

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

With the Feast of Trumpets picturing Christ's second coming soon upon us, I'd like to take a look at one of the Bible's end-time mysteries. Today I'd like for us to explore just what is the mark of the beast that we read about in the mysterious book of Revelation? Many evangelical Christians believe that it is some microchip people will have forced on them by a new world order or some tattoo or other physical mark. What does the Bible have to say about it? The Mark of the Beast is introduced to us in Revelation 13 so let's go there and let's start from verse 1 so we get the full context regarding this mysterious mark.

Rev 13:1 And I stood on the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. And on its horns were ten crowns, and on its heads was the name of blasphemy.

Rev 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet like those of a bear, and its mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him its power and its seat and great authority.

The CGCF Bible Reading Program in its commentary on Revelation, published just before their merger with the United Church of God, has this to say about this passage:

Verse 1 describes a fantastic beast that has seven heads, ten horns and ten crowns. This reminds us of Satan's description in Revelation 12:3, showing that this beast springs from him (cf. 13:2, 4). The Beast was like a leopard but with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion (v. 2).

In the book of Daniel...we find stated the historically-proven fact that there would be four human-led world-ruling empires on the earth from that time—the Babylonian Empire (2:36), the Medo-Persian Empire (5:28), the Greek Empire (8:20-21) and a *fourth* empire (2:33; 7:7)... Virtually all Bible scholars and history agree that **this fourth beast was the Roman Empire...**

In Daniel 7:3-24, these four kingdoms are compared with a lion, a bear, a fourheaded leopard and a terrible beast with ten horns. **We can see that the Beast in Revelation is a conglomeration of these four beasts. It has seven heads—apparently the head of the lion, the head of the bear, the four heads of the leopard, and the head of the fourth beast with ten horns.**

Historically the Roman Empire swallowed up most of the territory and absorbed all the others, and embodied the strongest physical and military characteristics of all its predecessors.

Now the Book of Revelation is a book about the future leading up to and following the return of Christ. The Roman Empire fell some 1500 years ago so what has the Roman Empire got to do with the end-time? We find the answer in Daniel 7:24 where we read:

And the ten horns [of this 4th beast] out of this kingdom [representing the Roman empire] *are* ten kings that shall arise.

After the Roman Empire there would be 10 revivals of the Roman empire leading all the way up to the return of Jesus Christ as indicated in other verses. There have been nine so far, some of which included Charlemagne's empire, the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon's empire and the Axis Powers of World War II and there will be one last great revival of the Roman Empire at the very end. Going back to Revelation 13 let's drop down to verse 7 where we continue to read about the beast:

Rev 13:7 And it was given to it to war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given to it over every tribe and tongue and nation.

Rev 13:8 And **ALL dwelling on the earth will worship it**, those whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world.

Notice here how it says “all” dwelling on earth will worship the beast. A misunderstanding of the use of the word “all” here has led most mainstream evangelical churches to believe that the beast is a coming one world government led by a globalist elite such as American and Jewish bankers or a coming new world order. To properly understand this verse, we need to realise that, at times, the Bible writers will sometimes use hyperbole that can only be understood when we compare with other Bible passages. In relation to the prophecy about the Roman empire we read in Daniel 7:23:

The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all kingdoms and shall devour **the whole earth**, and shall trample it and crush it.

Now did the Roman Empire rule the whole earth? For those who lived within the empire it certainly seemed like it did but we know that it never conquered Scotland and Parthia was not under its rule let alone China or the New World. So is the “all” who worship the beast just the “all” within its vast realm or all nations of a one world government led by a globalist elite? When we compare other Bible passages we see it is the former not the latter.

A few chapters back in Revelation 9 we see one power bloc going up against another great power bloc that has a 200 million man army. In Daniel 11 at the time of the end a King of the North, after being provoked, defeats the King of the South as it invades the Middle East and then is troubled by another power to the north and east which it goes out to fight. Someone might argue that this might be civil war within the one world government yet Christ’s words in Matthew 24 say the opposite. In Matthew 24:7 He said of the end time leading up to His return:

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

We see here sovereign nations and kingdoms fighting each other. While there are globalists pushing their agenda on this world, the beast is not some one world government but an end-time revival of the Roman Empire which we see the foundations of being laid today in Europe. There are a few interesting things that lend support to our traditional understanding that the beast power will be a future revival of the Roman Empire. One is that the builders of the European Union quite openly use the iconography of Babylon and the woman riding the beast that features in the book of Revelation. Let’s look at some examples of where they are using this iconography.

The first one is the European Union parliament building in Strasbourg. It was deliberately designed to mimic the unfinished Tower of Babel in Brughel’s famous medieval painting of Nimrod’s tower of defiance against God that God struck down in Genesis 11.

The next example is this statue in front of the Council of Europe building in Brussels which shows a woman riding a beast similar to the beast being ridden by the fallen woman called Mystery Babylon the Great described in Revelation 17.

Here are a couple of other examples of the EU openly using the iconography of Babylon and the woman riding the beast. Another example is one of several designs in circulation for the 2 euro coin. As you can see here there is a woman riding a bull on this coin.

What I need to explain here is that the continent of Europe, initially beginning with eastern Greece centuries before Christ, got its name from the goddess Europa. In Greek legend Europa was a beautiful Phoenician goddess who caught the eye of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods, who transformed himself into a tame white bull, sat at her feet and once she got on, ran to the sea, swam with her to Crete and raped her.

Early christians reading about the woman riding the beast in Revelation 17 would have immediately connected that imagery in Revelation with the myth of Europa being abducted by Zeus and would have thought of Europe. Also, they would have immediately connected Rome with Babylon as it says in Revelation 17:9 that "Mystery Babylon" sits on seven hills just like Rome, unlike Babylon in Mesopotamia which was built on a plain.

We are not exactly told what the 4th beast of Daniel 7 looked like that represented Rome other than it looked terrible and had iron teeth and bronze nails. The beast that took Europa for a ride was a bull. In the artwork in our church literature we have the beast of Daniel 7 looking like a dinosaur, a triceratops to be exact. That said, a triceratops may not have been far off what Daniel and John saw in their visions. If you remember Jurassic Park they portrayed the triceratops as a warm blooded, grass eating bovine which is the same animal family that bulls and buffalos are a part of.

There are also couple of ancient artifacts now in Germany that also lend weight to our traditional identification of the beast. Early in the Book of Revelation we read the following:

Rev 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: ...

Rev 2:13 I know your works, **and where you live, even where Satan's seat is**. And you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in those days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, **where Satan dwells**.

This verse in Revelation tells us that Satan's seat was in Pergamos or Pergamon as it is also called. Pergamon was the main seat of Emperor worship in Asia Minor, today called Turkey. Many Bible scholars believe Satan's seat in Pergamos was its Temple of Zeus. It's interesting to note that the original altar of the Temple of Zeus, king of the Greek gods, was moved to Germany where you can see it today in Berlin's Pergamon Museum. One Christian tradition has it that Antipas, an elder of Pergamos appointed by John, was boiled alive on this very altar in a bronze pot in the shape of a bull for refusing to worship the emperor.

So we have what many scholars believe is the seat of Satan referred to in Revelation in Germany today but there's also something else of great interest in this museum. Also in the Pergamon Museum is the famous Ishtar Gate, the main gate that led into Babylon. Again, this is not a copy, but a reconstruction using the original bricks that formed the gate. Going back to Revelation 13 we read:

Rev 13:11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. And it had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon.

This second beast looked like a lamb which is a Bible symbol for Christ but it spoke like a dragon, a symbol in Revelation 12 for the devil. It appears to be christian but in reality is not christian at all.

Rev 13:12 And it exercises all the authority of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and those dwelling in it to **worship the first beast**, whose deadly wound was healed...

We see here people worshipping the first beast. We have seen this already in history with Rome and the many revivals of Rome over the past 2000 years. We have seen emperor worship, church-backed complete obedience to the Holy Roman Empire to the total allegiance to the state under the banner of Fascism and Nazism in World War II. Going down to verse 14 we read:

Rev 13:14 And it deceives those dwelling on the earth, because of the miracles which were given to it to do before the beast, saying to those dwelling on the earth that they should make an image to the beast who had the wound by a sword and lived.

Rev 13:15 And there was given to it to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might both speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

In the same Bible Reading Program I quote earlier it says the following about these verses:

A careful reading shows that this second beast, a worldly religious power, existed before the creation of the "image," but it only obtained the *power* of the first beast *with* that image. Historically, the Roman imperial Church copied the governmental system of the Roman Empire as it was administered over the Empire's territory—that is, the Roman church created an "image" of the Roman Empire...Notice what historian Will Durant says in *The Age of Faith*, volume 4 of his renowned work, *The Story of Civilization*, about the Code of Justinian: "This Code ... acknowledged the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Church, and *ordered all Christian groups to submit to her authority*.... Relapsed *heretics* were to be *put to death*; Donatists, Montanists, Monophysites,

and other dissenters were to suffer confiscation of their goods, and were **declared incompetent to buy or sell**, to inherit or bequeath; they were excluded from public office, *forbidden to meet*, and disqualified from suing orthodox Christians for debt" (1950, p. 112).

Notice the penalties for not worshipping either of the two beasts. Worshipping the beast or the image of the beast is where people adore and obey them over God and His law. One specific example of this historically where true Christians were persecuted for not conforming was Sunday keeping, that is, worshipping on the Roman day of the Sun rather than keeping God's sabbath. In 364 A.D. the Council of Laodicea declared:

CHRISTIANS must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ (Canon XXIX, The Complete Canons Of The Synod Of Laodicea In Phrygia Pacatiana).

With that background let's now read about the mark of the beast in verse 16:

Rev 13:16 And it [that is, the second beast] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive **a mark on their right hand, or in their foreheads**,
Rev 13:17 even that **not any might buy or sell except those having the mark**, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name.

Most evangelicals see this as a physical mark but let's notice what the Bible has to say about God's laws over in Deuteronomy 11:18:

Therefore you shall lay up these my words in your hearts and in your souls, and bind them for **a sign upon your hand**, so that they may be **as frontlets between your eyes**.

Symbolically God's law is a sign or mark in our foreheads representing what we believe and a sign on our hands that represents what we obey by our deeds. Summarising what we have read so far, notice carefully these four key criteria that Revelation tells us about the mark of the beast:

- 1) "He" – the second beast - "caused" all to receive the mark. It is the church - NOT the civil government, which forces this brand on people
- 2) It brands on the people the mark of the "beast" - that is the mark of the Roman Empire, NOT the mark of the church.
- 3) The mark is received in the right hand and in the forehead.
- 4) This mark is plainly a mark of disobedience because true Christians will be martyred for not receiving the mark and the plagues of God will be directed on those who take on the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-11, 20:4).

The idea that the mark of the beast is some sort of microchip or physical mark fails to meet the first criteria because it is the church NOT the government which causes people to receive the mark. A microchip or some physical mark would be forced onto people by the government not the church.

The inevitable conclusion when we look at those four criteria is that the mark is something of a religious nature because it is forced onto people by a great church and that it originates with the Roman Empire, not the church, which a cunning devil would seize upon as a means of cleverly deceiving people into breaking one of God's laws and it involves a direct connection with holding a job - engaging in business - earning a living.

We saw before how Sunday-keeping historically was part of the greater sin of idolatry called worshipping the beast and its image where obedience to the Roman church-state power was put above God and His laws. Notice these Catholic statements regarding the observance of Sunday. They write:

"Sunday is our **MARK** of authority. . . . The church is above the Bible, and this transference is proof of that fact." The Catholic Record, September 1, 1923.

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change (from Saturday to Sunday) was her act. It could not have been otherwise, as none in those days would have dreamed of doing anything in matters spiritual and religious without her, and the act is a **MARK** of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” The Catholic Mirror, September 23, 1893.

In conclusion I'd like to quote now the official United Church of God understanding of the mark of the beast as stated in a Personal Correspondence Letter regarding this topic which states:

Bible students have long believed that forced **observance of Sunday** -- a day originally dedicated to the **worship of the sun as a god** instead of the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath -- will be **this identifying “mark” of the beast**. This view is strengthened by the fact that other prophecies in the book of Revelation show a great counterfeit religious figure and system will play major roles in leading people away from the true God and play into Satan's hands at this time.

The Bible does not explicitly define the specific methods that the beast will use to identify those free to participate in commerce at the time of the end...However this prophecy is fulfilled, it is clear that it will involve compromising and contradicting God's commands. Having proof that one is officially associated in some way with the beast will be necessary for one to be allowed to engage in commerce. Exactly how this end time prophecy will be brought to pass is not yet clear.

Let's all be diligent in watching world events and follow God when He commands us to be loyal to Him and not bow our knee to this world's Babylonian religious system as He says in Revelation 18:4:

Come out of her, My people, that you may not be partakers of her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues.