of God's Spirit, and so nonchristians can only continue to permanently live in sin and their lives are characterized by sin. This is likewise the sense of the Greek present tense in Revelation 14:9, in reference to those who worship the Beast and his Image and who receive the Mark of the Beast (they permanently do so as that which characterizes their lives).

c. Third, I do not believe that all who sin by taking the Mark of the Beast are beyond the grace of God to save and to rescue (any more than is true of those who are guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, covenant-breaking, Sabbath-breaking, murder, or sexual immorality). Certainly, anyone who lives in sin (regardless of what sins are committed) and will not trust alone in Christ and His righteousness for the forgiveness of sin, will be condemned to everlasting torment in hell. And so this is likewise true of one who permanently takes the Mark of the Civil Beast and thereby makes the Civil Beast the lord of his/her conscience. Dear ones, it is a great evil to make anyone lord of your conscience besides the Lord who has created you, but it is (in and of itself) the unpardonable sin.

d. But it may be asked, If this sin of permanently taking the Mark of the Beast is essentially no different by way of the consequence of eternal torment that follows from one who permanently continues in any sin (without the forgiveness of Christ), why does the Lord Jesus make such a point of this particular sin of receiving the Mark of the Beast and the everlasting torment that follows? I submit, it is not because this sin is in itself the unpardonable sin, but because it is a sin into which so many have been and will be blindly misled to commit because they have swallowed the deceptive lie that God requires us to submit our conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast in whatever he commands us.

II. Who Requires that the Mark of the Beast Be Taken?

A. The reason why this Mark of the Beast in compelling universal submission of the conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast has been and will be successful is because of the one who requires the Mark of

the Beast to be received. This deceptive lie to submit the conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast has had and will have the authority of the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) behind it (which is the question to which we now turn). In other words, the reason so many have been in the past and will yet be in the future led to take the Mark of the Civil Beast by way of submitting their consciences to his lordship and implicitly obeying his commands is due to the one who pushes and presses this upon the consciences of the people—the Vicar of Christ, the Papal Antichrist, the Image of the Beast. And that is why the Lord especially warns us to beware of the Mark of the Beast—it has and will be promoted by one who claims to be representing Christ (the Papal Antichrist).

1. Therefore, the Lord teaches us to be ever vigilant and watchful, for the devil would rob us of a conscience that is submitted to Christ alone.

2. As we consider the way in which Revelation 13:16 begins (“And he causeth all”), I submit it is the Image of the Beast (the Papal Antichrist) who causes all throughout the European Roman Empire to take the Mark of the Beast. For, you see, it is the Image of the Beast (the Papal Antichrist) that is last mentioned in Revelation 13:15, who causes all those who will not worship him (i.e. the Image of the Beast—the Papal Antichrist) to be killed and slaughtered. And it is the same Image of the Beast (the Papal Antichrist) who not only causes the slaughter of those who will not worship and give him an absolute obedience (Revelation 13:15), but also who causes all to receive the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:16), and if they will not comply, to suffer privation of bodily needs (Revelation 13:17).

B. But you ask, Why would the Papal Antichrist (i.e. the Image of the Civil Beast) compel and cause the vast majority of those in the European Roman Empire to worship the Civil Beast by way of an absolute obedience and to take the Mark of the Civil Beast by way of submitting their consciences to the lordship of the Civil Beast? How does this promote the agenda of the Papal Antichrist? Because as the Papal Antichrist promotes the Civil Beast, the Civil Beast will promote the Papal Antichrist and his rule over the Church as the Vicar of Christ. Ever since Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe, the Papacy has promoted the claims of those Emperors, Kings, and Rulers who promoted his claims as visible head of the Church upon earth. Clearly, there have been great struggles for power between the Papacy and the Emperor at various times in history (with the Emperor being victor on certain occasions, and the Papacy being victor on other occasions). However, when the Civil Beast of the European Roman Empire has been strong, the Papacy has sought to promote its agenda of universal headship in religion within the European Roman Empire by working together to promote the agenda of the Civil by way of treaties and concordats with the Civil Beast. I submit this has been the case in the past, and continues to be the case at the present time (which I will further demonstrate in the next sermon).

Dear ones, by way of application to our own lives, let us never forget that when we submit our consciences to any power, any authority, any person (even to our own alleged authority over our consciences), we have compromised the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For Christ died for us, His redeemed ones, that we being set free from the lordship of Satan, the Civil Beast, the Papal Antichrist, and even the lordship of ourselves over our consciences should submit our consciences under the lordship of Jesus Christ alone (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Therefore, when we follow the dictates of a Pope, Priest, or Minister in authorizing how we should worship the one true living God (rather than submitting our consciences to Christ as He speaks to us in the words of Scripture alone), we have compromised the Gospel. When we (as God’s redeemed ones who trust in Christ and His glorious righteousness alone for our justification) walk in fear of the condemning wrath of God, we are submitting our consciences to the lies of Satan, rather than submitting our consciences to the promises of Christ (that we are delivered from the condemning wrath of God to come through our Mediator, who suffered God’s wrath in our place), and when we do so, we are compromising the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When

Christian Churches submit their consciences to the civil magistrate and incorporate with the state, so that Christ is no longer Head of His Church (but the civil magistrate takes power within the Church to institute civil officers, called trustees, to oversee the Church of Christ), the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been compromised, because Christ died for His Church so as to deliver her from the lordship of any other power or authority over her, except His own.

Beloved, let us not compromise the Gospel of Jesus Christ by allowing our consciences to be submitted to any sin in reigning over us, or any power to rule over our consciences that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

And lastly, dear ones, let us never forget that we (as Christ's redeemed ones) are to have the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ's loving commandments in both the Old and New Testaments to be written as signs upon our foreheads and as signs written upon our hands—a faith in Christ and love for Christ in our consciences and hearts, and a faith in Christ and love for Christ that is evidenced in our loving and grateful obedience. We believe with our consciences and heart, but that faith is only evidenced to be a genuine faith as we practice it in our lives. For, dear ones, faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Let us, dear brethren, not only believe the Gospel by being sealed in our foreheads, but let us also practice the Gospel by being sealed in our hands as well. Then, dear ones, is the redeeming love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Gospel seen as a light within your family, at work, and within the Church and nation. The Gospel is powerful to change hearts and lives, but dear ones, reformation must begin with the Gospel changing your heart and life, and my heart and life.

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