The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast

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A Bible Study for the Arkadelphia Study Group

Revelation describes those that live at the end of the world's history as falling into two categories. These categories are characterized by a seal or a Mark. The following graph illustrates the contrast made between them in the book of Revelation:

Those with the Seal of God	Those with the Mark of the Beast
Worship God as Creator (14:7)	Worship the Beast (13:15)
Keep the Commandments (12:17; 14:12)	
Resist Legal Pressure to Disobey (15:2)	Submit to the Pressure (13:16)

Those that do not keep God's Law, the "lawless ones", will include “many” that profess to worship Jesus.

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ***Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord***, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, ***you who practice lawlessness***!’ Matthew 7:21-23. NKJV

The Seal of God is placed in the forehead. The Mark of the Beast is placed in either the forehead or the hand.

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**, Re 14:9

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God **in their foreheads**. Re 7:2-3

Anciently, God explained to his people, repeatedly, that their loving obedience to the Ten Commandments would set them apart like a mark in their foreheads. Additionally, the Ten Commandments were to be "as a sign" *bound* on their hands.

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words [the Ten Commandments, see Deut 5], which I command thee this day, ***shall be in thine heart***: . . . And thou shalt **bind them for a sign upon thine hand**, and they shall be **as frontlets between thine eyes**. De 6:5-8. See De 11:18; Ex 13:9, 16.

In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit writes, *or binds*, the Law of God on the heart of the believer. This was represented as the sign placed on the ancient forehead. In the Revelation it is pictured as a seal being placed in the mind, in the forehead.

Bind up the testimony, **seal** the law among my disciples. Is 8:16

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 8:10.

The most solemn warning found in the entire Bible is found in conjunction with the Mark of the Beast.

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. Re 14:9-11

The Beast, the civil power of the Roman Papacy, is marked, or characterized, as attacking God's law and trying to change its "times." Dan 7:25.

The Law of God includes a Commandment that honors God as Creator, establishes His authority on earth, and identifies Him as the Sovereign of the Universe. It is the fourth, the command related to "times."

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. Ex 20:8-11

Jesus clearly indicated that this Commandment would extend beyond His Death. Matt 24:20.

The Apostles and even the Gentile believers clearly observed it. Acts 13; 17; 18

In a future study we will study how the Sabbath is identified by the Bible as the sign of the Seal of God.

Today we will simply notice that continuing to transgress the Law by keeping it in its humanly changed form defies God's authority. Such disobedience places men in a camp that will, when put under pressure in the future, receive the Mark of the Roman beast's authority.

Let us "Remember" the Command that begins with that word. It does so for a reason.

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast II

The Roman beast is against the people of God, even if many of God's people are found among her members.

It stomped on "the remnant with its feet." Dan 7:7, 19. It "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." Dan 7:21. It spoke "great words against the most High, and [wore] out the saints of the most High, . . . and they [were] given into his hand." Dan 7:25.

In Daniel 7 the purpose of the judgment is intimately connected with the civil power of the Church of Rome. The judgment sits to take away that power, to destroy that power, and to establish in its place God's Kingdom in the hands of the saints. This marks the end of the several-thousand-year saga for world dominion.

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Hitherto is the end of the matter. Dan 7:26-28.

In Daniel 8 the Roman power "waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." Dan 8:10. These "stars" and "hosts" are the same "saints" mentioned above. An angel asks how long the Roman power will be permitted to oppress the "hosts." The answer is, *until the "cleansing of the sanctuary," Dan 8:13-14*, or, in other words, *until the judgment of Daniel 7.*

Though prior to this, the beast's "power shall be mighty . . . and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people," Dan. 8:24, yet its judgment is certain. The vision that brings his oppression to an end "is true." Dan 8:26.

Later, in the most detailed of Daniel's revelations, a distinction is made between God's people generally, and "they that understand among" them. The understanding ones are the objects of the wrath of the Roman power.

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. Dan 11:33-35.

As earlier in Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, this last vision of Daniel 11-12 presents God's final intervention as bringing an end to the Roman oppression. The Time of Trouble with the seven last plagues falls on those not found in the book of life—that is, on those condemned in the judgment that blotted names from the book. Dan. 12:1.

Revelation 12-16 presents the same picture, but even in greater detail. The saints suffer under the oppression of the papal power for 1260 years (Rev 11:2-3, 12:6, 14; 13:5). Then they are relieved by an announcement of the arrival of the hour of Judgment.

There we see that soon the Roman beast will suffer the verdict imposed by the judgment. The world is warned against honoring the soon-to-be-destroyed power. Nevertheless, many honor that power to their own everlasting shame.

This is the connection between the first angels' message and the latter two. The Judgment that favors the saints also pronounces against the beast. The first angel announces the Judgment. The second states both the charge and the guilty verdict for the beast. The third announces the sentence. Here the messages are abbreviated.

"The hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

"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 . . . 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." Re 14:7-12 selected

All four lines of prophecy (Dan 7; 8; 10-12; Rev 12-16) present the same picture in ever increasing magnification. The judgment relieves the saints, pronounces against the beast, and proceeds at once to the execution of the sentence. This is followed by the establishment of God's kingdom.

Who are these saints? Daniel 7:28 says that those that enter God's kingdom will "serve and obey Him." In Daniel 8 they are the "mighty and the holy people." In Daniel 11 they are "those that understand among the people." In Daniel 12 they are those found "in the book." In Revelation 12 they are those "that keep the commandments of God and have the Testimony of Jesus." In Revelation 14 they are those that endure persecution and who "keep the commandments of God."

Taken together, these four lines of prophecy teach that the final scenes on earth will feature the beast warring against commandment keepers. The issues will be worship and the Law. God requires honor as Creator. The Beast offers a sacrifice of its own choosing, denying the creation story of Genesis 1 and supplanting the memorial of that creation with an ancient pagan holiday. The Bible story ends as it began, with a command of God being slighted by the Devil speaking through a medium, then a snake and now the Roman Church.

But this time there are some who refuse to join the woman that fell, despite her affectionate encouragement to take a bite.

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast III

In Daniel the Roman power is characterized as taking special aim at corrupting the covenant. The covenant is first mentioned in 9:4 where Daniel prays to God who keeps "***the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments*.**" Dan 9:4.

Then, in the prophecy of the same chapter, the earthly work of Jesus is given. He is to "***confirm the covenant with many***" during the remainder of the 70 weeks. Dan 9:27.

When Jesus is crucified, in Daniel 11:22, he is styled "***the prince of the covenant***." And it is only a few verses later that we find the Roman power first having a "***heart" "against" the holy covenant***" and then becoming indignant "***against the holy covenant***." Then he has conspiracy "***with them that forsake the holy covenant***." Finally we find him flattering those who "***do wickedly against the covenant***" and corrupting them by his flatteries. Dan 11:28, 30, 32.

In summary, the powers of Christ and of the Roman church-state clash over the issue of the covenant. The covenant under consideration is that "everlasting covenant" that was ratified by the blood of Jesus. Heb. 13:20. It is the covenant over which Christ stands as "mediator" Heb. 12:24.It

is that covenant where the Law of God is written in the heart.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 8:10.

The Papacy is going to be destroyed for casting “truth” (Dan 8:12) down to the ground. Specifically, she will be destroyed for casting down the truth regarding the Holy Covenant. (See above). Namely, she will pay for thinking to change the Law of God. Dan 7:25.

And men are to come out of her communion, and out from among her daughters who have been corrupted and duped by her “intelligence against the covenant.” Her sins have been noted in the heavenly courts where the judgment has been sitting. Those sins have not been forgiven.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Re 18:4-5.

The character of her warfare has been to direct wrath against commandment keepers and to unite with those that forsake the everlasting covenant, corrupting them. The mark of her authority is demonstrated by submission to a civil law (for it is enforced by civil penalties and is made by a nation in Re 13) that distinguishes commandment keepers and others.

Now the history of the Roman church furnishes ample evidence of what kind of commandment keepers she hates. She despises those who keep the commandments that she has changed. She labeled them judeaizers and pronounced anathema against them in ever stronger language through several centuries of the early dark ages.

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast IV

There are three Bible stories that illustrate the final conflict over the Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God. These are the stories of the Passover in Egypt, the priestly ambitions of king Uzziah, and Heaven’s execution of King Herod.

In the latter story, the men of Tyre and Sidon who had formerly been at variance with Herod, decided to make amends. Through the man in charge of his bed-chamber they arranged to hear an oration from Herod, their representative of the Roman Empire. At its conclusion they honored him with words that exalted him as a god on earth.

And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. Ac 12:22-23

In like manner Revelation 13 describes the world wondering after the beast that is named with blasphemy. This world includes those Muslims, Chinese, Protestants, and Orthodox persons, numbering in at three billion people, that have historically felt towards Rome as Herod's listeners had formerly felt toward Him and Roman rule.

Tyre and Sidon here typify those that receive the Mark of the Beast. Interestingly, the pope is also typified by the prince of Tyre in that chapter, Ez 28, where Satan appears as the king of the same city. In that chapter the prince of Tyrus suffers a fate similar to Herod, and for similar reason. Both represent that king that establishes his throne between the seas in the glorious holy mountain. (Dan. 11:45).

Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: . . . With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches . . . and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. Eze 28:2-10.

While the prince of Tyre and Herod, the centuries-later Roman king over the same city, enjoyed the titles of deity in their respective ages, Judah's own king Uzziah aspired only to the priesthood.

Prior to Uzziah kings and priests had kept their respective places. Saul, of course, had offered sacrifice—and was rejected from being king. But Uzziah went further. Perhaps as a reward to himself for defending the faith, Uzziah took the censor in his own hand, the censor that represented the mediation of Jesus, the mixing of His righteousness with our prayers. Uzziah made himself a figure of antichrist.

Notice in the story the object of the king's rage. Notice the location of the plague that struck him. Uzziah became a figure of that apostate Christianity that rages against God's faithful while trying to unite the position of priest and king that God has put asunder.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed

against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. 2 Chr. 26:16-19.

While the law was as a sign between the eyes for the faithful among God's people (De 6), Uzziah's leprosy was a sign of a contrary nature. It represented false pretensions to the priesthood, a heaven-cursed attempt to change the regulations that governed the sanctuary. Uzziah's leprosy became typical of the Mark of the Beast.

When Israel was about to be gathered out of Egypt God warned them how to escape the plagues coming on that oppressive nation. The angel of destruction would spare those only that had the appointed sign of faithfulness.

The sign involved killing a lamb, bringing everyone in the household into the home and painting the outside of the door with blood by means of hyssop. Inside everyone was to be dressed to go and to eat the lamb with bitter herbs.

The angel passing by was not to enter homes covered with the symbol of Christ's atonement. All others received the worst plague, the death of their first born. By this it was shown, even in the plague, that their sin had caused the death of God's only Son. Those not availing themselves of the offered mercy, who counted the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, were thought worthy of sore punishment.

The Seal of God is easy to see typified in that evening. But the Mark of the Beast seems to be, in the type, almost passive. It was enough to be Egyptian, in name, or even merely in service. It was enough to forgo the seal to be marked for destruction.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the princes of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. . . .And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the

destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. . . And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. Ex 12:12-13; 22-23; 29

These three stories highlight the relation of worship to the issue of the mark of the beast. Those that honor the beast and his image with words or acts that should be rendered only to the Deity worship the beast. And those that worship the beast receive the beast's mark.

The third angel speaks twice of those who "**worship** the beast and his image, and **receive his mark** in his forehead, or in his hand." Rev 14:9, 11. The first plague rests "upon the men which **had the mark** of the beast, and upon them which **worshipped** his image." When the beast is finally destroyed, it will be with "deceived" ones "that had **received the mark** of the beast, and them that **worshipped** his image." Re 16:2; 19:20.

A fourth story illustrates this reality. In Daniel 3 the head of Babylon and the image that he had set up was to be worshipped. In this story the mark of the beast was *kneeling*. The seal of God was illustrated simply by refusing to kneel.

Daniel 6 paints the same picture. There the sign of the Seal of God was *kneeling*. The Mark of the Beast was illustrated by prayers to a god-king who by law exalted himself above all that is worshipped.

The mark that was legally pressed on the three friends, and later on Daniel, was an act of unlawful worship. This was a violation of the very command that contains the terms of the everlasting covenant – "shewing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

We will notice only one more item regarding the Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God in this section: The seal is read by heaven alone; the mark is read by government also. In Ezekiel 9 those with the seal are spared the plagues that destroy the world. This same idea is implicit in the holding back of the four winds until the servants are "sealed" in Revelation 7.

The mark, by contrast, is enforced by human agencies in Re 13:16-17. These two facts give us another significant hint about how to identify the mark and the seal. No truth is more plainly taught in scripture than:

For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1Sa 16:7

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast V

We concluded the last section with an observation that God looks on the heart and that man looks on the outward appearance. If the three worthies, for example, had bowed to the image, Nebuchadnezzar would have been unconcerned with their insincerity. Conformity was all he was seeking.

God, on the other hand, utterly refuses heartless worship.

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. Matt 15:8

Worship is the theme and issue in the book of Revelation. Men worship the beast or they worship their Creator. The word "worship" and its derivatives, is used more times in the book of Revelation than in any other book of the Bible, Psalms not excluded.

Satan Accepts Third-party Worship

Satan has never been so particular as to require true devotion. In Revelation he is contented to receive third-party worship. Men that honor the image thus honor the beast. And those that honor the beast worship "the dragon which gave power to the beast." Re 13:4 The dragon is Satan. Re 12:9.

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? Re 13:4

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Re 12:9

Satan's willingness to accept whatever kind of service he can get was showcased in the temptation of Jesus. The devil stooped to bribe Jesus to worship him.

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, *if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Mt 4:9

Satan does the same in the case of the Mark of the Beast. Hungry men are offered the things that money can buy if they will only bow. Re 13:16-17. By bribe, by hunger, by superstition-inducing miracles, the devil in Revelation draws inadvertent "worship" to himself.

God Requires Direct, Willful Worship without Competitors

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Mt 4:10

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24.

Where Satan is willing to accept the ignorant worship of idols as directed to himself (De 32:17; Ps 106:36-37), God cannot. How does He relate to ignorant devotion? In kindness, He overlooks it as long as possible. He cannot accept it.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth . . . For in him we live, and move, and have our being . . . we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Acts 17:23-30

While Satan bribes men to worship himself, God will not even accept men's bribes as worship. He is not "worshipped with men's hands" Acts 17:25. Here is the reason that the Seal of God must be placed in the forehead while the beasts' mark can be either in the hand or the head. God only accepts loving obedience. The beast accepts fearful conformity.

But we can not say that God always overlooks ignorant worship. When light is presented, Paul teaches, God "now commands all men everywhere to repent." When the Jews sank down into idolatry their worship was not winked at. Their opportunities to know better prevented their ignorance from winning them grace. See Jer. 44:18-25.

***Honoring Man's Works and Man's Commands is* Idolatry**

***Honoring God's Creative Power and Divine Right to Rule is* Worship**

This section opened with Matthew 15:8 where Jesus speaks of worshippers who use praise lyrics but whose heart was far from Him. The next verse shows that a heart that is close to Him is one that has been engraven with the Law of God. It shows that worship from a heart filled with man's commands is pointless, hollow, vain.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Mt 15:9

God seeks worship based on two of His attributes. He is Creator and Redeemer.

The . . . elders fall down before Him . . . and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and

cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Re 4:10-11

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy . . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred . . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Re 5:9, 12, 14

These attributes are written into the 2nd and 4th Commandment. Jehovah shows us mercy in the 2nd and is Creator in the 4th. It is the latter Command that is alluded to in the command to worship that introduces the Three Angel's Messages.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. Re 14:7

In summary, the final conflict will be over worship. Satan will seek worship from misguided Christians who honor Satan inadvertently by vainly worshipping the image and the beast. Whether deceived or merely cowed by pressure, the evil one eagerly accepts the submission.

God, quite on the contrary, has a refined taste for worship. He knows what He is looking for in particular. He will only accept worship that honors Him by obedient submission to His will.

And He will avenge his saints by destroying the beast with those that have united in worshipping contrary to God's Law. Their judgment hints at their crime.

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. Re 14:11

These are professed Christians. But they mock the idea of a six-day Creation and of a literal flood. They believe God made the world over ages of time and deny that His judgments are soon to fall. This class rise in the "last days."

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water,

perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 2Pe 3:3-7

Yes, Satan accepts whatever kind of honor he can get. This kind of scoffing is honor enough for him. These scoffers are "ungodly." The Greek is *asebaes*, "without due reverence, worshipless." What have they been scoffing at? Very apparently, the *First Angel's Message*. They refuse both to acknowledge that the "hour of His Judgment" is come and to "worship Him" as Creator.

God only accepts heart love and obedience. While men will look at the outward acts to determine who accepts the mark of the beast, God will look at the heart to perceive who has been sealed with the covenant Law by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast VI

When God looks at the heart, what is He looking for? In the day that He will judge the secrets of men, Judge Jesus will be looking for the works of the law to be written there. Our thoughts and actions will bear witness whether the Law has been written into the heart.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these . . . shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing [each of them] in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Ro 2:14-16

In the period of time when the world is coming to its end, the Ten Commandments receive greater attention. In the context of the close of human probation, Revelation 22:14 blesses those that "keep" the commandments of God.

In the context of the final controversy between good and evil the law of Ten Commandments is revealed in the Ark that housed it. This happens twice. Revelation 11:19; 15:5. This is further evidence that the Law will have been at issue in the closing scenes of the world.

In Revelation 14:7 the announcement that the hour of “His Judgement has come” begs the question, “What will be the standard of judgment in this trial?” James 2:8-12 specifies that we are judge by the “royal law” of the Ten Commandments. During the judgment this standard receives due attention. And again we point out that it is the Sabbath command that is partially quoted immediately after the announcement of the judgment.

The Sabbath, as a seal that one is keeping the Commandments of God, fits snuggly into the puzzle of Revelation.

When Jesus speaks of His coming, He mentions a class that will be bitterly surprised to find themselves lost. As all lost persons in Revelation receive the Mark of the Beast, and as all saved persons receive the Seal of God, this class must be the class that has not the Seal of God. The disappointed ones at the Advent are not the class of 14:12 that keep the commandments.

But what commandments would it be that professed followers of God could break and still dare to say "Lord, Lord" to Jesus at His coming?

And of the commandments, the Sabbath seems most like the sign/seal of circumcision. It is the commandment that does not appeal to unaided moral senses any more than the command to avoid the Tree of Knowledge. Some authors have rejected it particularly on this ground—that they could not see the morality in it.

In that respect the sacredness of the Sabbath, like the forbiddeness of the Knowledge Tree in Eden, is a fit test to separate men into two camps. On one side are the Cains who offer to God a generous offering of what makes sense to them. On the other are the Abels who do as they are told by God, human reasoning not withstanding.

The Sabbath has been set apart as a special sign of the work of sanctification, of living our lives as if "the Lord God [were] in our hearts." Isaiah 8. Sanctification is the New Covenant process of writing the Law in the Heart.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant. It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. Ex 31:16-17.

Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them. Eze. 20:12

And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God. Eze. 20:20

Why else has the Fourth Commandment been chosen as a sign of sanctification? In Hebrews 4:4-10 the Sabbath is made a symbol of the creative work that God does in the heart. It emphasizes the Divine gift in writing the law there. We are to cease doing our "own works" and to rest in blissful dependence on God's inworking power.

A Sign of the Spirit's Work

“You also trusted [in Jesus], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” writes Paul. But he adds that there is more. “In Whom also, after that ye believed, ye were **sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”** Eph 1:13.

Jesus received the Seal of God. John 6:67. Jesus was, for the record, filled with the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus, “being full of the Holy Ghost” preached regarding himself, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” Lu 4:1, 18.

Just as Jesus was filled with the Spirit, and thus sealed by God the Father, the last generation will be. Joel 2; Ezekiel 9; Revelation 7.

Ephesians speaks of the seal being “the earnest” of our inheritance until we receive glorified bodies. Eph 1:14. In other words, we can be sure that we will be resurrected finally when we have received the down-payment of the Spirit.

“Now he which stablishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” 2 Co. 1:21-22.

The Bible places the seal of the Spirit "in our hearts." The same idea is expressed in Revelation where the seal, or the Spirit, is placed in the forehead.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is given to those who meet the qualifications for salvation. In the time of Noah, for example, it would not be put on anyone who would not get in the ark. If the seal were given to someone who had not met the conditions of salvation, it would be a false promise.

Now nothing is clearer in our dear country than that many unsanctified persons have exhibited what are called the gifts of the Spirit. The Sabbath, as an outward sign, serves to show the body of believers that are Commandment Keepers, that are New Covenant Christians, and that are being sanctified by the writing of the Law on the heart.

As a sign of the Spirit's seal, it helps clear confusion regarding what the Spirit is and is not doing in the world. Today the Commandment Keepers are preparing for Christ's return. They are not building an ark.

But they are engaged in an activity as distinctive and as significant to the final scenes of this earth's history. They are being sanctified by the special work of the Holy Spirit. 1 Co 6:11; 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Pe 1:2; Ro 15:16; 1 Thes 5:23. This is the sealing process.

The Sabbath is a sign of the special work of the Spirit on the heart. Or, stated another way, we could say, “The Sabbath is the seal of the work of the Spirit.” In a shorter term, we would say that

the Sabbath is the sign or seal of the spiritual work of sanctification.

By keeping the Sabbath we confess that God has the right to determine the purpose of His creation. We were created for his pleasure. This idea carries within it the idea of worship. The man that feels he can determine which day is honorable is only demonstrating an extension of another principle. He is his own master, determines his own purpose, makes his own way. He worships himself. Living to please is an act of worship.

“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10.

The Sabbath is ideally made to discern between him that serves God and him that serves Him not. Our relation to the change proposed by man’s will, when the pressure is on, reveals who we are serving.

An Outline of What We Have Learned So Far

The Lamb	***The Beast***
Prince of the Covenant	Heart against the covenant
Confirms the covenant	Works, plans, cooperates against the covenant
Stands for the saints	Opposes the saints
Helps them	Pursues them
Gathers a remnant	Scatters the whole
Executes vengeance	Executes saints

The Everlasting Covenant

Saints are forgiven

The Law is written in their heart à This is the sealing

They receive the kingdom *The Sabbath is the Sign*

The Beast’s Arrangement

Claims to give forgiveness

Claims to change the Law

Forces compliance à This is the marking

Holds last earthly kingdom *Bowing to Man's Law is the Mark*

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast VII

Humanity's Foreheads at Stake

The beast introduced in Revelation 13 is often called "a composite beast" for the similarities it bears to the four beasts of Daniel 7. We are told that this seven-headed beast has the name of blasphemy on its heads.

As the mark of the beast is called the "mark of his name" (Re 14:11) this blasphemous name is of particular interest to our study.

The Babylonian head demanded worship through the image of Daniel 3.

The Persian head demanded worship through a law in Daniel 6.

The Roman head, while Pagan, executed saints and accepted honor as a god. Herod illustrates this in Acts 12:19-24.

The Roman head, while Papal, does all these things in Daniel and Revelation and finally impersonates Christ in 2 Thes. 2.

Thus various heads of the beast have the name of blasphemy. They claim the prerogatives that belong to God alone. The mark of the beast is called "the mark of his name" of blasphemy. It is honoring the papacy with the very authority it claims for itself, the ability to change God's law.

The battle for humanity's foreheads rages between the beast and the Lamb. The Lamb, gentle Savior, guides His followers. Re 14:4. The beast coerces. Re 13:15. The Lamb fills with the power of the Holy Spirit. The beast works miracle to advertise the legitimacy of his power.

Miracles are the reason that many honor the beast and receive the mark.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him,

with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Re 19:20.

Far from being an obscure fact, the relation of miracles to the final deception is spoken of widely. Miracles in the end of time aid the great deceiver. Matt 7; 24; Mr 13; Lu 21; 2 Th 2; Re 13; 16; 19.

Miracles fill the beast's arsenal. Men see them and are deceived. Every class of men are presented as receiving the mark. This is preparatory to their entrance into the lake of fire mentioned above in Re 19:20.

Love fills the Lamb's followers. Men observe their character, their constancy under persecution, the cogency of their scriptural reasoning, the spiritual power of their presentations. Men know that they are right.

They face beheading (Re 20:4) for refusing the combined authority of the powers of earth. Though decapitated, they are counted victorious (Re 15:2) over their enemies. Like saints before them (Re 6:11) they overcome by their testimony and by Christ's blood while sacrificing their lives (Re 12:11).

The Battle for the Forehead

We have observed repeatedly that the Law of God is to be written in men's minds. Satan also has a character that he works to have planted there. It is characterized in scripture as having a "whore's forehead."

Where men have such a forehead they are nearly impervious to the Spirit's work of sanctification. They can not be led to the first step of feeling a need for the Spirit's convictions. They refuse to be ashamed of their sins.

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore‘s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. Jer 3:3

So there is a forehead of a whore and a forehead of a Lamb. Regarding the latter we are to "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who . . . became obedient unto death." Thus the last-day faithful ones are represented as having foreheads like the Father and the Son. Re 14; 22.

What both camps have is a hardened forehead. This idea is illustrated in the experience of Ezekiel who was called to give fearful warnings to a stubborn (literally "stiff-foreheaded") nation. To preserve his faithfulness God strengthened Ezekiel's forehead to be able to stand against their opposition.

But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are stiff-foreheaded [Hebrew] and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Eze 3:7-9

These stiff foreheads are similar in their rigidity. They differ widely otherwise. One is the result of God's transformation of the human heart, the other of conformity to the world.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Ro 12:2

The "mother" of harlots has promoted conformity. The compliance of the masses has deluded individuals into refusing to be ashamed, duped them into accepting the essence of having a "whore's forehead." See Re. 17

And so men will range under the two banners—one with a Lamb's forehead, transformed, and braving death for the faithfulness. The other with the whore's, refusing even to be ashamed. These classes naturally receive the Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast respectively.

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast VIII

The Seal of God is placed, strategically, in the mind. There it is sure to have an impact on the message given by the sealed one.

And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: Ex 13:9

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Matt 12:34

We noted earlier Christ in His character of Prince of the Covenant (Dan 11:22). The New Testament identifies Him in a similar fashion.

There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? Jas 4:12

The passage indicates a relation between giving Law and being authorized to judge. In a fascinating turn of events, the very class that have suffered for their loyalty to the "one lawgiver"

eventually sit with the Law-giver on his throne as co-judges.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them . . . which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Re 20:4

The Activity of those who Escape the Mark

So those who escape the Mark of the Beast and who refuse to worship the Roman power will at last sit as judges. They will co-reign with their Savior. This is future. But what will they be doing now? The answer to this question is the subject of Revelation 14:8-12.

First the passage warns the world regarding special future judgments on those that submit to the beast's authority. Then it points out the class who heed those warnings. Those warnings are the most solemn given in the entire history of the human race.

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 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. Re 14:8-11

How does this message get to the world? "All nations" are in danger, for all have been confused by the teachings of the Roman power. (This is what it means to be made drunk with her wine.) Each man and woman in those nations ought to have a chance to escape such terrible judgments.

So who will give the message? In Revelation 14 it is given by an "angel." But this angel is a metaphor for certain of God's people, the ones who understand. They are "here" giving the warning and enduring opposition.

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Re 14:12

The saints are those who have lingered to consider the seriousness of the threatened judgments. They struggle with their inability to rouse the world to see their danger. Their position makes them very unpopular. Their simple choice to be loyal to all of "the commandments of God" places them in opposition to the gods of this world: convenience and conventional wisdom.

This is our eighth lesson. We are not close to exhausting the Biblical themes of the Mark of the Beast and of the Seal of God. But we have seen enough to know with Biblical certainty what we are talking about.

The Mark and the Seal Plainly[1]

The Sealing is the special work of the Holy Spirit in writing the Law of God into the heart of God's people. The Sealing is the work of sanctification. The sign of submission to this work is Sabbath keeping. That sign distinguishes those that reject human authority in religious matters and thus honor God alone.

The character of the beast is to be unashamed of its violations of God's law. This mindset is, metaphorically, the whore's forehead. Those that refuse the sealing process are hardened each time they refuse. Their unwillingness to take up their cross and follow their Savior against the current of the world marks them as unworthy of eternal life.

By refusing the claims of the Fourth Commandment they honor men above their Creator, the beast above the Lamb, their comfort above the truth. Their refusal to take up the warning that the world needs so desperately marks them for the judgments of Revelation 14:8-11. They have no "rest" during the plagues who have refused the Sabbath rest. Though sincerely deceived into thinking they are doing right, they are not excused. Their sincerity is rather the fruit of trusting in men than of loving the truth.

When laws enforcing the keeping of another day than Sabbath, undoubtedly Sunday as all history declares, the character of these hardened persons will naturally submit to the coercion of the beast. Heaven is not guided that way. They are unfit to be there. They won't be there.

Just prior to the sealing of God's people in Ezekiel 9 (and just prior to the plagues on those that are unsealed) the prophecy describes the abominations that have invaded Christendom.

Though, in the metaphor, these abominations are conducted inside God's temple, yet they savor of paganism. These idolatrous practices are revealed to Ezekiel in ascending order of magnitude.

The worst item, last in the list, and just prior to the command to seal the faithful servants and to slaughter the rest, is sun-worship.

Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Eze 8:15-16

To be particular, here is worship of the Sun practiced inside Christ's temple by men who have turned their back on God's Law.

The illustration is particularly interesting because the worshippers might appear, to an observer, to be worshipping the lamb on the altar.

Ezekiel 8-9, written entirely in figurative speech, indicates that just prior to the end of the world men will turn their back on the Law of God and on Christ in His temple to rather honor the sun. All the while they will be in God's church.

Sun-worship is the most ancient kind of false-religion. Job says that had he secretly admired the sun that he would be deserving of punishment by the Judge of the Earth. Job 31:26-28. Through Moses God warned his special people regarding worshipping this gift of God to "all nations under heaven." De 4:19. Josiah's great reformation involved the cleansing of God's house from horses and chariots dedicated "to the sun." 2Ki 23:5, 11.

And the temple had purposefully been built to prevent the very type of abomination figured in Ezekiel 8. As worshippers entered the court in the morning, their backs were to the sun. They faced forward to where they could not see, the Most Holy Place, and imagined what they knew to be there—the Law of God in a special box built to honor it.

But when a soul persists in ignoring God's requirements He may give them up to honor the hosts of heaven despite themselves. As the fall into idolatry marked old Israel for captivity in Babylon (Ac 7:42-43), so the fall of Christianity into the worship of religious men was a fall that put them into a spiritual state called Babylon in the book of Revelation.

Those that Sigh and Cry

In the pictures of Ezekiel 8-9, who is spared? The Seal of God is placed on those that "sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" in the professedly Christian churches.

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Eze 9:4

In particular, they mourn over the honor given to the sun and over the dishonor shown to the covenant. In figure, these faithful souls are in the same place as the 25 sun-worshippers. They are between the porch and the altar. But they are facing the opposite direction.

Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD . . . Joel 2:17

Scripture Index to Study

Re 14:8-11

For the Word Document, click here: The_Seal_of_God_and_the_Mark_of_the_Beast

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[1] The Biblical references for these assertions are the content of the rest of this 18 page study. They are missing here only to make the summary more readable.