

The Mark of the Beast

Understanding the Mark

To understand the mark of the Beast, we have to first understand who the Beast is and what the Bible tells us the issues are at the end of time.

In previous articles, we've learned through 13 individual characteristics described in the Bible that only one power can meet the description of this Beast (also known as the Antichrist)—papal Rome. The mark of the Beast, therefore, is a mark that belongs to and is enforced by the Antichrist (papal Rome) itself.

Revelation describes the last great conflict between Christ and Satan as a conflict of authority. The devil has always been in rebellion against the authority of God. We see in Revelation 12:7 that the Dragon makes war on those that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ—those who submit to the authority of God alone. There are thus two issues that the enemy will target in the final conflict: the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus.

The law of God is the issue that touches the authority and government of God:

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail (Revelation 11:19).

In John's vision in Revelation 11, the seventh angel's trumpet sounds, and momentous events begin to take place. One of these events is the temple of God opening in heaven. Inside the temple is the Ark of the Covenant. In ancient Israel, a replica of this heavenly Ark stood in the earthly sanctuary. The earthly Ark of the Covenant held two tables of stone on which God had written the law with His own finger.

Is John's vision of the temple opening, with its focus on the Ark of the Covenant, telling us that the issues in the last great controversy will center on the law of God? It certainly would fit with the devil's desire to attack God's authority. If we choose to obey God's law, God is our authority (Romans 6:16). But the Enemy of God will challenge the authority of the Creator and try and establish his own sign of authority.

Claiming Authority

Revelation 13 identifies the powers that would be involved in the final challenge to God's authority. We know that papal Rome and the United States of America will play pivotal roles in this conflict. Moreover, the sea beast, or papal Rome, speaks with the mouth of a lion, which in Daniel's prophecy represented Babylon. In other

words, there would be a Babylonian component to the Papacy, especially concerning its speech.

History tells us that during the fall of Babylon, its priesthood fled to Pergamum, and the Babylonian religion, rites, and rituals, as well as its hierarchy, were maintained there.

The last pontiff king of Pergamum, King Attalus, bequeathed his title, the structure of the Babylonian priesthood, and vestments to Rome.ⁱ Initially, only the pagan high priest of Rome used the title Pontifex Maximus, but when pagan Rome fell, this Babylonian title was transferred to the Pope.

Interestingly, the statue of Pope Gregory XIII shows not only this title, but also shows the Pope on top of a dragon. According to Revelation 13, it is the Dragon that gave his power to the sea beast, the Papacy. In a special sense, the Roman Pontiff is thus the spokesman of the Dragon and it is through the Papacy, the heir of the Roman Empire, that the Dragon exercises his authority.

The Papacy claims to possess extraordinary powers in both moral and civil matters, even to the point of asserting its authority over the precepts of God.

Understanding the Context

The commandments of God—and thus the government of God—are targets of Satan’s anger. He will use the supposed powers of the Papacy in the final conflict between good and evil, eventually forcing the mark of the Beast on all the citizens of Earth. The warnings concerning the mark of the Beast are the most serious and solemn messages found in the Bible. It is essential that we apply careful examination and exegesis to unravel their meaning.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Revelation 13:16-17). ...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 forever 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 (Revelation 14:9-11).

The mark of the Beast carries with it the greatest punishment that God has ever pronounced—the punishment of eternal separation from God—and is therefore an issue of vital importance.

It is surprising how many theories there are on the mark of the Beast, ranging from computer-generated IDs to implants of computer chips, none of which have any bearing on character, a personal relationship with God, or subjection to the government of God.

All of these theoretical marks may be useful to the Enemy in terms of monitoring human activities and controlling access to resources, but they cannot be the mark of the Beast, if the Beast is the Papacy as we see in Revelation 13.

If we are going to identify the mark of the Beast, then we must do so within the framework of the great controversy and how it affects the plan of salvation. It is through sin (1 John 3:4) that humanity became separated from God, and this rebellion against His government has brought about the consequences the human race is experiencing.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:2).

Justice demanded that the penalty for sin be paid (Romans 6:23), and Christ fulfilled these requirements by paying the price Himself. Through His sacrifice, grace abounds, and the broken relationship between humanity and God can be reestablished. The renewed heart is one that “keeps the commandments, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Hebrews 8:10).

A restored relationship means a life that is once again in harmony with God’s law. Those who say they know God, but don’t keep His commandments are liars (1 John 2:4). Separation from God is the consequence of sin, and the mark of the Beast also pertains to sin, because it is the only cause for separation. The final cause for ultimate separation from God is the breaking of His law.

The Image of the Beast

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads (Revelation 13:15-16).

This passage tells us that the mark of the Beast will be enforced by the image of the Beast. An image is something that has the attributes of the original. The first beast of Revelation 13 (the Roman Catholic system) was a power that utilized state

resources in order to enforce its doctrines, even when these doctrines were contrary to the Word of God.

According to Revelation 13, the second beast, which was identified as the United States of America, will exercise the same authority as the first beast (the Roman Catholic system) and cause the world to worship the papal system (Revelation 13:12). We are seeing signs of this taking place already in our day.

We are told in Revelation that the US will also actively encourage the world to make “an image to the beast.” With its political and perhaps military might, the US will bring this image of the Beast to life and cause it to speak and declare a death decree against all those that would not comply with its regulations. A specific mark, belonging to the first beast, (hence the name, mark of the Beast) will be used to mark those that cooperate with the image of the Beast. Only those with the mark will have permission to conduct business.

Revelation 13:12 says that the second beast “exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.” If the United States is to exercise all the authority the Papacy had and force the world to worship the Papacy, then it follows that the US will become like Rome was during the 1260-year period when she enforced her doctrines through the law and persecution. The United States will, however, enact papal laws and enforce their observance internationally.

In becoming like Rome, by forming a union between church and state, and using the power of the state to enforce religious laws, the United States will become an image of the Beast.

According to the Scriptures, the mark will be enforced by imposing economic sanctions on anyone unwilling to accept the mark:

And that no man might buy nor sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast or the number of his name...and his number is six hundred, three score and six (Revelation 13:17-18).

Sunday: The Roman Catholic Emblem

A mark distinguishes one thing from another. A mark of a religious power would be some outstanding belief that distinguishes it. The best way to determine the distinguishing mark of the Roman Catholic Church is to consult her teachings directly.

Cardinal Gibbons claimed that Sunday-keeping was the mark of Roman Catholic authority:

Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. It could not have been otherwise, as none in those days would have dreamed of doing anything, in matters spiritual, ecclesiastical and religious without her. This act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.ⁱⁱ

Sunday worship has no Scriptural authority, and rests solely upon tradition. Protestants have always claimed that the Bible alone should be the standard for our religious beliefs. To meet this challenge, the Roman Catholic Church called the Council of Trent in 1545, and proclaimed that tradition stood above Scripture.

Protestants who observe Sunday as the day of worship are honoring the defining feature, or mark, of Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholics have claimed this:

Sunday is our mark of authority...the church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.ⁱⁱⁱ

You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! But by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, 'Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day', who shall dare to say, nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day, but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet, in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that which He has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the ten commandments; you believe the other nine are still binding; who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principle, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered.^{iv}

Why is the Sabbath Commandment Relevant?

Throughout the Scriptures, the Sabbath of God is treated with the utmost solemnity:

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 (Ezekiel 20:20).

For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18).

Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition...But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up (Matthew 15:3,9,13).

The knowledge of the seventh-day Sabbath has been preserved by God through the

centuries since the days of Jesus and has been observed in many areas around the world. Never has there been a time in which God's people somewhere did not observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Seal of Authority

The Sabbath Commandment is not only the heart of the Ten Commandments, but it is also the seal of the commandments. Remove it and the commandments have no authority. Every law must state the name of the lawgiver, his title, and his jurisdiction.

In the Fourth Commandment we find the name of the Lawgiver, *LORD*; his jurisdiction, *the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them*; and his position or title of Creator, *the LORD made*. This commandment defines whose authority is being acknowledged when these specific Ten Commandments are obeyed.

Any adherent of any religion could subscribe to the other nine Commandments. A change in the seal means a change of rulership—it implies a new authority with power to implement laws. When we obey a law, we are submitting to the authority whose seal is on that law.

It has always been Satan's aim to have more authority than God. By claiming authority as lawgiver, and enforcing his seal in opposition to God's seal, Satan shifts the position of authority from God to himself. Obedience to his seal (or mark) of authority means subjection to his government in direct opposition to that of God. This is the ultimate apostasy.

Humanity will fully submit to Satan's reign by submitting to this fake seal and practicing Sunday worship. Until such laws are enacted, freedom of choice is still possible.

The mark of the Beast only leads to ultimate separation from God once individuals are forced to choose whom they wish to obey. If they choose to obey God in this issue, then the penalty is persecution. If they choose to obey the earthly authorities, then the penalty is separation from God.

We will all have to make this choice.

Enforcing Rome's Mark

The Church of Rome claims that Sunday is her mark of authority. Moreover, she claims that it is her right to legislate moral issues, and that governments should subscribe to her directives. This is not only a right she claimed for herself during the Middle Ages, but is a right she claims for herself today.

Changing the Ten Commandments

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, sanctioned by Pope John Paul II, has this to say on the issue:

The Church, the "pillar and bulwark of the truth," "has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles to announce the saving truth." "To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order."^v

According to Roman Catholicism, moral issues are dictated by the Ten Commandments—but not the Ten Commandments as found in the Bible. Rome's Ten Commandments are defined by Augustine, the Catholic Church father:

The division and numbering of the Commandments have varied in the course of history. The present catechism follows the division of the Commandments established by St. Augustine, which has become traditional in the Catholic Church.^{vi}

What an amazing confession! The Ten Commandments defined by Augustine, rather than defined by Scripture, form the basis for Catholic morality. Since Sunday is also the mark of the Catholic Church's authority, it follows that this mark is in direct opposition to the declared will of God. Compromise on this issue is not possible.

Sunday worship can be defended only on Catholic principles

Legislating the Mark

One might think that Rome would not pursue the Sunday issue as vigorously in our age. If, however, the enforcing of the mark of the Beast is to become a reality, then this controversy will escalate until legislation is created enforcing the observance of Sunday.

The Roman Catechism, dubbed by Pope John Paul II as, "a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching,"^{vii} says that governments are to cooperate with the Roman Church regarding Sunday law:

Cooperation by the Civil Authorities Regarding This Commandment: *The civil authorities should be urged to cooperate with the church in maintaining and strengthening this public worship of God, and to support with their own authority the regulations set down by the Church's pastors. In explaining this commandment the pastor should include a discussion on how it is related to the other commandments: how it resembles them and how it differs from them. For it is only in this way that the faithful will understand why it is Sunday and not the Sabbath day that we now keep holy.*^{viii}

Just prior to the new millennium, Pope John Paul II took several steps towards this cooperation between his Church and the state. The Church has introduced strict

obedience laws into its canon requiring total submission to the Pope in matters of doctrine. For example, in his 1998 apostolic letter on Sunday sanctity, *Dies Domini*, the Pope repeatedly asks for Sunday legislation to enforce its observance.

Just a few days after issuing the directive on the maintenance of Sunday, the Vatican issued its apostolic letter, *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, making strong statements about submission to the Pope on issues of doctrine.

These apostolic letters say that those who deny the Catholic faith will be branded a heretic, and will be punished. History will repeat itself. Just as refusal to observe Sunday led to economic measures persecution and eventually death in the past, the same will happen again.

However, this time the decree will be universal and the whole world will have to choose between allegiance to God or allegiance to Satan. Then, according to Daniel, John, and E. G. White, will follow a time of trouble such as never was:

When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin (Maranatha: 193).

Choosing a Side

The mark of the Beast is the ultimate test of obedience. It will determine who will remain faithful to the precepts of Christ and who will fall under the banner of Satan.

The keeping of the Sabbath is the greatest signal to the world that we believe that God is our Creator and our Redeemer. It is the signal that we acknowledge His authority alone in our lives, in terms of religious matters.

In our time, anyone upholding the seventh- day Sabbath will be subject to ridicule. The question might well be asked of us, "How can you keep the seventh- day Sabbath commemorating a six- day Creation when the rest of the world adheres to evolutionary principles?"

The question may also be asked how the whole world can be wrong, particularly in the light of miraculous signs among Sunday adherents. It will take courage to stand on God's side. The issue is not a day. The issue is the acknowledgment of the entire government of God, for which the Sabbath day is merely a sign.

...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 forever and ever; and they shall have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Revelation 14:9-11).

This article is adapted from *Truth Matters* by Professor Walter J. Veith, an international speaker who has studied Biblical issues in-depth in his quest for truth. His popular series Genesis Conflict brings the debate between Creation and evolution to a new climax as he dissects the arguments with a scientific eye. His highly-acclaimed series Total Onslaught sheds light on the state of the world today as we move to a one-world government and an anticipated apocalypse.

i Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation - Evangelistic Studies for Public Presentation* (California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1953).

ii Extract from a letter written by the Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons (November 11, 1895).

iii *Catholic Record* (September 1, 1923).

iv Burns and Oates, *Library of Christian Doctrine*, as quoted in Carlyle Haynes, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Review and Herald, 1928): 48.

v "Moral Life and Magisterium of the Church," *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

vi "The Decalogue in the Church's Tradition," *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

vii Pope John Paul ii, *Catechesi Tradendae* (October 16, 1979).

viii Robert I. Bradley and Eugene Kevane (trans.), *The Roman Catechism* (Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1985): 386.