

Understanding the Mark of the Beast



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The book of Revelation describes a terrifying beast that will soon appear on the world scene. This beast will dominate the nations of the earth causing multitudes to receive a mark that will allow them to conduct business. Those who refuse this mark will suffer great persecution and in some cases death. Those who accept it will be subject to the wrath of God. Who and what is this prophetic beast? What is its mark? How will the masses obtain it, and is there a way to avoid the mark of the beast?

Understanding the Mark of the Beast

Nearly 2000 years ago the Apostle John was given a series of prophetic visions. In one of them, Christ revealed that a beast will rise up at the end of the age and force countless numbers of people to accept a mark in their right hand or forehead allowing them to buy and sell (Rev. 13:16-17). Today there are numerous opinions as to what this mark might be.

Some think it's a tiny computer chip that will be implanted in people. Others believe a bar code like those used when scanning merchandise. A few are convinced it is a type of social security card. With all the differing ideas, is it possible for us to know? The answer is yes! And though it may come as a shock to most readers, billions of people already have this mark!

The Dragon and the Beast

In the 13th chapter of the book of Revelation, John described a frightening, prophetic vision. The apostle wrote:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to

make war with him?” And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him whose names have not been written in the Book of Life (Revelation 13:1-8).



What is this beast and how will it come to be worshipped by most of the world? Many theories have been suggested, but the only legitimate key to understanding the beast is to let the Bible interpret itself (2Pet. 1:20). This is possible by examining other prophetic Scriptures that use the same symbolism and speak of similar events (2Tim. 2:15). The seventh chapter of Daniel provides verses that apply this principle. There, the prophet described a divine vision of four beasts representing kingdoms that would dominate the known world down through time. As the prophet wrote:

Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings which arise out of the earth (Daniel 7:17).

These four empires began with Babylon symbolized as a lion having eagle's wings (Dan. 7:4). While this political entity had existed for more than 2000 years, its world dominance did not begin until the Assyrian empire fell to the Chaldeans in 626 B.C. The kingdom of Babylon finally came to its end in 539 B.C. when the Medo-Persians conquered its capital (*The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, Vol. 4, p. 526-527).



Mosaic from Babylon's Ishtar gate 575 B.C.

The second beast Daniel saw was the Medo-Persian Empire symbolized by a bear with three ribs in its mouth (Dan. 7:5). The ribs represent Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt which are three significant nations that this empire conquered. Medo-Persia remained the prominent government for more than 200 years (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. I, Ch. XIII). It was during this time that King Cyrus issued an edict to free the Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1). Later, King Artaxerxes, also known as Ahasuerus, was noted for marrying Esther and dealing with Persia's administration of Judah (Est. 2-10).



Relief of Median and Persian soldiers marching together

The third beast Daniel saw appeared as a leopard with four heads and four wings (Dan. 7:6). This creature represented the powerful Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great which began in 333 B.C. The war strategy of this kingdom consisted of swift attacks similar to that of a leopard which swiftly conquers its prey. Their success made way for Greece to become the next empire to dominate western civilization (ibid, Ch. XXII).

We must also note that this beast was depicted with four heads which foreshadowed the final Greco-Macedonian Empire being split into four divisions after the death of Alexander. Each of these smaller kingdoms was presided over by one Alexander's four military generals (ibid, Ch. XXIII, p. 558).



Alexander the Great

The fourth beast represented an empire more frightening and powerful than all of the others. As Daniel wrote:

After 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. I 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 (Daniel 7:7-8).

Note the striking similarities between the beasts described by Daniel and the one the Apostle John saw. Daniel witnessed a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fourth beast that was different from all the others. It was more powerful than any before having subjugated the preceding kingdoms.

The beast of Revelation has all of these characteristics (Rev. 13:1-2). This indicates that the final beast not only subdued the previous empires, it assimilated aspects of the cultures and religions from kingdoms it conquered.

This fourth beast of Daniel's vision portrayed the Roman Empire which dominated Europe under rule of the Caesars. As John's vision portrayed, its power was "mortally wounded" by a number of tribes early in the fifth century A.D. However, it was restored to life under the rule of Justinian (Rev. 13:3). During Rome's revival, the empire became a union of church and state calling itself the "Holy Roman Empire." Throughout history it would have seven successive ruling governments symbolized by the beast's seven different heads. These can also be described as eras that began with Justinian, then Charlemagne, followed by Otto the Great, the Habsburgs, Napoleon, the fascist axis powers of Mussolini and Hitler, and one head yet to come (Rev. 17:9-10).

John noted that the last head will have ten horns (Rev. 12:3; 13:1). In the book of Daniel, a representation of this same beast is also depicted as having ten horns. God also explained what these horns portray. Symbolically, a horn represents a kingdom, nation, or a world leader (Dan. 7:20-24). Therefore, the seventh and final head of this beast will be comprised of ten nations that will unite to become a single, mighty, military force.

These nations will combine their strength under the banner of a false religion and develop into a dominate world power that will be the final expression of the Holy Roman Empire. It is this extensive kingdom that will be led by an exceedingly powerful man who will boldly speak blasphemous things. This empire and its leader comprise the end time beast who will force its subjects to accept a mark.

The Number of His Name

John wrote that the beast has a name associated with a specific number. As we read the following words, note four clues used to identify the beast of Revelation:

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. 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 13:16-18).

We are first told that we must have understanding in order to identify the beast. This means readers are to think intelligently about the clues and they will make sense. We are then instructed to “calculate the number of the beast.” In other words, add it up. Next we are told that it is the number of a man. Finally, we are given the sum indicating who the beast is—666.

It must be understood that 666 is not a number imposed on the masses. Those who believe that 666 is a mark that the beast will force others to bear have been misled. This deception can misdirect people so that they will accept the real mark. Instead, 666 is a number enabling readers to identify who and what the beast is. For this reason it is called the number of the beast, the number of a man, and the number of his name. With this information we can expose both the empire and the individual whose number is 666.

Latin Man – A Roman Citizen

The founder and first king of Rome was a man called Romulus. This king and his subjects carried the name Roman which refers to a citizen of that empire. The term Roman originally indicated a Latin speaking individual. To this day, most dictionaries define a Roman as a person, “that uses the Latin alphabet, that speaks the dialect of Italian spoken in Rome, or is fluent in the Latin language” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Roman>, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/roman>; retr. 1/27/2010).

Included in the equation is the fact that the prominent language used in the New Testament is Greek. The Greek word for a Latin speaking man is *lateinos*. This term has nothing to do with race, nor is it a reference to the Hispanic culture. It pertains to an individual associated with Latin and the government of Rome.

When we continue to use wisdom, we find an ancient numbering system known as *gematria* where letters, words, and phrases possess a numerical equivalent. This numbering system can be used to identify the beast. Consider the term Roman, as defined by the Greek *lateinos*, and its numerical equivalent.

Greek letter	Numerical equivalent
$\lambda = L$	30
$\alpha = A$	1
$\tau = T$	300
$\varepsilon = E$	5
$\iota = I$	10
$\nu = N$	50
$\omicron = O$	70
$\sigma = S$	+ 200
Latin man / Roman	666

The number 666 is also identified as being “the number of his name.” Therefore, this number stands as a way to identify the leader who will govern the final blasphemous empire.

With this in mind, Nero Caesar was a Roman emperor of unspeakable cruelty. He was responsible for great persecution of both Jews and Christians. This man began a 3½ year war during the final Pharisaic era of the Old Covenant beginning in 64 A.D. This war concluded with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the priesthood in 70 A.D. It was also during his reign that many of the apostles were martyred.

When considering the duality existing between historical and prophetic events, Nero Caesar foreshadowed the end-time beast that will wage war during the great tribulation (Dan. 12:7; Mat. 24:21; Rev. 12:14). Nero's name in Hebrew is spelled with the characters נרון קטר. If we follow God's instructions to count the number, the corresponding numbers of these characters that spell his name add up to 666!

Hebrew character	Numerical equivalent
ן	50
ו	6
ר	200
נ	50
ר	200
ס	60
ק	+ 100
נרון קטר (Nero Caesar)	666

The great beast John saw coming out of the sea was symbolic of a powerful empire with religious ties rising up out of the nations (Rev. 13:1, 17:1-15). It will be a final restoration of the Roman Empire comprised of a confederation of ten nations and unified under the leadership of one man who is supported by a prominent religious figure referred to as the false prophet (Rev. 16:13). Together, this powerful world force will reflect the same form and nature of the church and state government that comprised the ancient Holy Roman Empire.

The exact name of this end time ruler will not be known until he appears on the world scene. However, when he does, the Scriptures make it clear that the beast will eventually dominate Western civilization the same way the Romans dominated the Mediterranean world. But, how could any man, or company of men, amass such enormous influence? God answered this question plainly, stating:

The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority (Revelation 13:2).

The source of this government's power comes from "the dragon," but who is this dragon capable of supplying such might? Again, God did not keep us in the dark. The dragon is none other than the devil (Rev. 12:9).

This world increasingly rejects the moral way of God and continues to show deference to Satan's immoral way of do what you want. Unknowingly, most people routinely follow his lead. Even most Christian denominations reject the authority of God by not keeping His commandments. In one way or another, Satan deceptively reigns as the god of this world (2Cor. 4:4). His deception is so effective that he will cause the future beast to be worshipped as a deity. As John continued:

And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So **they worshiped the dragon** who gave authority to the beast; and **they worshiped the beast**, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months (Revelation 13:3-5).

To worship does not necessarily mean that an individual must pray or bow down in reverence. People worship whatever it is that they obey, and Satan has influenced countless numbers to disobey God and conform to the traditions of men. The devil will continue this deception by inspiring political and religious

speeches that will persuade the masses and national officials to support this wicked empire (Dan. 7:8). Satan will also cause a second beast to work in conjunction with the political leader (Rev. 13:11). This second entity is called the false prophet (Rev. 19:20). He will be a religious figure that will perform astounding miracles validating the first beast and seducing vast multitudes into accepting the beast's mark. Interestingly, as the term Roman refers to *laitenos*, a Latin speaking man, the vast majority of messages delivered by the Pope and Catholic priests are in Latin. This further indicates a past and future alliance between an apostate church and state.

The Spirit behind the Throne

Before we can fully understand the mark of the beast we must first consider its author. Though the mark will be enforced by a prevailing world government, the power behind the throne will be Satan. In fact, the devil has always been a source of strength for the world's ungodly leaders.

The Bible describes Satan as the adversary, a serpent, a dragon, a murderer, and a master of lies and deceit (Gen. 3; John 8:44; Rev. 20:2, 9). He is a genius of deception and more cunning than humanity can comprehend. By portraying him as a crimson cartoon character with horns and a pointed tail, Satan has seduced people into underestimating the enormous power he wields. Even within the various sects of Christianity his influence is widely discounted. Instead of considering him a formidable foe, people mock and ridicule the devil as if he were spiritually inferior to us. However, the devil is not weak or ineffective, and he certainly does not lack intelligence. His ability to deceive is so effective that he has influenced millions to commit horrible wrongs thinking they were right.

Summing up the extent of his power, the Apostle John wrote that Satan has accomplished what might seem impossible:

That serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world... (Revelation 12:9).

God declares that the entire world has been deceived by the devil in one way or another. So before anyone dismisses him as some kind of spiritual lightweight, consider just a few of his accomplishments:

- He seduced one third of the angels to follow him in rebellion against God (Rev. 12:4)
- He seduced Eve to reject God's law (Gen. 3)
- He induced evil throughout humanity to the degree that God had to destroy all but eight people (Gen. 6:7)
- He was the source of Job's afflictions (Job 1-2).
- He moved King David to look for strength in Israel instead of God (1Chr. 21)
- He influenced Judas Iscariot to betray Christ (John 13:2)
- He exercises control over the kingdoms of this earth (Mat. 4:1-4)
- He can cause believers to turn against the truth of God (Mat. 24:24)
- By blinding the minds of unbelievers, he has caused the world to worship him (2Cor. 4:4).

Satan is called the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air (1Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). He has rule over the nations and demonstrated that fact when he offered the kingdoms of the earth to Christ (Mat. 4:4). He has led untold numbers to worship idols. He inspired parents to sacrifice their children to false gods such as Molech. He led the Aztecs to cut the hearts out of people while worshipping the sun. He has influenced powerful empires to rise up and destroy one another. He has caused soldiers to torture the innocent and thugs to rape innocent women and children. Through his enormous power of deception, he has been the source of immeasurable pain and suffering.

Nearly everything in this world has experienced his corrupting touch. If we simply pause to honestly consider the reality of the world we live in, we can easily recognize the scope of Satan's persuasive abilities. Seduced by the devil, the world has

become a toxic cocktail of false religions. Crime and violence are spinning out of control. Many are convinced that killing unborn babies is a moral right and simply an element of a woman's "health care." Governments have become corrupt and self serving. Pollution is poisoning the earth beyond human repair. The Devil's deceptive power is so great that, at the end of the age, violence will escalate to the point that God must intervene in order to prevent the extinction of humankind (Mat. 24:22).

When considering the extent of Satan's atrocities, one begins to wonder. How could he persuade multitudes to believe they were virtuous while committing horrible acts of wickedness? The answer comes from Paul who warned us that Satan and his followers do not appear as evil doers. He wrote:

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Masquerading as purveyors of righteousness, the devil and his demons are responsible for every false religion ever practiced by humanity. Satan has convinced billions to embrace beliefs such as Gnosticism, paganism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Wicca, Buddhism, Atheism, and Islam. He is responsible for innumerable perversions of the Bible. As a result, the majority of humankind has been completely misled in their understanding of the true God. In fact, Satan has dedicated his existence to leading us astray, and the history of our world is a clear demonstration of his tremendous success. This same devil will be the spirit behind the coming force called the beast. His deceptive talents will enable the beast to convince the majority of civilization to accept his mark which, as we will see, is the ultimate symbol of false religion.

The Second Beast

As these prophetic symbols continued to unfold, John saw a second beast rise up that reflects a religious figure with enormous influence over the masses. As John wrote:

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 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 (Revelation 13:11-12).

Christ is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The second beast has two horns that are like those of a lamb or ram. This indicates an appearance of holiness, and the two horns represent the two powers of church and state. However, no matter how it appears, this beast will speak blasphemy. Like the first beast, this second beast's words are inspired by the devil. Sermons will be powerful and will stir emotions causing people to rise up in bold defiance of the true God. John was then shown how this second beast will use demonic miracles to persuade people to worship the beast:

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 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. He 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 (Revelation 13:13-15).

This second beast will be empowered by forces of darkness to perform miracles. Feats of sorcery will persuade billions to worship the beast and his image. Those who refuse will suffer enormously and many will be killed.

When most people read these words they think that they could never be fooled by something inspired by Satan and his demons. But this belief has always been part of the devil's deception (Rev. 12:9). He inspires many people to form an appearance of righteousness that denies God's authority (2Tim. 3:5).

Understand that God chose to use beasts to represent powerful empires, corrupt leaders, and an apostate religious organization. The actual men and women who lead these abominable organizations do not appear as hideous monsters. They are attractive to many, and the whore will appear to be holy, righteous, and pure.

The Bible describes Satan as transforming himself into an angel of light. It should be of no surprise that many religious leaders appear to be righteous (2Cor. 11:14-15). This explains how many present themselves as servants of Christ. They might be appealing, charismatic, and speak words that are soothing to itching ears. Such individuals have actually persuaded people to persecute the innocent while believing they were serving God (John 16:2). In like manner, during the end time, even though the beast will propagate wicked and brutal acts, these world leaders will convince people that their atrocities are evidence of God's approval. Daniel prophesied that this coming violence will also be directed towards commandment keepers. The prophet wrote:

That horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows. I was watching; and **the same horn was making war against the saints**, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came (Daniel 7:20-22).

The conflict prophesied by Daniel is described in the New Testament as a period of terrible persecution for God's people (Rev. 6:9-11). It will be "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). The treatment of true believers, as well as those nations who carry Jacob's name by birthright, will be vicious, but God promised protection for some. For this reason, Christ exhorted His followers to pray that they might be "accounted worthy to escape these things

that shall come to pass” (Luke 21:36). The Savior indicated that those who are faithful will be taken to a place of safety where they will be sheltered during the great tribulation (Rev. 3:10; 12:14).

In this context it is important to understand that those who respond to God’s calling will not be deceived. A relative few will recognize the evil being perpetrated upon mankind, and they will refuse to accept the authority and mark of the beast. Sadly, some of these will be martyred for their faithful defiance.

Worshipping the Image of the Beast

John wrote that the masses will be required to “worship the image of the beast” (Rev. 13:15). It must be understood that this image is not something made of wood, stone, glass, or metal. It is not a computer graphic or a holograph. In fact, people have worshiped this image in the past and that worship has continued to this day. What may come as a shock to many is that the image is a reflection of the ancient worship started long ago within the first empire mentioned by Daniel—Babylon. That religious system began with Nimrod, and it experienced slight modifications as each empire came and went.

It was fatally wounded in 476 A.D. when the Roman Empire fell (Rev. 13:3). The Byzantine Emperor Justinian gained traction in 527 A.D. and reunited the eastern and western territories. The deadly wound was healed as the Roman Empire revived and most aspects of the Catholic religion solidified (Rev. 13:12).



A major aspect of Justinian’s rule was his religious conviction. Justinian was a devout defender of orthodoxy. He envisioned his role as both king and priest. As such, the unification between an apostate church and state was solidly reinstated as the Holy Roman Empire adopted the image of the beast. The empire grew more powerful and it fell deeper into apostasy by embracing many of the rites and festivals of pagan territories that it conquered. The church

substituted Christian names for heathen festivals and tried to change their symbolism, but the morphed ceremonies continued to reflect the ancient Babylonian system. This religious syncretism actually encouraged citizens to continue to worship in the old ways while calling itself Christian.

Thus, the image of the beast is a revival of that same false system which is intimately connected to counterfeit religion. It has been reflected in succeeding empires and it will rise up a final time displaying that same ancient, false, religious system. The new world order will enforce blasphemous worship. Powerful speeches will be given and remarkable miracles performed. People will be mesmerized and brought to their knees in awe and reverence. This brings us to the point where we can understand exactly what the mark of the beast is.

What is A Mark?

The Scriptures state that the mark of the beast is worn in the forehead or hand. Most people consider this to be a physical symbol on the hand or forehead. Few would suspect it to be a sign that identifies them with a specific set of internal beliefs that motivate behavior. But this is exactly what the mark is.

For example, though the expression may have many applications, a mark is defined as “a distinctive or characteristic trait; a device or symbol serving to identify, indicate origin or ownership” (*Webster’s College Dictionary*, mark). A mark is a symbol that gives us information regarding the identity of someone or something. According to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the word “mark” is the Greek *charagma* and refers to a stamp as a badge of servitude (G5480). This definition is important to understand. A mark identifies ownership and who, or what, a person serves.

It is not difficult to understand this concept. We mark our children’s clothes when they go to summer camp to identify ownership. We wear a ring as a sign that we belong to someone. We brand cattle to display who owns them. In like manner, banks and markets put up a sign to identify their company. Some people

even dress or act in a specific way to let others know what organization they are a part of.

In a similar manner, the mark of the beast will be used to identify who or what an individual is associated with. It will enable the beast to recognize those who share his beliefs. Still, how can we know exactly what this mark is?

God's Mark

Most do not realize that God has a mark and there are parallels between His mark and that of the beast. While the mark of God identifies people who obey Him, the mark of the beast identifies those who obey the devil. The mark of the beast is actually a counterfeit of that which was designed by our Creator.

For example, God's mark is worn in the hand and forehead. But what does this expression mean? Do people actually tattoo a symbol in their hands or foreheads? To understand we must consider God's mark as revealed to Israel in His statutes and judgments:

Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them*... You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes** (Deuteronomy 6:1-8).

These verses express God's desire for His law to be the central part of our lives. It is to be what motivates us, guiding our decisions, identifying who we serve with our mind and strength. For this reason, God's moral law is to be worn upon the hand and between the eyes. In other words, God's law is to be in the frontal lobe where we process thought. It is this part of the brain that we use to contemplate and make judgments. God is telling us that His law is to be the vanguard of our minds! It is also to be displayed in

FRONTAL LOBE
between eyes,
forehead



our hand; reflecting what we apply our strength to do (Ecc. 9:10). These expressions explain how those people who live by His code of ethics have God's mark and are identified as His people.

It must also be understood that numbers have symbolic meaning in Scripture. For example: two represents unity, four a foundation, six the number of man, seven the number of completion, twelve reflects government, and ten is the number of God's law. Further, God divided the Ten Commandments into two categories. The first four are foundational to all others. They relate how we are to love God. We do this by having no other gods before Him, by not having graven images, by not taking His name in vain, and by keeping His Sabbath holy. On the other hand, the last six commandments express how we are to show love for each other. By honoring our parents, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying to one another, and not coveting those things that others possess. Because of these two categories:

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. **This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it:** You shall love your neighbor as yourself . On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Every man-made religion has some form of the last six commandments in their moral code. Everyone understands that murder, stealing, lying, adultery, and envy is wrong. Where the various religions differ is how we are to express love towards God. The first four commandments are foundational in this respect and will naturally affect how we keep the other six. Therefore, they are

of great concern when identifying those who have the mark of God as opposed to those who display the mark of the beast.

Daniel wrote that the beast will “change times and laws” (Dan. 7:25). This means it will have a different set of laws and times that will identify its adherents. As we are about to see, most people have already chosen to follow these heretical regulations.

No Other Gods

The Eternal’s first commandment is to have no other god’s before Him. Satan’s way allows for a plethora of false gods; many of which came from Babylon’s worship of the earth and its seasons. According to Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*, the first king of Babel, Nimrod, married his mother, Semiramis. She bore his child and claimed it was a virgin birth. From that time forward the symbolism of Madonna and child has left its religious imprint in different cultures around the world (Chapter II, Section II).

This imprint was adopted by the Catholic Church which teaches its members to bow down before images of Mary and pray to the supposed “queen of heaven” which is a title held by the ancient pagan goddess of fertility—Ashtoreth (Jer. 44:17; 1Kin. 23:13).



The world's empires adopted much of Babel's ancient religious practice. As the leadership over proceeding kingdoms changed, the world's empires adopted much of Babel's ancient religious practice. Though traditions and rites were modified to some degree, it always corresponded to that which had previously existed. Thus, the Babylonian system was passed to Persia, Greece, and then Rome.

As an example, the winter Saturnalia was observed by ancient pagans for centuries. During their celebration they would cut down trees, deck them with silver and gold, exchange gifts, worship the sun god Mithra, and pay homage to the fire god Molech. Legend states that Mithra's birthday was December 25th and on this day believers celebrated the sun's "rebirth." Changing their sun god to the Son of God was easy enough for the Catholic Church. For more on this subject, please read our booklet titled *The Truth about Christmas*.

In like manner, Easter was long worshipped as the goddess of fertility known as Ishtar, Eostre, Astarte, and Ashtoreth. The infamous cross shaped † was also worn in honor of Ishtar's brother; the pagan god Tammuz. Many of these ancient false gods, pagan holidays, and symbols have been handed down to our modern world.



As a result, this Babylonian system left a mark on the world which is still visible today. The great historian Will Durant described how these ungodly systems invaded Christianity when he wrote:

Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it... the Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretist result. From Egypt came the idea of a divine trinity... the adoration of the Mother and Child and the theosophy that made Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and obscured Christian creed... From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother... The

Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. [Modern] Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, Caesar and Christ, p. 595).

Durant's observation explains how people corrupted God's true religion down through time. As the powerful Holy Roman Empire conquered the nations, many pagan religious practices were assimilated by the Catholic Church. These traditions were retained by her daughters known as the Protestant, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Mormon, and most other professing Christian religions. Today, this mark of pagan blasphemy remains identifiably intact. This was made clear to the Apostle John when He saw a woman, a symbol of a church, riding the end-time beast:

And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement (Revelation 17:3-6).

The revival of this beast will be composed of a confederacy of ten nations. Its religion will reflect the mystery religions of Babylon. It is ridden by an apostate church that, like a harlot, has had intimate relations with numerous kings and religions. As Durant and the Apostle John both indicate, a wide range of pagan practices were assimilated by this blasphemous empire. These

customs were passed to others and they eventually spread throughout the world. What few realize is the origin was always Babylon, and these beliefs are an integral part of that false system still worshiped by billions.

As a result of the widespread assimilation of these ancient religious rites, the celebration of Christmas, Epiphany, Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter, Halloween, Candlemas, and Valentine's Day are not only absent when we consult the Scriptures,



they are actually condemned as blatant worship of false gods (Deu. 12:29-31; Jer. 10:1-5). Such observances openly transgress God's first commandment and stamp the individuals celebrating them with the mark of the beast.

Graven Images

God tells us the second way we are to show love toward Him is not to have graven images (Exo. 20:4-6). This means that we are not to use images of angels, animals, saints, plants, or anything found in heaven or earth in a spiritual manner. No matter how beautiful we might consider an object to be, it is a terrible trivialization of the Almighty to use them in worship. For this reason, God commanded:

Take careful heed to yourselves... lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the

moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage (Deuteronomy 4:15-19).

In contrast to God's word, people have continually created images to use in a religious manner. Buildings all around the world are filled with idols that represent their deities. Even religious stores that profess to be Christian offer numerous idols in the shape of a cross, a fish, a saint, Mary, and Jesus. Millions purchase and use these idols in worship or as a symbol of their faith.



In bold defiance to God's second commandment, people feel they will be blessed by using these graven images when such idols actually carry a curse. They reflect the ancient mystery religion which promotes the worship of numerous gods. Those who use them do not display the mark of God. Instead, their practice reflects the mark of the beast.

Taking God's Name in Vain

The third commandment tells us to not take God's name in vain (Exo. 20:7). Ironically, many who claim to be "conservative" attempt to soften their violation of this command by using words like gosh, golly, gee whiz, sheesh, jeepers-creepers, and cripes; when all of these are simply euphemistic slang words for God and Jesus Christ.

The Savior also instructed us to not call anyone "Rabbi" or "Father" (Mat. 23:8-9). By this admonition He warned us against designating any human being as our spiritual parent or master. He and the Father alone hold this sacred status. However, Jewish religious leaders are called rabbi, and the Catholic Church teaches its adherents to call their priests "father." Perhaps the pinnacle of breaking this commandment is found in the self proclaimed title of the pope who is referred to as the "Most Holy Father."



While objecting to the status and title claimed by the pope, many Protestants break the third commandment by calling their ministers "Reverend" when the Scriptures proclaim that "holy and reverend *is* HIS name" (Psa. 111:9). These religious leaders presumptuously give themselves titles that belong only to God.

Perhaps the most ironic violation of this commandment comes from the fact that the majority of people who profess

Christianity reject God's law. Billions claim to be followers of Christ, but do not keep His Ten Commandments. By calling themselves "Christians" and refusing to obey Him, they blatantly break the first and third commandment. These individuals do not have God's mark. They have instead chosen a counterfeit.

Changing Times and Laws

Daniel noted something of great significance regarding the mark of the end-time beast. As was noted earlier, the prophet wrote the following important detail:

He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall
intend to change times and law (Daniel 7:25).

We have already discussed how changing laws is a reference to altering God's statutes and judgments. These include the Ten Commandments, but there are other regulations also required of true believers. These are the annual holy days and the dietary food laws (Lev. 11 and 23). Again there are multitudes who may vow allegiance to God, but do not observe these precepts.

Contrary to clear divine guidelines, most choose to eat any kind of flesh they want. Historically it was the Catholic Church who propagated the lie that all flesh is good for food when the Bible tells us otherwise. This false doctrine has also been passed to her daughters throughout the religious community. For more on this subject see our booklet—*Why the Unclean and the Clean?*

When it comes to times, exactly what has been changed by the apostate church in relation to the worship of God? Consider that the Creator chose to begin each new day at sunset (Gen. 1:5). The Roman calendar has chosen to start the new day in the middle of the night. Additionally, while God begins the new year in the spring, Rome decided to begin theirs in the middle of winter (Exo. 12:2). God concludes the week on the seventh day which He named the Sabbath. Under the influence of the Catholic movement, Emperor Constantine decreed that all should work on the Sabbath and regard

Sunday as their day of worship (Edict of Milan, 321 A.D.). God also instructed His followers to observe seven holy days annually. These have also been rejected by most people and replaced with whitewashed pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter. As we proceed it will become obvious that billions of people have already rejected the mark of God and accepted that of the beast.

The Sabbath

Did God provide a mark related to time that is a sign between Him and His people—one that would enable us to identify a counterfeit? The answer is yes. That mark is God’s Sabbaths. Consider His words:

Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for **it is a sign between Me and you** throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you... Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations **as a perpetual covenant** (Exodus 31:13-17).

The word “sign” comes from the Hebrew word *oth* and is defined as “a *signal* (literally or figuratively), as a *flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, evidence, etc.*: - **mark**” (*Strong’s, H226*). Therefore, God declares that His Sabbaths are a mark between Him and His people.

The weekly Sabbath has never been lost to history. Secular nations, as well as the Jewish people, have kept track of the weekly cycle since the beginning of humankind. The Sabbath has always been observed on the seventh day of the week; the day we know as Saturday. Abraham kept it. Moses and the faithful Israelites kept it. Throughout the Bible great champions of faith like Isaac and Jacob, Ezra and Nehemiah, David and Samuel, and all the

prophets observed God's Sabbaths. The Son of God, who is the Lord of the Sabbath, kept it. The apostles and the New Testament Church faithfully kept the Sabbath. Even the New Testament Gentiles were expected to observe the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:44, 15:21).

In addition, there remains a history of God's true Church keeping the Sabbath down to our present age. Not surprisingly, the Bible declares that the Sabbath will continue to be kept when Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom. Notice God's words:

And it shall come to pass *that* from one New Moon to another, **and from one Sabbath to another**, all flesh shall come to worship before Me (Isaiah 66:23).

The Sabbath has been kept from the beginning, and it will continue to be observed in the millennium after Christ returns. It is a sign—a mark—designating the people of God. The faithful have always kept the seventh day holy. What we need to understand is that if we do not keep the Sabbath on the day God assigned to it—we sin.

Many who claim to be ministers of Christ act as if God's law is like poetry. They feel it can be interpreted, manipulated, and even disregarded. They pick and choose what they want to believe and teach. However, not one part of His Ten Commandments can be changed or omitted.

The fourth commandment is not only a principle for weekly living; it is a sign between God and us. It is His mark! If we keep any other days—we wear the mark of the beast.

A Counterfeit Sabbath

Satan understands the intent and purpose of the Sabbath and he wants us to reject this link to our Creator. The mark of the beast is designed to do just that. It repudiates God's commandments, and accepts a pseudo Sabbath and holidays which appear to be holy, but were never sanctioned by God. The mark of the beast is a demonstration of a person's rejection of God's authority.

Consider that most denominations assert we should keep Sunday as our day of worship. Despite the fact that observance of the first day of the week cannot be found anywhere in the Bible, billions cling to this day as a sign of their faith. But where did the observance of Sunday come from?

The Catholic Church openly acknowledges that during the period of the Holy Roman Empire they alone were responsible for instituting the observance of Sunday in place of God's commanded Sabbath. Though the Scriptures make no provision for this change, they claim to possess authority greater than the Bible and have presumptuously altered the law of God. Consider just a few of the many outrageous statements from this organization:

Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claims to observation can be defended only on Catholic principles... From beginning to end of scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first (*The Catholic Press*, Sydney, Aug. 25, 1900).

Sunday is our mark of authority. The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact (*The Catholic Record*, Sept. 1, 1923).

Many will read these words and be shocked that supposed ministers of the Bible would boldly display rebellion against the God of the Bible that they profess to be sovereign. However, the Catholics are not the only organization to promote this heresy. Her Protestant daughters of this organization have followed suit. As their mother church declared:

Which church does the whole civilized world obey? Protestants call us every horrible name they can think of, anti-Christ, the scarlet colored beast, Babylon, etc. and at the same time profess great reverence for the Bible, and yet **by their solemn act of keeping Sunday, they acknowledge the power of the Catholic Church**

(*Industrial American*, T. Enright, Dec. 19, 1889).

God's Sabbath is a commandment that seems to be violated with impunity by billions who claim allegiance to Christ. In fact, leaders of most denominations will openly acknowledge that the biblical Sabbath has always been the day we know as Saturday. There are literally hundreds of confessions made by the religious community acknowledging the Sabbath as being Saturday and yet most still refuse to keep it. For more on this subject please see our booklet titled *Sabbath Confessions*.

Satan has deceived most people into believing that the commandments were done away and it no longer matters which days are kept. If you ask a Protestant minister why he doesn't keep the Sabbath, he might say that it is part of the Old Covenant, or the Jewish law. However, Christ never expressed a desire to change any of the Ten Commandments. He never indicated or even implied that the Ten Commandments were no longer necessary. The truth is the Son of God stated the exact opposite:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill... Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19).

Contrary to the truth, the Catholic Church removed the fourth commandment and instituted their day of worship on the first day of the week. Many now observe this pseudo-sabbath as the Lord's Day. However, this is not the only law of God they altered. Consider the following list from the *Catholic Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. They state:

The commandments of God are these ten:

1. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember thou keep holy the Lord's day.
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.

5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Any student of the Bible will quickly recognize the flaw in this set of rules. The Catholics presumptuously removed the second and fourth commandments that tell us to not have graven images and to keep the seventh day Sabbath holy. They did this for two reasons.

One was to sanction their use of idols in worship. As most are aware, the Catholic religion propagates the use of graven images. It teaches members to bow down before statues of Mary, Christ, and various saints while praying to them. The second reason was to steer believers away from observing the seventh day as the real Sabbath. They then renumbered God's third commandment to become the second, and replaced the third commandment with a false day of worship. They advise congregants to observe the first day of the week—Sunday—as “the Lord's Day.” By this brazenly defiant act, they attempt to usurp God's authority. Then, in an effort to retain the number ten, they split God's tenth commandment into two parts.

The audacious activity of this organization has reached far and wide. Their work has been so influential that the vast majority of Christian denominations have followed suit. They mistakenly believe that the Sabbath was legitimately changed to Sunday or that it doesn't matter what day you keep as long as you keep one. However, the Scriptures do not validate this change. God sternly warn believers against making such presumptuous, heretical, judgments. For those who believe that Sunday worship is legitimate, or that it doesn't matter which days are observed, consider the words of Almighty God:

- God blessed **the seventh day**, and sanctified it (Gen. 2:3).
- Remember **the Sabbath day**, to keep it holy (Exo. 20:8).

- **The sabbath** was made for man (Mark 2:27).
- On **the seventh day** you shall rest (Exo. 34:21).

Do any of these statements sound ambiguous as to which day of the week we should keep holy? Does God ever tell us to call any day we want the Sabbath? Sunday is never called the Lord's Day, a rest day, or the Sabbath in the entire Bible! No sacred title was ever applied to it. The Bible simply calls it "first *day* of the week" (Mat. 28:1; Mark 16:2; John 20:1).

In the world today, professing Christianity has conjured up every excuse imaginable to avoid observing the Sabbath. But the truth is blatantly evident. The Sabbath is, and always has been, the seventh day of the week. Not a single credible religious scholar will deny this truth. Why then do so many people around the world keep Sunday? This question is answered in *Plain Talk about the Protestantism of Today*:

It was the Catholic Church which transferred this rest to Sunday... Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church (p. 213).

As much as the Protestant world tries to distance itself from their mother, they are inextricably linked to her. They share a common belief that God's Sabbath has been replaced by Sunday. However, this is not the only abomination that the masses share with the Catholic Church. As John concluded the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, he described the beast's mark that is imposed on people of the earth:

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).

Based on John's words, we can know what the mark of the beast is. First we understand that God's mark is a life defined by His law and the observance of His Sabbaths. His mark is worn in the hand and the forehead symbolizing what we think about and what we do with our strength. Once this is understood, it becomes obvious that the mark of the beast is a counterfeit way of life in which God's law is rejected and other ordinances and celebrations are accepted. We live in a world where the overwhelming majority have already abandoned God's mark and embraced another. Knowingly or not, they have chosen to be associated with pagan religions of the past and observe the traditions of men instead of the commandments of God. Today, the mark of the beast is not only accepted—it is preferred. In time it will be enforced!

Holy Days or Holidays

The significance of time in God's plan cannot be overstated. For this reason, He instructed His people to observe specific holy days each year. The observance of His annual Feasts is of the utmost importance. They were embedded within the astronomical calendar and are a part of the very process of time itself (Gen. 1:14). These are commanded observances instituted by God as an indelible part of His law (Lev. 23). They are prophetic and foreshadow the Creator's plan for mankind (Col. 2:16-17). They are also an inseparable aspect of His mark.

Despite their enormous significance, God's holy days have been rejected by most people and replaced with pagan holidays that have been made to appear Christian. As we proceed, it will become obvious how important God's holy days are, and how the holidays that most observe are part of the mark of the beast.

After observing their first Passover, Israel came out of Egypt on the first day of Unleavened Bread. God commanded this yearly ordinance to be kept forever (Exo. 12:14). Then, the Eternal made it clear that these days would be an integral part of His mark. As He told Moses:

It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law

may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year (Exodus 13:9-10).

This holy time was an additional “sign” or *mark* identifying those who keep God’s law. Though this passage discusses the Passover and the related Feast of Unleavened Bread, these are not the only annual Sabbaths we are required to keep. God proceeded to identify seven yearly holy convocations and He later used the prophet Ezekiel to remind us that they are all vital aspects of the mark of God’s people. Notice His words:

Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them... I *am* the LORD your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; **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 20:12-20).

In this statement, God used the plural “sabbaths” when describing His sign. This is because He created more than one Sabbath. In addition to the weekly day of rest, He established seven annual Sabbaths. These observances are also identified in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16, and they continued to be observed by the New Testament Church. Note God’s words regarding these days:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, **these *are* My feasts...**” (Leviticus 23:2).

Note that God calls these celebrations “My feasts.” This statement has enormous importance. It means that all other religious celebrations are NOT His! Days such as Christmas, Easter, Lent, and the like, were created by the traditions of men—not God (Mark 7:7). They are holidays that originated in

Babylon, were adopted by the Romans, and integrated into their religion. The result has been a form of Christianity that is nothing like that practiced by the apostles and the New Testament Church.

On the other hand, God's holy days reveal the plan of God and the purpose of our existence (Col. 2:16-17). While their significance could easily fill an entire book, for our purpose, we will only mention the basics.

The Passover represents a time of great deliverance. In the Old Covenant, this day commemorated the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. But it also looked forward to a much greater deliverance; our salvation from sin made possible by the sacrifice of God's Son who was crucified on this very day (Lev. 23:5; John 8:28, 39).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a festival observed for seven days in which God's people put leaven, a symbol of pride and sin, out of their lives (Lev. 23:6-8). It consists of two Sabbaths, or high days, that are kept on the first and last day of the Feast. During this time, God's people eat unleavened bread which pictures replacing sin with the humble, righteous sincerity of Christ (John 6:4, 31-35; 1Co. 5:7-8).

The Feast of Weeks, also called *Pentecost*, is a time when God established His covenant with Israel by giving them His law (Lev. 23:10-22). It foreshadowed the day God sent His Spirit to enable Christians to keep the law, not only in the letter, but in its spirit and intent (Acts 2:1-4). This holy day represents the time when God's chosen will become holy, incorruptible, and immortal spirit beings (1Cor. 15:51-54).

The Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets pictures the end time when powerful angels will unleash seven devastating trumpet plagues upon a rebellious planet (Lev. 23:24-25; Rev. 8). These trumpets will be blown over a period of months and will culminate at the resurrection of the Saints when the seventh trumpet is sounded (1Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7; 11:15).

The Day of Atonement is a time when God's people fast for 24 hours. This is a period of humbling ourselves in order to draw closer to God (Lev. 23:27-32; Psa. 35:13). It foreshadows the day

when Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for 1000 years, and a time when people can finally be at-one with God (Jer. 31:34; Rev. 20:1-3).

The Feast of Tabernacles is another seven day festival picturing the Kingdom of God on the earth (Lev. 23:35-36). During the coming millennial period, Christ will return to tabernacle with mankind. It will be a time of worldwide peace and prosperity (Isa. 2:4; 32:18). The Messiah and His saints will rule the earth and the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Dan. 7:22; Rev. 5:10; Isa. 11:9). All people will then have God's mark. They will observe God's law and celebrate His holy days (Isa. 66:23; Zec. 14:16).

The Eighth Day follows the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:36). Also known as the Last Great Day, this pictures a complete end of the wicked, and a new beginning for the righteous (Jude 6; Rev. 20:15). This fresh start will include new heavens and the New Jerusalem descending to a newly created earth where God the Father will now dwell with men (2Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-4). For a more complete understanding of these holy days, please read our book—*the Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days*.

The Apostle Paul wrote that God's Sabbaths are a "shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:16-17). His holy days reveal a divine prophetic plan that reflects insurmountable wisdom. They declare a great hope to all humankind. It is appalling to consider that countless numbers of people claim to be Christian but have rejected nearly every one of God's prophetic festivals. Again, it was the Catholic Church that propagated this rebellion long ago. Consider a Catholic priest's own words:

It is now commonly held that God simply gave His Church the power to set aside whatever day or days she would deem suitable as holy days. The Church chose Sunday, the first day of the week, and in the course of time added other days as holy days (*A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies*, Vol. 1, p. 51).

Today, the vast majority of people have been charmed into abandoning the Sabbath, the Ten Commandments, the annual holy days, and God's food laws. They roast swine's flesh and embrace traditions of ancient Babylon such as Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Saint Valentine's Day, and Halloween. Those days carry the mark of a counterfeit system begun by Nimrod and passed down through history by the beast-like nations described by the prophets. They are now observed by billions around the world. For more information about the origin of these days, please see the list of free literature found on the last page of this booklet.

Tragically, God's holy days have been replaced with cheap counterfeits. No matter how cloaked in pretty decorations, colorful lights, sweets, treats, and false piety, they are actually the mark of a system that mocks God and rejects His law!

The Bible makes it clear that God established specific Sabbaths. These days are to be observed forever. In addition, the Eternal instituted Ten Commandments that are to be continually honored (Mat. 19:17). He called these a *mark* to be worn in their hand and forehead where they are considered, revered, and carried out as an ordinance from generation to generation (Deu. 6:7).

Not all Sabbath Keepers have God's Mark

Not all Sabbath-keepers honor God. There are several organizations that keep the Sabbath, but openly break other commandments.

For example, Seventh Day Adventists recognize Saturday as being the commanded day of rest. However, they condone celebrating Christmas, Easter, and a form of Halloween. They also condone the use of images to represent Christ in their worship. In addition, most Adventists do not observe the annual holy days as prescribed by the Bible.

The Church of God Seventh Day also keeps the Sabbath as well as the dietary laws. However, they too images of a Christ-like figure in their worship and, while some may keep Passover, they choose to ignore God's other holy days—a clear violation of the first three commandments.

Ironically, the Jewish faith observes the commandments, the holy days, and other statutes such as the dietary food laws. However, they add personal interpretations and traditions to God's Word. By observing God's Sabbath and holy days, they outwardly carry the identity of His people and everyone knows the Jews are descendants of ancient Israel. However, they have rejected Christ who is the very Creator who gave them and us the Ten Commandments. By this, they break the first and third commandments (John 5:39).

There are also a few Messianic groups who keep the Sabbath, the annual holy days, and reject pagan holidays. But many of these have accepted false doctrines such as the trinity, and are generally liberal in their holy day observances and emphasize Jewish traditions that lie outside the Bible.

In short, there are a number of people who recognize the true Sabbath. There are also some who acknowledge the holy days, but this alone does not mean they have God's mark. Keeping the Sabbath and the holy days are essential, but the mark of God is a way of life that encompasses living not by just the letter, but by the spirit of all His commandments, statutes, and judgments (Deu. 6; Mat. 19:16-22). If we observe some, but don't strive to keep them all, it is likened to being half hearted and the sign that links us to Him becomes non-existent (Mat. 19:17).

Is Love God's Mark?

Many denominations have adopted the Gnostic idea that having love in your heart is all that really matters. They make this assumption by taking a few verses out of context and twisting the intent of Christ's words. A verse misused to propagate this false doctrine comes from the last supper in which the Savior said:

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).

We must first realize that nowhere does this statement mention that love toward others is God's sign. His mark has always been a sign between Him and His people—not between

outsiders and Christians. In addition, realizing the context of Christ's statement is vital. In fact, the context of any given verse is the first step to rightly understanding the Scriptures. What then is the context of His words?

The Savior's ministry took place during the era of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At this time most believers had an outward show of righteousness, but they widely ignored the intent of the law—love! In fact, it was the treatment of others where people transgressed the most (Mat. 7:3, 21:13; Luke 6:37). For this reason Christ constantly chastised them for omitting the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Mat. 23:23). These are characteristics of love and the purpose of God's law is to show us how to express love toward Him, love toward others, and making the proper choices in life. This kind of love was greatly lacking at that time—just as it is today.

The purpose of Jesus' statement was to further encourage His disciples to live by the law of God and the principles that His law contains. The foundation of God's law is love, and His mark is a sign reflecting that we are His. It is a sign of our devotion to God. The Eternal is the creator of all things—including love. He did not leave expressions of love up to personal interpretation. He revealed it from the very beginning. As John stated:

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:2-3).

This is the only way to define real love toward God and each other—by keeping His commandments. Simply treating others with respect, kindness, or generosity does not necessarily mean we have the mark of God. There are many who express love towards people, but reject obedience to God's first four commandments, and do not observe His holy days. As stated earlier, nearly every religion on earth has a form of the last six commandments. It is the first four that primarily sets God's people apart from the rest.

We cannot pick and choose which of God's instructions suit our personal preference. His statutes and judgments are inseparable. Total obedience to God is a sign of who we serve and it defines true love. His entire way of life is His mark and if we do not possess it we reflect a different mark—that of the beast.

To Buy and Sell

Imagine how difficult it would be to obtain food and other necessities if we were prohibited from buying and selling. For many, such a constraint would be life threatening. Yet this is exactly what will happen to those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast. As Christ foretold:

He [the beast] 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).

Keep in mind that the purpose of this future edict will be to abolish God's people by denying them the ability to acquire human necessities. It will be a matter of submit or die! In fact, when describing the future enforcement of the mark, God indicated that the false prophet will cause many of those who do not worship the image of the beast to be killed (Rev. 13:15).

Persecution has played a significant role in the history of God's true Church. The author of Hebrews identified many heroes of faith who were willing to lay down their lives for the truth (Heb. 11). It seems that commandment keepers have always been the target of persecution. Christ even warned His disciples that martyrdom may occur to many true Christians (Mat. 10:21-22).

For example, at one point Sabbath keeping was outlawed by the Holy Roman Empire. This took place in 363 A.D. at the council of Laodicea. While claiming to be Christian, the Catholics actually set their sights on the very Church Christ established through the apostles. They claimed that the Jews were responsible for Christ's death. Therefore, Christians who kept the Sabbath

were labeled as “judaizers” and cast into the same cauldron heated by their hatred of the Jews. True Christians were branded as “anathema from Christ” (Council of Laodicea, Canon XXIX). This misguided self righteousness raised its ugly head again during the time of the Crusades and the Inquisition in which persecution unleashed undeserved cruelty and violence upon commandment keepers and other non-Catholics.

History has chronicled events in which faithful Christians were forced out of their homes, imprisoned, tortured, and executed because of their obedience to God. Mothers watched their children mercilessly slain, fathers were torn limb from limb, and people were burned alive because of their commitment to God’s commandments and holy days (*The Incredible History of God’s True Church*, Fletcher).

In the near future, many will lose their lives for not accepting the mark of the beast. However, the Scriptures reveal that a great reward awaits those who are willing to make that sacrifice. Notice what the Apostle John recorded concerning the heroes of faith:

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 (Revelation 20:4).

Satan has inspired a counterfeit religion designed to draw people away from obeying their Creator. This pseudo Christianity widely rejects the authority of God and has put itself above the Bible. The harlot and her protestant daughters pick and choose what they want to believe, and feel justified in their defiance of the Almighty.

It is this false religion that will be enforced by a powerful world government supported by the Catholic Church. Sadly,

billions have already unknowingly accepted the mark associated with the beast. It will be easy for these people to whole heartedly accept it when these familiar observances are glorified by ungodly supernatural miracles.

The Wrath of God

While refusing the mark of the beast will present great difficulties, worshipping the beast and accepting its mark will bring divine judgment. Those who have it will suffer the wrath of Almighty God. As John recorded:

If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, 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 (Revelation 14:9-10).

God's wrath upon those who worship the beast demonstrates how He feels about breaking His law. If not repented of, iniquity will be severely punished. That punishment will come in a series of terrible plagues the likes of which this world has never seen (Rev. 8-9). Consider another prophecy Christ revealed to John regarding those who have the mark of the beast:

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." 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 16:1-2).

These words stand as a stern warning. God will deal severely with those who defy His law. The mark of the beast is something every true believer should vehemently reject.

In Conclusion

There exists a sign identifying the true God and His people. That sign is keeping the Ten Commandments, God's holy days, and His statutes. We must realize that our Creator only has our best interest at heart. These laws were designed for our own good. They are a blessing and encompass a way of life that expresses love towards God and one another. Following these guidelines enables us to know the Eternal, to know His mind, and to understand what He has prepared for those who love Him (1Cor. 2:9). When a person rejects any one of His laws—that person rejects God and accepts the mark of the beast!

That mark embraces an apostate system of beliefs that include a counterfeit Sabbath and pagan holidays. It is a system that claims God's moral code is not required. We live in an age that clearly exhibits the mark of the beast. It is all around us as our various societies purposely stray from biblical principles. Many who have the beast's mark may even profess to be Christian, they might shout their love for God and utter "praise Jesus," but it is only lip service. Notice the warning from the Apostle John:

He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:4).

The various sects of Christianity believe they can choose for themselves how to worship God. However, their worship is in vain. As Christ stated:

Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:6-7).

Christ pointed out that doctrines not found in the Bible are pointless and of no value. They are only the traditions of men who have been deceived by the father of lies (John 8:44). As the Savior

explained, those who appear righteous and do not keep the commandments are hypocrites!

Notice the similarities between God's mark and the beast's counterfeit in the chart below. This makes it clear that there are two opposing ways—the mark of God or the mark of the beast.

<i>The Mark of God</i>	<i>The Mark of the Beast</i>
Called a sign (Exo. 31:13).	Called a mark (Rev. 13:16).
Sanctified by God (Gen. 2:3).	Sanctified by men (Rev. 13:16).
Worn in the forehead and hand (Deu. 6:6-8; Exo. 13:9).	Worn in the forehead and hand (Rev. 13:16).
Adherents will be persecuted by the beast (Rev. 13:17).	Adherents will be punished by God (Rev. 14:9).
Those who have it keep all God's commandments and holy days (Deu. 6:8).	Those who have it do not keep all of God's commandments and holy days (Dan. 7:25).
Those who have it will be given eternal life (Rev. 20:4).	Those who have it will be given wine of the wrath of God (Rev. 14:10).

The mark of the beast is already here. It has been handed down from the ancient mysteries of Babylon and Rome. That system will soon dominate the planet as a powerful government rises to control western civilization. People will soon be forced to accept this false religious system. And yet, to many, it will be nothing new. Billions have no idea that they already reflect the mark of the beast!

Accepting the mark propagated by the whore of false religion might temporarily sustain a person's life, but holding fast to the mark of God will ultimately bring everlasting life. There is only one reasonable choice. It is the choice God has continually encouraged us to make:

Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, articles, video, and audio to help people better understand God's Word and His plan for humanity. Some of the printed material available includes:

Keys to Understanding Revelation

Understanding God's Holy Days

The Truth about Christmas

The Truth about Easter

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Sabbath Confessions

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