

*The Mark of The Beast*¹ (Revelation 13:11-18)²

Sermon Purpose: To explain difficulties Christians had when John wrote the Apocalypse, and to encourage brethren to remain faithful in spite of discouragements.

Introduction:

1. Questions: What is the beast? Who causes all to receive the mark of the beast? What is the beast's name? etc.
2. To answer these questions we need first to learn the historical and biblical context.

I. The Proper Approach to a study of the book of Revelation

- A. The current attitude too often is that the book of Revelation is a mystery, too difficult to be understood.
 1. Answer: The book of Revelation was meant to be understood. It is the only book in the Bible that places a blessing upon its readers.³
 2. Answer: Those who say the book of Revelation cannot be understood are often those who parrot what others have said, and made little if any effort to understand or study it for themselves.
- B. Fundamental facts: Helpful in a study of the book of Revelation is the knowledge that...
 1. The book of Revelation is a letter, written to Christian people, located in the seven principal cities of Rome in the province of Asia, to encourage them to be faithful in the face of persecution.
 2. The book of Revelation is a prophecy, foretelling those things "which must shortly come to pass" (1:1) It is therefore not a blue-print of prophetic utterances dealing with events to occur throughout the remainder of the history of the world.
 3. The book of Revelation is an apocalypse, written in symbolic language ("he sent and signified it" 1:1) for the protection of the original recipients of the letter.

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²**Revelation 13:11-18**, Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹²And he 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, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷and 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. ¹⁸Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

³**Revelation 1:3**, Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

The Mark of The Beast

C. Characteristics of apocalyptic literature

1. It is possessed of historical significance.
2. It is written in code language.
3. It is both personal and cosmic in character.
4. It is dualistic.
5. It is retrospective.
6. It is eschatological.
7. It is encouraging to the oppressed.

II. Historical Situation at time of writing of Book of Revelation

A. Growth of Caesar-worship in the Roman Empire

1. At Smyrna, 195 B.C., an altar was erected to Rome, the goddess, "Dea Roma."
2. Julius Caesar was deified the day after his death in 49 BC.
3. There was a tendency to attribute divinity to Rome before 1st century of Christian era.
4. Augustus Caesar, 29 B.C. permitted a temple to be erected to him at Pergamum.
5. Caesar-worship came to be the common element for uniting all Rome's conquered people.
6. Gaius Caligula, 37-41 A.D. sought Caesar-worship, fanatically in Rome.
7. Domitian, 81-96 AD, insisted on being called "Our Lord and God."
8. The priesthood of Imperial Religion forced populace to worship the Emperor.
9. Summary: The growth of Caesar-worship was gradual but forceful and much greater in Asia than in Rome.

B. Growth of Christian Persecution

1. First, from Jewish sources, in Jerusalem, Asia, then in Rome.
2. Second, from Roman sources, but not for 30 years. Then influenced by Nero's actions, setting a precedent, then by Domitian, so that not to worship Caesar was considered equal to treason.
3. Summary: Everyone must worship either Lord Caesar or Lord Jesus!

III. The Beast from the Sea (13:1-10)

- A. Description: 10 horns, 7 heads, 10 diadems on 10 horns, like leopard, feet like a bear, mouth like a lion. (Similar descriptive passage in Hosea 13:7-8)⁴
- B. Actions: Uttered haughty words of blasphemy; made war on & conquered saints; was worshipped by "those who dwell on the earth."
- C. Identification: 10 horns = 10 kings;⁵ 7 heads are seven hills⁶ also 7 kings;⁷ epithet, "seven-hilled" applied to Rome, a commonplace with Latin poets.
- D. Conclusion: Imperial Rome is intended by figure of the fourth beast.⁸

⁴*Hosea 13:7-8*, "So I will be to them like a lion; Like a leopard by the road I will lurk; ⁸I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage, And there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them.

⁵*Revelation 17:12*, "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

⁶*Revelation 17:9*, Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

⁷*Revelation 17:10*, There are also seven kings.

⁸*Daniel 7:1-25*, In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. ²Daniel spoke, saying, "I

IV. The Beast from the Land (13:11-18)

- A. Description & Actions: “two horns like a lamb,” “spake like a dragon,” caused all to worship the first beast, performed great wonders, deceiving, brought death to those who refused to worship 1st beast, caused a mark to be placed on all who worshipped the beast, prohibiting buying & selling without it.
- B. Identification: Could only have been priesthood of the Imperial religion. Proof is abundant in contemporary history. Imperial priesthood used magic, political power, and social pressure to accomplish its purposes.

saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. ³And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. ⁴**The first was like a lion**, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. ⁵And suddenly **another beast, a second, like a bear**. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' ⁶After this I looked, and **there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird**. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, **a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns**. ⁸I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. ⁹I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened. ¹¹I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. ¹²As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. ¹⁵I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷**Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth**. ¹⁸But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' ¹⁹Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; ²⁰and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. ²¹I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²²until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. ²³Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. ²⁴The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. ²⁵He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

V. The Mark of the Beast

A. Textual Information.

1. Placed on forehead, or in right hand.⁹
2. It, only, was a license for buying and selling.¹⁰
3. A worshipper of the beast, or one who had the image of the beast on him, was condemned by God to hell.¹¹
4. Those who refused to worship the beast & have his image upon them were victorious in heaven.¹²
5. Those who worshipped not the beast were killed.¹³
6. Synonymous with “the mark” of the beast, is “the number” and “the name” of the beast.¹⁴
7. In every instance, the worship of the beast is closely allied to the mark of the beast.
8. “Mark” and “number” may be substituted for one another. “The mark of his name” (14:11) and “the number of his name” (15:2) both indicate the same thing.

⁹**Revelation 13:16**, 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, **Revelation 14:9-10**, Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. **Revelation 20:4**, Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.

¹⁰**Revelation 13:17**, 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.

¹¹**Revelation 14:9-11**, Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." **16:2**, So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. **Revelation 19:19-20**, And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

¹²**Revelation 20:4**, And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

¹³**Revelation 20:4**, See above.

¹⁴**Revelation 13:18**, Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. **Revelation 15:2**, 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 13:17**, 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 14:11**, "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

The Mark of The Beast

- B. Various interpretations of the Mark of the Beast - “The mark of the beast has been interpreted to mean: The symbol of freemasonry, the faces that appear on the American dime; the N.R.A., the monomark, the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of the week, anti-Christ’s initials appearing on the forehead of the wicked, etc.”¹⁵
- C. How was the Mark of the Beast received?
1. Probably a certificate was issued, e.g. “To those who have been appointed to preside over the sacrifices, from Inares Akeus, from the village of Theoxenis, together with his children Aias and Hera, who reside in the village of Theadelphia. We have always sacrificed to the gods, and now, in your presence, according to the regulations, we have sacrificed and offered libations, and tasted the sacred things, and we ask you to give us a certification that we have done so. May you fare well.” = to which was given a certificate stating: = “We, the representatives of the Emperor, Serenos and Hermos, have seen you sacrificing.”¹⁶
 2. What, then, does the expression, “on the forehead,” or “on the right hand” mean? Probably it is an allusion to the Jewish manner of wearing his tephillin on the left hand and on the head. This would therefore suggest that which is not acceptable!

VI. Observations on the Number 666

- A. Textual facts from Revelation
1. The number of the beast is the number of a man (13:18)
 2. The number of the beast’s name (15:2) is also the name of the beast (13:17). Therefore the number of the man must also be the number of a man’s name (13:18).
 3. The mark of the beast’s name (14:11) is evidently a parallel expression to the number of the beast’s name (15:2). Therefore, the mark of the beast’s name is also 666.
 4. As the number of the beast’s name (666) is also the number of a man’s name (666), then the mark of the beast’s name (666) must also be the mark of a man’s name (666).
 5. All equal one and the same, designated by the number, or mark, or name, 666, of the beast, or man.
- B. Possible meanings of 666
1. Figuratively - that 666 means imperfection because it falls short of 777. Thus, the beast, unlike Christ, always falls short.
 2. Nero Caesar - historically is linked to Neron-Redivivus myth.
 - a. The myth: That Nero had not died, but fled to the Parthians, from whence he’d return to Rome with an army to conquer Rome. Later, it was thought he did die, but that his spirit returned in the person of Domition. (John surely did not believe the myth, but might have taken advantage of it in his presentation of his visions in Revelation.)
 - b. The text: “one of his heads was wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed” (13:3) See also 13:12, 14¹⁷

¹⁵William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954, p. 273, Note 22.

¹⁶William Barclay, *Letters to Seven Churches*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957, p. 29

¹⁷**Revelation 13:12, 14**, And he 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, whose deadly wound was healed...14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

The Mark of The Beast

- c. Although John wrote in Greek, his receivers could transpose 666 into Hebrew. Both languages counted numbers by using alphabetical letters. In Hebrew, 666 spelled out “Caesar Neron,” or by dropping the last “n,” the number would be 616, which satisfies discrepancies in the manuscripts.
3. While latter meaning is my personal preference, neither is certain.

VII. Meaning of Revelation 13 for our times.

- A. Symbols, e.g. dragon, devil, etc. mean same today as then.
- B. In Revelation 13, the primary moral lesson is in verses 9 & 10.¹⁸
- C. “John’s purpose was to encourage the Christians in Asia to remain faithful to the Lord regardless of the consequences. If they were to be taken captive, then they were to go into captivity without resistance. If they were to be slain with the sword, then they were to realize that punishment would come upon their slayers. If one resisted the sword, he would be counted as worthy of death, but non-resistance to martyrdom meant that the Christian was victorious in death.”

Conclusion:

1. The “Mark” of the “Beast” is a fascinating subject, but not really as relevant to us as it was to its original readers. The entire book of Revelation becomes more relevant to people who are being persecuted.
2. What is significant to us is that we, like them, must remain faithful, even when pressures are brought to turn us away from the Lord.

¹⁸*Revelation 13:9-10*, If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.