



DISCOVERING REVELATION

#22

Mark of the Beast

During the 1,260 years of the Dark Ages, it was hard to escape the wrath of the dragon. God's people—described in prophecy as a “woman”—were forced to flee into the wilderness to hide (Revelation 12:13-15). Eventually, however, the *earth* opened up to help the woman (Revelation 12:16), and the persecuted masses poured across the Atlantic to the New World in search of peace and liberty. The reign of the little horn power seemed to come to an end in 1798 when General Berthier marched on Rome and put an end to the papacy's temporal power. Revelation 13:3 said, however, that the beast's deadly wound would heal. On February 11, 1929, a concordat was signed by Mussolini and Gasparri, restoring temporal power to the Vatican. The Roman church was once again in control of its own lands. The wound was healing!

With the healing of the wound, however, came a new problem. Revelation 13:11 says that a *second* beast comes up out of the earth—the very place where the persecuted fled to near the end of the Dark Ages! This second beast leads the world to worship the first beast which had recovered from a deadly wound.

Who is this second beast? There are at least five clues given in the Bible (Revelation 13:11-15):

1. It comes up out of the earth—the New World, the place where the persecuted went to get away from the beast.
2. It appears some time near the end of the Dark Ages, when the earth opens up to help the woman.
3. It rises to significant world prominence sometime near the beginning of the 1900s, when the first beast is healed.
4. It looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. It looks Christ-like, but when it eventually opens its mouth, it says the same kinds of things the dragon always says.
5. It has no crowns on its horns. The first beast did; the horns represented kingdoms. This beast is *not* a kingdom.

No other power besides the United States of America could possibly fit! It was founded at the end of the 1700s, was a refuge for the persecuted, came to real prominence after its participation in the World Wars in the 1900s, claims to be a Christian nation with a wall of separation keeping the church out of government, and it has no king. Bible prophecy teaches that together, the Vatican and the United States will take back everything the Roman church lost at the close of the Dark Ages. The USA will bridge the gap between the Protestant West and Rome!

Since the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1981, the Vatican has made massive inroads in re-establishing its interests in the West. For example, Reagan and the Pope conspired to bring communism to its knees and lent their very influential support to the Solidarity movement in Poland. Within a very short period of time, the Berlin wall came down and the communist threat to Rome's supremacy was no more. Since then, the United States has established diplomatic ties with the Vatican, has appointed a Catholic priest as chaplain to Congress, and has carried out a number of other significant political changes. At the same time, Rome has re-asserted its position as a *mother* church. (It is an interesting assertion in light of Revelation 17:5, 6.) In 2000, the Vatican asserted that other churches are “defective” and that there is ultimately salvation only in the Roman church (*Dominus Iesus*, Aug. 6, 2000). John Paul II also reaffirmed the church's position on indulgences, which were an issue that first sparked the Reformation.

Revelation 13:15 says that the second beast will lead the world to Rome's door! Eventually, according to Revelation 13:16, 17, people will be obliged to receive the Mark of the Beast. This mark has nothing to do with computers or bar codes. Revelation 14:9-11 shows us a last day warning that goes to the whole world just before Jesus comes—"Don't take the Mark of the Beast!" Right after that, in Revelation 14:12, the Bible shows us those who do *not* have the mark—those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." We can safely surmise from this that those who have the Mark of the Beast don't keep God's commandments or have the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 7:2; 14:1 and 22:4 give us more information. Those who do not have the Mark of the Beast in their forehead or hand have instead the Seal of God in their forehead. The "forehead" represents the mind, where our moral decisions are made (see for example Romans 7:25). The "hand" represents the things we do—which are proof of the decisions we have made (see for example Ecclesiastes 9:10). God's last day people have His seal in their forehead, they keep His commandments, and they have the faith of Jesus. There is an interesting passage in Deuteronomy 6:6-8 that reveals what the Seal of God is all about. Right after giving Israel the Ten Commandments, God told them to bind them for a sign (or seal) in their forehead and hand. In Hebrews 10:16, 17, God indicates His desire to write His moral law in our hearts (minds). Isaiah 8:16 says, "Bind up the testimony, seal the *law* among my disciples." The Seal of God clearly has something to do with God's law.

Out of all of God's laws, one in particular has to do with our allegiance to God—the Sabbath Commandment. It is remarkable that the last day message that goes out to the world in Revelation 14:6, 7 (along with the warning about the Mark of the Beast) so closely resembles the fourth commandment of Exodus 20:8-11: "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It is no coincidence! Ezekiel 20:20 clearly indicates that the Sabbath was meant to be a special sign, or seal, between God and His people. Keeping the Sabbath is a special mark of allegiance among God's followers. The Sabbath is a mark, or sign, of God's authority over the creation.

The Roman church, however, has declared that it is above the Bible and has established her own mark of authority and allegiance—a counterfeit Sabbath:

"Of course, the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. And that act is a *mark* of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters." —James Cardinal Gibbons.

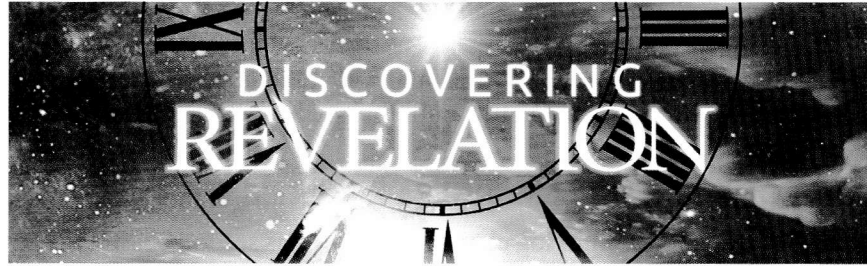
"Sunday is our mark of authority...the church is above the Bible, and this transference of the Sabbath observance is proof of that fact." —*Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, Sept. 1, 1923.

Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15) Daniel warned us that the beast power would try to tamper with God's law (Daniel 7:25). Prophecy has been fulfilled to a T! The table has been set for the last great conflict. The United States has become the world's police force, and while they are busy subduing the world and building bridges back to Rome, Rome is putting all the final pieces in place for people to take the Mark of the Beast.

It hasn't happened yet, but eventually there will be a law that says that unless you take the Mark of the Beast, you will not be able to buy or sell, and you might even face death. Rome will not be happy until everybody acknowledges her sovereignty. And what better way to do that than to have people observe the day that proves Rome can even change God's law!

On May 31, 1998, Pope John II issued an Apostolic Letter called *Dies Domini*—"The Lord's Day." Section 67 says, "Christians will naturally strive to ensure that *civil legislation* respects their duty to keep Sunday holy." Rome has not lost her desire to control the governments of the world—in fact, the process is picking up speed every year.

Tonight, you are faced with a clear choice. You *must* decide. Even *not* deciding is a decision—and nobody joins God's side by default. Time is running out. Where will you stand—on traditions of man, or on a clear Word from God?



Mark of the Beast

Is the “mark of the beast” a microchip that will be surgically implanted under the skin of your hand or forehead? Is it one of Satan’s 666 names? Or is it the United States Supreme Court’s recent decision upholding gay marriage? These are just a few of the many ideas being promoted today.

It may be interesting to speculate about such things, but the Bible is the only authoritative Source for truly understanding the beast, its mark, and what these things mean for God’s people in the last days.

WHO OR WHAT IS THE “BEAST”?

In a previous study, we learned that the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8 is the same power as the beast in Revelation 13:1, 2. In that earlier study, we also recognized the sad truth that these symbols represent the Christian church itself. The beast of Revelation 13:1, 2, is not a political tyrant or an anti-religious power. It is the church—a church that during the Dark Ages largely lost sight of Jesus Christ in its quest for worldly power.

1. How long would the church continue to exercise unrestrained power? (Revelation 13:5)

In AD 538, the Roman Church assumed the authority of the crumbling Roman Empire. Forty-two prophetic months (1,260 days) equals 1,260 years of real time. And in 1798, at the end of the 1,260 years, the church suffered a “deadly wound.” (Revelation 13:3) Louis-Alexandre Berthier, a French general, marched on Rome, captured the pope, and put an end to the papacy’s worldly authority.

2. What happens when the church’s “deadly wound” is healed? (Revelation 13:3, 4)
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On February 11, 1929, Mussolini signed a concordat with the Vatican, restoring its political authority. Today, the world looks to the pope as a moral leader who shapes world affairs. The Bible predicts that papal authority will continue to grow until the whole world accepts it.

A SECOND "BEAST" EMERGES FROM THE EARTH

3. What are some identifying characteristics of this second beast?
(Revelation 13:11-16)
- (a.) It arises out of the _____ (vs. 11), which is the same place the woman, or church, went to escape persecution. (Revelation 12:16)
 - (b.) It has two _____, (vs. 11) neither of which has a crown like those on the first beast. It is not a monarchy.
 - (c.) It looks like a _____, but speaks like a _____ . (vs. 11)
 - (d.) It performs great _____ that deceive the people of earth. (Revelation 13:13, 14)
 - (e.) It tells the people of earth to make an _____ to the first beast who came up out of the sea. (vs. 14)
 - (f.) It tries to impose a _____ on everyone—either on the _____ or the _____. (vs. 16)



Many of these identifying characteristics refer to actions that are still in the future. But no other power besides the United States of America could possibly fit the outlines of this prophecy! This power arises

from the earth—not the sea, which represents multitudes of people. (Revelation 17:15) The United States is the only nation that rose to power in the New World as the 1,260 years of papal supremacy were ending in the late 1700s.

4. What does the prophecy predict about the future course of the United States? (**Revelation 13:11, 12**)

Although it appears as a lamb, it will speak like a dragon and exercise all the authority of the first beast. Bible prophecy teaches that the United States and the Vatican will work together to restore everything the Roman Church lost at the close of the Dark Ages.

5. Why are the dragon (Satan) and his followers so angry with God's people? (**Revelation 12:17**)

God will have a faithful remnant in the last days who keep His commandments and cling to the testimony of Jesus in spite of Satan's persecutions and temptations.

IDENTIFYING THE MARK OF THE BEAST

6. What warning does heaven give regarding the mark of the beast? (**Revelation 14:9-11**)

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7. How does the Bible describe those who do NOT receive the mark of the beast? (**Revelation 14:12**)

Those who do NOT receive this mark are keeping God's commandments. So, clearly, those who DO receive this mark are not keeping them. The mark of the beast has to do with God's commandments.

Of all God's laws, one in particular deals with our allegiance to Him—the Sabbath commandment. Ezekiel 20:20 declares that the Sabbath is a special sign between God and His people, a special mark of allegiance to Him.

8. What authority does the beast claim over God's law—especially the commandment dealing with time? (**Daniel 7:25**)
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The Roman Church declares that its authority is above the Bible; it has established its own mark of allegiance—a counterfeit to God’s holy seventh-day Sabbath.

“Sunday is our mark of authority . . . the church is above the Bible, and this transference of the Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.”
(*Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923)

“Of course, the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. And that act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” (James Cardinal Gibbons)

The seventh-day Sabbath is God’s mark, or sign, of allegiance to Him. Sunday, the counterfeit to God’s Sabbath, is the mark of those who do not keep God’s commandments. Prophecy is being fulfilled. The scene is being set for the last great conflict. The United States is busy building bridges back to Rome, while Rome is putting all the final pieces in place for people to receive the mark of the beast.

9. Why is it important to keep God’s commandments? (**John 14:15**)

We don’t keep God’s commandments in order to be saved. We keep them because we *have* been saved—and because we love our Savior. Obedience demonstrates our love for the One who died for us. It’s not just a matter of days of the week; it’s a matter of love and loyalty.

MY DECISIONS

- I want to show my love for God by keeping His commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath.
- I ask God to guide me as I pray about the information I am learning in the Bible about the Sabbath.

MY PRAYER

Father, thank You for the blessings of the Sabbath. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, help me to stand faithfully for You in all things. In Jesus’ name, Amen.