



18. 666: The Emperor's Mark

The Bible's strongest warning message is given against receiving the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 14:10). We must be able to understand what the Mark is; otherwise God would be unfair to let His wrath fall on us for receiving something we didn't even understand. While no one yet has the Mark of the Beast, let's discover what it is.

Firstly, it comes from the Beast (the Medieval Church of Rome, renewed with end-time power). It is his mark (Revelation 14:9). Secondly, it is connected to worship: *"If anyone WORSHIPS the beast and his image and receives his MARK on the forehead or on the hand, he too will drink of the wine of God's fury..."* (Revelation 14:9,10). The Beast's Mark is a sign of worship or loyalty to the Beast. Thirdly it is linked to rest: *"There is NO REST day or night for those who WORSHIP the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the MARK of his name"* (Revelation 14:11). Fourthly, it is a sign of disobedience to God's commandments: *"Here is the patience of the saints, they that KEEP the COMMANDMENTS of God and have the faith of Jesus"* (Revelation 14:12). Fifthly, it is in contrast and opposition to God's mark or Seal. Revelation is full of contrasting pairs. To understand one of the pair you must study the other also. To understand the Beast's Mark we must understand God's seal or mark.

John saw a vision of Jesus' second coming and heard a vital question: *"The great day of His wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:17). The answer follows immediately in chapter 7: *"Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of ISRAEL'"* (Revelation 7:2,3,4). The 144,000 Israelite servants with God's end-time Seal or mark in their forehead are able to stand. The symbols in Revelation are interpreted by the Bible: the Lamb represents the crucified Christ. We've seen before that Israel is the Christian church, of Jews and non-Jews who belong to Christ, Abraham's promised seed, by baptism of faith (Galatians 3:29,26,27).

So what of the 144,000? – The 144,000 Jewish & non-Jewish Christians? You may wonder, 'what hope do I have with such a small number?' We just read John saw them sealed on earth (Revelation 7:1-4). Next he sees them in heaven: *"After this I looked, and there before me was a GREAT MULTITUDE that NO ONE COULD COUNT, from EVERY NATION, TRIBE, PEOPLE and LANGUAGE, STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE and IN FRONT OF THE LAMB. These are they who have come out of THE GREAT TRIBULATION (the end-time crisis) ... they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 7:9, 14). The question was, 'who can stand before the throne and the Lamb?' The answer was 144,000 Israelites or Jewish and non-Jewish Christians (Revelation 7:1-4). Yet it is now called a great multitude because he sees them STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE AND THE LAMB and they have come out of earth's end-time great tribulation (Revelation 7:9,14,15). The 144,000 are a huge number of Christ's followers. There's plenty of room for you at the end!

But why "144,000 Israelite servants"? It is code for "REMNANT," which means "those faithful to God while the majority are unfaithful". Only faithful Israelites - only faithful Christians - receive God's seal. True Christians show their faith by following Jesus and his commands with all of their heart (John 14:15; 15:9,10). Servant means a Spirit-filled, obedient follower of Jesus (Romans 8:2; 6:22). To receive the Spirit, we believe the gospel and obey God (Ephesians 1:13 Acts 5:32).

Thus God's end-time seal or mark is placed on a vast number of obedient Spirit-filled believers of Jesus

(Revelation 7:3). Seals in the Bible were firstly an outward sign of a truth. Paul said Abraham, “received the SIGN of circumcision, a SEAL of the righteousness he had by faith...” (Romans 4:11). A seal is a sign. Circumcision was a sign of a truth. An outward SIGN that Abraham was righteous before God by faith. Secondly, seals were a sign of belonging, loyalty and obedience: “God’s sure foundation has THIS SEAL: The Lord knows those who BELONG to Him, AND everyone who CLAIMS the NAME of the Lord (claim to be loyal to Him) must TURN AWAY from unrighteousness (lawlessness)” (2 Timothy 2:19). In Revelation 7, God’s end-time seal is placed in the forehead, but in Revelation 14 God’s NAME is in the forehead (Revelation 14:1). Jehovah or the LORD, the “I AM,” is the name of Jesus and His Father (Exodus 3:13-15; Isaiah 42:8; John 8:58,59). God’s end-time seal is a sign of belonging, loyalty and obedience to the LORD or Jehovah God: “They are VIRGINS. They FOLLOW the Lamb WHEREVER he goes” (Revelation 14:4). Why are they loyal and obedient to the LORD to whom they belong? “These were REDEEMED from among men...they are WITHOUT FAULT before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:4,5). They are loyal and obedient to God because He redeemed or purchased them at an enormous cost - the death of Jesus. They know they are loved and valued and that He took away, or forgave their sin - “there is no fault in them” (Revelation 14:5). Because they are redeemed, valued and clean from sin, they love Jesus as virgins, a symbol that they have kept themselves pure, just for Him.

They reveal their loyalty to the LORD by obeying the call to, “WORSHIP Him who MADE the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7). According to the 4th commandment, the creator is the LORD (Exodus 20:11). To be loyal to the LORD our creator is to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy...For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea...” (Exodus 20:8,11). Revelation’s call to worship the LORD as creator is taken from the Sabbath commandment! Thus, the 7th day Saturday Sabbath is the end-time outward sign of worship or allegiance to the LORD: “Hallow my Sabbaths; and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God” (Ezekiel 20:20).

Sabbath is called a sign of loyalty to the LORD as creator (Exodus 31:16,17). Thus it will be kept in God’s eternal kingdom: “For as the new heavens and the new earth...shall remain...it shall come to pass, that...from one Sabbath to another, shall all people come to worship before me, says Jehovah” (Isaiah 66:22,23). Sabbath is also a sign of loyalty to the LORD, who makes us holy and whole for Him: “Also I gave them my Sabbaths as A SIGN (Mark or Seal) between us, so they would know that I the LORD MADE THEM HOLY” (Ezekiel 20:12).

Now we can understand the Beast’s Mark. It is something that originated with the Medieval Church, is connected to worship, rest, disobedience to God’s commandments and is in contrast and opposition to God’s mark or seal. Clearly the mark of the Church of Rome’s authority is Sunday: “Sunday is our MARK of authority...The Church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact” (Catholic Record, Sept 1, 1923). Notice the following claim from the Church of Rome itself: “Question - Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept? Answer - Had she not such power she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no scriptural authority” (An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine, p58).

Which brings us to 666 and the sixth identifying characteristic of the Beast from the sea: “And that no one could buy or sell, except those who have the MARK, WHICH IS THE NAME of the BEAST or the NUMBER of HIS NAME. Here is wisdom. Those who have understanding, let them count the NUMBER of the BEAST; for it is THE NUMBER OF MAN: and his number is 666” (Revelation 13:17,18). The Mark of the Beast is the name and number of man. In the Bible, 6 is man’s number (he was created on the 6th day), while 7 is God’s number. 666 is a fixation with man - man not moving beyond himself to God. Man-centred religion! Remember in Daniel 7:8 we saw the Anti-Christ has the eyes of MAN. It is man worshiping himself rather than God! It is man in opposition to God, by refusing to enter God’s Sabbath rest! But there is more, “Catholics hold that the Church, which is a visible society, must have a visible head” (Our Sunday Visitor, April 18, 1915). One of the titles of the Pope, who is the visible head of the church, was Vicarius Filii Dei, which is Latin, meaning, “Vicar or representative of the Son of God.” Many Latin letters had number values. So let’s give number values to the Papacy’s title, Vicarius Filii Dei: Vicarius – V = 5; I = 1; C = 100; A = 0; R = 0; I = 1; U = 5; S = 0, which totals to 112; Filii – F = 0; I = 1; L = 50; I = 1; I = 1, which totals to 53; and Dei – D = 500; E = 0; I = 1, which totals to 501. Adding all these together gives 666 – man centred religion.

The Sabbath is God's mark or seal and sign of worship and loyalty to him, but Sunday is the Roman Church's Mark and outward end-time sign of worship and loyalty to the Beast. How will it be received? The Land Beast, apostate Protestant USA that no longer follows the Bible teachings: "(He) causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell, except one who has the mark, or the name of the beast or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16,17). God's seal is received in the forehead only, but the Beast's mark can be received in either the forehead or the right hand. In the Bible, the forehead refers to a conscious belief and acceptance of the will, whereas the right hand was a sign of acceptance, but not necessarily because one believed in what they were accepting. It means to agree for convenience sake, but not necessarily believe in it with the will. However God's seal must be believed in, and our wills embrace it. We can't just agree for convenience sake. Hence God's seal can't be received in the right hand.

However no one who keeps Sunday at the moment yet has the mark of the Beast, because we have not come to the time when people are *forced* to accept it. But we are moving in that direction. During the latter part of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, he wrote a 41 page encyclical entitled, "Dies Domini," in which he urged Catholics around the world to more faithful keeping of Sunday. More recently Pope Benedict was doing the same. Time Magazine reported, "*Pope Benedict on Sunday called on Catholics to keep the Sabbath. The Pope...said Western societies had transformed Sundays into days where leisure activities had eclipsed the traditional Christian meaning of the day - to devote time to God. 'Give the soul its Sunday, give Sunday its soul,' he said (Philip Pulella, Thompson Reuters, Sunday, Sept 9, 2009).* Protestants in America have also been agitating for Sunday keeping. Pat Robertson, a major driving force in fundamentalist Protestantism in the USA, and who ran for the Presidency some years ago, wrote the following in his book, *The New World Order*: "*The next obligation that a citizen of God's world order owes is to himself. 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy' (for Robertson Sunday is the Sabbath) is a command for the personal benefit of each citizen...Higher civilizations rise when people can rest and draw inspiration from God. Laws in America that mandated a day of rest (Sunday laws) have been nullified as a violation of the separation of church and state' (The New World Order, p236 Pat Robertson).* Robertson is lamenting the fact that Sunday Laws in the USA have been repealed over the years because of US Constitutional calls for a separation between politics and religion, or between Church and State. He is calling for closer observance of Sunday worship. Another respected Protestant leader in the USA, and former editor of the respected journal, *Christianity Today*, Harold Lindsell, wrote some years ago during the American oil crisis, "*All businesses, including gasoline stations and restaurants, should close every Sunday...by force of legislative fiat through the duly elected officials of the people' (Christianity Today, Harold Lindsell Editor May 7 1976).*" An unbelievable call from a respected Protestant leader. As the Bible predicted, Protestant USA is agitating for Rome's Sunday.

Time is running out! Jesus is coming soon for His forever friends who love Him and follow Him by keeping His commandments. But remember, the issue over the day of worship – Sabbath or Sunday – really reveals who is Lord or master of our life. Is it the Lord of the Sabbath? Do we really love Jesus and therefore keep His Sabbath? Right now, why not reveal to Jesus, that he is both your Saviour and the Lord of your life, by determining to keep his Sabbath?