

What Is the Mark of the Beast? #2

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 13:16-17

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Rev. Greg L. Price

In the previous sermon, we saw once again how a faithful interpretation of prophetic symbols (like the Mark of the Beast) is not found in the latest novels or apocalyptic movies, nor is an accurate interpretation of prophetic symbols found in that which is most sensational and popular within the majority of Christendom, but rather we are always to appeal (first and foremost) to Scripture—Scripture is to interpret for us what is the Mark of the Beast. By way of a brief summary, this is what we gleaned from Holy Scripture in regard to the Mark of the Beast.

1. The Mark of the Beast is the Mark of the **First** Beast that has the seven heads and ten horns, which is the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Revived Head or Emperor.
2. The Mark of the Beast is not essentially a literal, outward mark on the body or implanted beneath the skin, but is figurative in nature. Just as the Civil Beast that has seven heads and ten horns is not literal (but is revealed in figurative language in Revelation 13:1-3), so the Mark of this Civil Beast is not literal (but is also revealed in figurative language in Revelation 13:16-17). To be signed, sealed, or marked upon the forehead represents that one's conscience belongs to the lordship of God or belongs to the lordship of the Beast (as the case may be), and to be signed or marked upon the hand represents that one's obedience is directed to the lordship of God or is directed to the lordship of the Beast (as the case may be). Thus, the essence of that to which the symbolic language of being signed, sealed, or marked upon the forehead points is one of lordship. Who is your lord? God or the Beast? God or man?
3. And finally, the prophetic character that compels those of every social status within the European Roman Empire to take the Mark of the Beast is the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy). Just as the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) causes all those who will not worship him with absolute obedience to be killed (Revelation 13:15), so the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) causes all those who will not submit their consciences and obedience to the Civil Beast to suffer the consequences of economic deprivation (as we see in Revelation 13:16-17).

With that brief summary before us, let us proceed to consider the main points for the sermon this Lord's Day: (1) Brief Responses to Those Who Promote Different Views of the Mark of the Beast; (2) Consequences of Those Who Refuse to Take the Mark of the Beast.

I. **Brief Responses to Those Who Promote Different Views of the Mark of the Beast.**

A. I would briefly like to address the views of those who offer a different interpretation for the Mark of the Beast than the interpretation that was presented in the previous sermon (and summarized above). Most of these various positions on the Mark of the Beast (that differ from the interpretation summarized above) fall under two general headings: (1) Those views that interpret the Mark of the Beast to be something literally and outwardly applied to the forehead and hand; (2) That distinctive view that interprets the Mark of the Beast as worship on the first day of the week (as is practiced by most professing Christians), as opposed to worship on the seventh day of the week (as is practiced especially by Seventh Day Adventists).

B. First, the view of those who interpret the Mark of the Beast to be something that is applied literally and outwardly to the forehead and hand. Those who hold this view (probably the majority of professing Christians) would take the Greek word that is translated as “mark” (*charagma*), as referring to a mark that is imprinted or placed in some way upon the forehead or hand. It would also be noted by those holding this view that the Greek preposition, *epi*, is used, indicating that it is a mark imprinted or placed “on” or “upon” the forehead or hand (according to Revelation 13:16: “a mark in [*epi*—on or upon—GLP] their right hand, or in their foreheads”). Thus, some understand the Mark of the Beast as a brand of some nature, or some visible laser mark; others understand the Mark of the Beast to be an embedded micro-chip that is surgically implanted below the skin; others interpret the Mark of the Beast to be a headband that is worn around the forehead and a wristband worn around the hand that testifies, “bismallah” (i.e. “in the name of Allah”); and finally others believe the Mark of the Beast to be the sign of the cross that is placed by Roman Catholic Priests upon the forehead using ashes during Lent or using water at the time of baptism. Although the mark in these various interpretations is different, what is common to them all is that something is literally and outwardly applied to the body (as opposed to the conscience, mind, or heart of a person). In response to these various interpretations of the Mark of the Beast, let me note the following difficulties I see.

1. To interpret this Mark of the Beast literally and outwardly applied (as in any of the views just noted) is to discount the rest of prophetic revelation that uses the **figurative** language of marking, writing, or sealing God’s servants as those who **inwardly** submit their consciences to the lordship of Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 6:4-8; Ezekiel 9:3-4; Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 17:5; 22:4). Just as the Greek word for “write” (*grapho*) has a literal use in historic narratives (like John 8:6), but is used figuratively in prophetic literature (like Revelation 14:1; 17:5), so likewise the Greek word for “mark” (*charagma*) has a literal use in historic narratives (like Acts 17:29 to an image that is “graven” or “marked”), but is also used figuratively in prophetic literature (like Revelation 13:16). And just as the Greek word for “seal” (*sphragizo*) has a literal use in historic narratives (like Matthew 27:66), but is used figuratively in prophetic literature (like Revelation 7:3; 9:4), so likewise the Greek word for “mark” (*charagma*) has a literal use in historic narratives (like Acts 17:29 to an image that “graven” or “marked”), but is also used figuratively in prophetic literature (like Revelation 13:16). Thus, the use of a word which may have a literal meaning in a historical narrative, in no wise excludes the same word from being used in a figurative sense in prophetic literature (e.g. the word “beast” is used in many places in Scripture in a literal sense, but that does not preclude its use in a figurative sense here in Revelation 13—and because the Beast is symbolic, the Mark of the Beast is also symbolic). Scripture must interpret Scripture rather than some arbitrary principle of literal interpretation.

2. Likewise the same problem is faced by those who take a literal view of the Mark of the Beast when they consider the Greek preposition, *epi* (“on” or “upon”). For the Greek preposition, *epi*, is clearly used figuratively in the Book of Revelation to refer to the name of God that is written “on” or “upon” (*epi*) the foreheads of those who follow Christ. They must once again explain how the same Greek preposition (*epi*) is used a number of times in the Book of Revelation for that which is figuratively (and not literally) written or sealed “on” or “upon” (*epi*) the foreheads and hands of those who internally submit their consciences and their outward obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ alone (Revelation 14:1; 22:4). Likewise note that the Harlot Church of Rome likewise has her name written “on” or “upon” her forehead (Revelation 17:5). Thus, that which is written or engraved “on” or “upon” (*epi*) the forehead is not to be understood literally, but figuratively in such prophetic places of Scripture. I submit that just as there is a contrast between the faithful Church (which is figuratively identified as a virgin in Revelation 14:4) and the unfaithful Church (which is figuratively identified as a harlot in Revelation 17:5), so the followers of Christ are figuratively identified as those who have written upon their foreheads the name of God (i.e. their consciences are submitted to the lordship of Christ), whereas the followers of the Beast are figuratively identified as those who have the Mark of the Beast upon their foreheads (i.e. their consciences are submitted to the lordship of the Beast).

3. Although I believe the Mark of the Beast is that which is essentially internal and applies

to the conscience in submitting to the lordship of the Beast, that internal submission of the conscience certainly may and will manifest itself in outward acts of conscientious obedience (whether it be an oath of allegiance to obey the Beast, or a flag to be waved in honor to the Beast, or some other outward sign of obedience to the Beast, whether a brand, a micro-chip, or something worn). I do not deny that any of these might be possibly required of those who follow the Civil Beast, but what I strongly maintain is that the Mark of the Beast is figurative and is essentially internal, meaning the submission of one's conscience to the lordship of the Beast.

C. The second interpretation that differs from the one I have presented as the biblical view is that of Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), who interpret the Mark of the Beast as the imposed worship of God on the first day of the week (rather than on the seventh day of the week). SDA have other significant errors which they embrace, but this is the one that directly relates to the Mark of the Beast (which is our focus today). SDA believe that the Sabbath is violated and desecrated by the worship of God on the first day, because they maintain that it was the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church that changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day (and not God) according to Daniel 7:25 (the Little Horn will "change times and laws", which I submit refers not to the Sabbath but to the many "holy days" the Papacy and the Church of Rome have added every month to their calendars). Thus, according to the SDA, a change of the Sabbath is a mark against the God and for the Beast. My brief response is as follows.

1. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). Thus, if Christ keeps the morality of the weekly Sabbath rest, but changes the day that it is observed from the seventh day to the first day, He has the right and the authority to do so, as Lord of the Sabbath.

2. Just as the seventh day Sabbath was a celebration of God's creation rest (Genesis 2:1-3) and a sign of Israel's redemption from Egypt (Exodus 20:1; Exodus 31:13; Deuteronomy 5:15), so the first day Sabbath is a celebration of Christ's new creation at His resurrection (2 Corinthians 2:17; Hebrews 4:9-10) and is the realization of redemption of God's new Israel from bondage to sin, Satan, and death through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:11; Hebrews 2:14-15). Just as God preserved the morality of the Fifth Commandment to honor father and mother while changing that which was not moral within it (cp. Exodus 20:12 with Ephesians 6:3), so likewise God has preserved the morality of the Fourth Commandment to rest one day out of every seven while changing that which was not moral within it (a seventh day Sabbath to a first day Sabbath).

3. There is sufficient evidence in the New Testament that the seventh day Sabbath of the Old Testament was changed by Christ (the Lord of the Sabbath) to the Lord's Day (or first day Sabbath) rather than by the Papacy or Roman Catholic Church: (1) the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to His disciples (Mark 16:9—Christ was not raised on the seventh day, but on the first day of the week; John 20:19,26—Christ meets with His disciples and imparts to them His gracious Spirit on the first day of the week, and waits to appear to them one week later); (2) the Apostles of Christ (who were Christ's authoritative Ambassadors) continue the first day of the week for worship and gathering the collection for the needy, passing over the seventh day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2); and (3) the Apostle John calls the day in which Jesus appeared to him and gave to him the Revelation, the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10—*kuriake* is only used here and in 1 Corinthians 11:20—just as the Lord's Supper was changed from the Passover and was initiated by Christ to remember His death, so the Lord's Day or first day Sabbath was changed from the seventh day Sabbath and was initiated by Christ to remember His resurrection).

4. It was not the Papacy or the Roman Catholic Church that changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week, but was Christ (as is attested by early Church Fathers that preceded the usurped authority of the Papacy in changing "times and laws" Daniel 7:25).

a. **Ignatius (30-107 a.d.)**. Ignatius was appointed to be the bishop of Antioch about 69 a.d. during the apostolic era. This epistle was most likely written 98-107 a.d. He was noted to be a disciple

of the apostle John. Ignatius describes the change from observing the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Lord's Day as brought about by Christ's death and resurrection (and not by the Papacy).

Those who have come to the possession of new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of THE LORD'S DAY, on which also our life has sprung up again, by him and by his death (*Epistle To The Magnesians*, Ch. IX, emphases added).

b. **Epistle of Barnabas (about 100 a.d.).** The Epistle of Barnabas (though not canonical), nevertheless sets forth the practice of early Christians in regard to Lord's Day worship or as it is also called worship that occurs on "the eighth day", which was instituted by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (and not by the Papacy).

Wherefore, also, we keep THE EIGHTH DAY with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead (*Epistle Of Barnabas*, Ch. XV, emphases added).

c. **Justin Martyr (110-165 a.d.).** Justin refers to the first day of the week in which Christians gather for worship as "Sunday", and once again attributes the worship on Sunday to the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week (not to the decree of the Papacy).

ON THE DAY CALLED SUNDAY is an assembly of all who live either in cities or in the rural districts, and the memoirs of the apostles [i.e. the inspired writings of the apostles found in the New Testament--GLP] and the writings of the prophets are read BUT SUNDAY IS THE DAY ON WHICH WE ALL HOLD OUR COMMON ASSEMBLY, because it is the first day on which God dispelled the darkness and the original state of things and formed the world, and because Jesus our Savior rose from the dead upon it (*First Apology Of Justin*, Ch. LXVII, emphases added).

d. **Tertullian (145-220 a.d.).** Tertullian clearly states that the Jewish Sabbath (or seventh day Sabbath of the Jews) has been changed by God and has passed away, just as was true of circumcision.

It follows, accordingly, that, in so far as the abolition of carnal circumcision and of the old law is demonstrated as having been consummated at its specific times, SO ALSO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH IS DEMONSTRATED TO HAVE BEEN TEMPORARY (*An Answer To The Jews*, Ch. IV, emphases added).

e. **The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (120 a.d.).** *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* is not canonical, but yet it gives the practice of Christians early in the second century as to which day of the week they gathered for worship. That day is identified as the Lord's Day (which is associated with Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week in other early writings).

1. BUT EVERY LORD'S DAY DO YE GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure (*The Teaching Of The Twelve Apostles*, Ch. XIV, emphases added).

f. **Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (200-300 a.d.).** Again this early document is not canonical, but it is nevertheless helpful in making clear that Christians regularly worshipped together on

the Lord's Day (or the day of Christ's resurrection). This document reflects the practice of Christians before the Council of Nicea (325 a.d.) or before Emperor Constantine forbade work on Sundays (321 a.d.).

XXX. ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD, THAT IS THE LORD'S DAY, ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES TOGETHER, WITHOUT FAIL, giving thanks to God, and praising Him for those mercies God has bestowed upon you through Christ, and has delivered you from ignorance, error, and bondage, that your sacrifice may be unspotted, and acceptable to God, who has said concerning His universal Church: "In every place shall incense and a pure sacrifice be offered unto me; for I am a great King, saith the Lord Almighty, and my name is wonderful among the heathen" (Constitutions Of The Holy Apostles, Bk. VII, Sec. I, emphases added).

5. Thus, it is obvious from this brief historical survey that it was not the Papacy, it was not the Roman Catholic Church, it was not the Emperor Constantine (in 321), or the Council of Nicea (in 325) that changed the seventh day Sabbath to the first day Sabbath—the change was attributed to Christ and His resurrection upon the first day of the week. Thus, the fallacy of the SDA position that the Mark of the Beast is some alleged change of the seventh day Sabbath to the first day Sabbath by the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church.

II. Consequences of Those Who Refuse to Take the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:16-17).

A. Not only does the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) cause those who will not worship him to be killed and slaughtered according to Revelation 13:15 (which history more than adequately confirms as we shall see in the following sermon), but the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) also causes those who will not take the Mark of the Beast (in submitting their consciences to the Civil Beast) to suffer the privation of food, clothing, and shelter.

1. This, dear ones, has been the nature of this symbiotic relationship between the Papacy of the Harlot Church of Rome and the Emperors and Kings of the European Roman Empire since Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Revived Roman Empire in the year 800. The Papacy serves the Emperor (when it is in the Papacy's interests to do so), and the Emperor serves the Papacy (when it is in the Emperor's interests to do so). When Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Roman Empire, "he anointed him with holy oil, and worshipped him on his knees after the manner of adoring the old Roman emperors" (according to Newton in his *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 87). And then Charlemagne swore the following to the Pope: "I, Charles, the emperor, do, in the name of Christ engage and promise, in the presence of God and of the blessed apostle Peter [i.e. the Pope—GLP], that I will be a protector and defender of this holy Roman Church, in all her interests, according to my power and knowledge, and so far as I shall be upheld by divine assistance" (*Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 87).

2. This is what we see prophesied in Revelation 13:15-17. The Image of the Beast commands the worship of absolute obedience in Revelation 13:15 and those who will not give it are slaughtered by the Emperor (who has the military troops to enforce the decree of the Pope). In turn the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) commands all social classes of the European Roman Empire to honor the Civil Beast by taking his Mark and submitting their consciences to him in matters of state policy and those who will not do so are to be deprived of their means to support themselves by way of the excommunications and wars waged against the faithful witnesses of Christ who will not bow the knee to Baal. We will note in what I believe will be the final sermon on the Mark of the Beast (next week, God willing) how this has occurred in actual historical events from the past in confirmation of this prophecy.

3. I submit that this interconnected symbiotic relationship between the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) and the Civil Beast of the European Roman Empire is yet to be realized again in fulfillment of

prophetic Scripture (as we shall see next Lord's Day). I submit that the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) will yet compel by his authority the taking of the Mark of the Beast in submitting the conscience to the Civil Beast of a united European Roman Empire, and the consequences of not doing so will be deprivation and death. Such a conspiracy to see a strong re-united European Roman Empire is clearly being planned as indicated by recent news reports.

a. In the British publication, *The Telegraph*, dated May 7, 2013, states,

A fully fledged federal Europe may seem like "political science fiction" today but will soon become reality for all European Union countries whether inside or outside the euro, Jose Manuel Barroso [President of the European Commission—GLP] has said. . . . "We want to put all the elements on the table, in a clear and consistent way, even if some of them may sound like political science fiction today. They will be reality in a few years' time." Mr Barroso's announcement that he will set out plans for a European federation next spring, before elections to the European Parliament in May 2014, will further deepen Conservative divisions over the EU.

b. And then this article from *USA Today*, dated May 18, 2013.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, mindful of the importance of Christian voters in September elections, met with Pope Francis on Saturday during a quick trip to Rome that focused on helping victims of Europe's economic crisis and emphasizing the continent's Christian roots. . . . For its part, the Vatican is eager for allies in its campaign to win over more Catholics. . . . Merkel said they spoke about the regulation of the financial markets. . . . The chancellor said the pope had stressed the world needs a strong and just Europe, and she described the overall conversation as encouraging. . . . "I see continuity in the missionary aspect, in becoming aware of the importance of Christianity for our Christian roots," said Merkel, adding that the "simple and touching words" of Francis, who was elected pontiff two months ago, are already reaching people.

4. Dear ones, with the push for a strong, united European Federation that has a central head and that is working together with the Papacy to see this accomplished, I submit we are seeing before our very eyes what may be the kind of symbiotic relationship between the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) and the Civil Beast of the European Roman Empire that is seen in Revelation 13:15-17, which will require the worship of absolute obedience to the Image of the Beast and the taking of the Mark of the Beast in submitting the conscience to the Civil Beast of the European Roman Empire.

In conclusion, dear ones, whether you are I will be required to take the Mark of the Beast (or live to see the final fulfillment of this prophecy before the destruction of these enemies by Christ just before the millennial reign of Christ from heaven over all the earth, we all need to seriously consider what we are willing to sacrifice by way of possessions, relationships, and life itself in this world in order to be faithful in following Jesus Christ. Consider the words of Christ in Mark 10:28-31. Dear ones, it has always been a mark of one whose conscience and heart was submitted in faith to the lordship of Jesus Christ that he/she was willing to give up all in this world to faithfully follow Christ. Although we do not presently face such a trial, there are Christians around the world who are facing this test. We need to daily uphold them in prayer, and pray that we might walk in their steps, even as they walk in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ, who willingly became a man, was rejected, scorned, hated, unjustly tried, tortured, and crucified as a wicked criminal in suffering the wrath of a Holy God for sinners like you and me. He gave up His life and endured the cross for His undeserving people, in order that

we may enjoy the glories of heaven forevermore. Dear ones, what are you embracing so tightly right now that you cannot ever imagine yourself having to give it up to follow Christ? The issue is the lordship of Christ over all and over every area of your life and mine. Let us not withhold the least penny or the greatest love that we have on earth from Christ. It all belongs to Him—let us use it for His glory and under His lordship. That, dear ones, is what it means to have the name of God written upon your foreheads. And what an inexpressible honor to have God’s holy name written upon your foreheads!

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