

16 -- THE MARK OF THE BEAST AND THE SEAL OF GOD (The Test of Loyalty)

The sanctuary in heaven is the great center of activity for the salvation of man which is why the book of Revelation refers to the heavenly temple repeatedly (3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:22). From here Jesus communicates His desire for all to understand the last great issues that will face the world at the end of earth's history. In this last book of the Bible we find that Jesus gives to His children references, again and again, of a final clash between the seal of God and the mark of the beast. This clash will be the last public test of loyalty that will ever come to the inhabitants of the earth. The richest of heaven's blessings are promised to those who receive the Seal of God (Revelation 7:15-17; 14: 1-4), while the most fearful of heaven's warnings are threatened against those who receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-11; 16:1-2).

Thank God, we do not need to approach this last great crisis unprepared, it is the privilege of every Christian to learn from the Bible the nature of the final test, to acquaint themselves with the issues involved, and to decide now on which side they will stand.

1. Who will be protected through the seven last plagues?

Revelation 7:3 ... Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

Note: Those who receive God's seal in their foreheads will be protected during the plagues (Psalm 91:7-11).

2. What is this "seal" the righteous have in their foreheads?

Isaiah 8:16 Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples.

Note: God's seal is found in His law. A seal is what makes a document official, and it normally contains three characteristics: Name, Office, and Territory. An example would be "Cyrus king of Persia" in Ezra 1:1.

3. Which of the Ten Commandments contains all the elements of a seal?

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them ...

Note: The fourth commandment is the only one that contains all three elements of a seal: (1) "The Lord"--His name, (2) "made"--His office as Creator, (3) "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is,"--His territory.

4. What has God given as a special sign of His power?

Ezekiel 20:12 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.

Ezekiel 20:20 ... hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.

Exodus 31:13 ... 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.

Note: God clearly states that He gave the Sabbath as a sign of His power to create and sanctify. It is His seal, or mark of authority. The words "seal," "sign," "mark," and "token" are used interchangeably throughout the Bible (compare Genesis 17:11 with Romans 4:11 and Revelation 7:3 with Ezekiel 9:4).

5. What does the second beast of Revelation 13 force all to receive?

Revelation 13:16 *And 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.*

6. What is the mark of the beast?

Note: We identified the first beast of Revelation 13 in Lesson 14. What is its mark of power and authority? The best way to discover its mark of authority is to ask the papacy directly.

Notice the following section from a Catholic catechism:

"Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

"A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

"Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

"A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." (1)

Here is another statement from a catechism:

"Q. Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

"A. "Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her--she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." (2)

So the papacy is saying that its mark of power and authority is making Sunday a holy day--a change that virtually the entire Christian world accepts. ---- (1) Peter Geiermann, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957 edition), p 50. (2) Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, third American edition, revised, n.d.), p. 174.

7. Is either the mark of the beast or the seal of God visible?

Hebrews 10:16 *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.*

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*

Exodus 13:9 *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; ...*

Isaiah 59:6, 7 *... Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands. ... Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths.*

Note: Neither the mark of the beast nor the seal of God is outwardly visible. The forehead represents the mind, and the hand is a symbol of work. "On the hand" and "between the eyes" are consistent symbols in Scripture for a person's thoughts and actions (Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18). A person will receive the mark of the beast in his forehead by choosing to believe that Sunday is a holy day in spite of Bible truth. A person will be marked in the right hand when, in spite of knowing the Sabbath truth, they choose to work on God's Sabbath, or by outwardly keeping Sunday laws for convenient reasons--such as a job, family, etc. Although the sign is invisible to men, God will know who has which mark (2 Timothy 2:19). In a sense, each person will mark himself. If I respect and regard God's holy Sabbath, He will mark me as His own. If I regard the beast's false Sabbath, He will mark me as belonging to the beast.

8. How does Jesus determine if we are His servants?

Romans 6:16 *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, ...?*

1 John 2:6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

John 14:15 *If you love me, keep my commandments.*

9. Does anyone have the mark of the beast now?

Revelation 13:17 ... no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Note: No person has the mark now. When it becomes a forced issue, only those who have received the mark of the beast will be able to buy or sell. At that time, people who keep God's holy Sabbath will do so at the risk of their lives (Revelation 13:15), and those who choose to profane His holy day and officially cast their votes by placing the laws of men above the Law of God will be marked as belonging to Antichrist. All who are loyal to Jesus and His holy day will receive Jesus' glorious seal, thus making them His forever. Those who try to remain neutral will be counted for Antichrist (Matt. 12:30).

10. What two things does the Antichrist power attempt to change?

Daniel 7:25 He shall...intend to change times and law.

Note: Daniel 7 reveals an Old Testament description of the Antichrist power. It clearly predicts that the beast would attempt to change both God's laws and times. The papacy has tried to change God's laws by: (1) omitting the second commandment against veneration of images, (2) shortening the fourth commandment from 94 words to just eight in order to avoid mentioning which day is the Sabbath, and (3) dividing the tenth commandment into two commandments. The papacy attempted to change God's times by: (1) teaching people to recognize the first day of the week as the Sabbath instead of the seventh day. No mortal should ever dare to tamper with God's sacred law or times (Matthew 5:18).

11. What was God's criticism of His ancient priests, or pastors?

Malachi 2:8, 9 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. ...

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Note: God is still hurt when His pastors are partial to eight or nine commandments and cause many to stumble over His command to keep the Sabbath holy. Virtually all churches admit in their official writings that there is no Scriptural support for Sunday sacredness. Tragically, both Protestantism and Catholicism stand guilty before the judgment bar of God for throwing out the Bible Sabbath of the fourth commandment! God Himself gave the Sabbath as a sign, or mark, of His power to create and His power to sanctify and save (Exodus 31:17; Ezekiel 20:12). Dare any man tamper with this sacred sign, which represents the great God of heaven and all that He stands for?

12. How did God's ancient leaders regard the great things of His law?

Hosea 8:12 I have written for him the great things of My law, But they were considered a strange thing.

Note: Times have not changed. God has placed the Sabbath, His great sign, in the middle of His law and begins that commandment with the word "remember." Yet many people today feel that keeping His seventh-day Sabbath is a strange thing.

13. What specific, solemn rebuke did God give to religious leaders regarding His holy Sabbath?

Ezekiel 22:8 You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths.

Ezekiel 22:26 Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, ... and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Note: God pointedly rebukes religious leaders who say that the Sabbath doesn't matter and who claim "Thus saith the Lord" when it is not true.

14. What specific sin does God command His leaders to denounce?

Isaiah 58:1, 13, 14 Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, ... If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, ... Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; ...

Note: God charges spiritual leaders to call Sabbath-breaking a sin and to insist that His people keep His Sabbath day holy. As with the disciples of old, our only safety is in obeying God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

15. When you decide to accept Jesus and fully follow Him, what happens?

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Note: Glorious rest and peace enter your heart at conversion. The Sabbath, which means "rest," is a symbol of the rest and peace that comes from the new birth (Hebrews 4:1-10). Those who are truly born again will keep the Sabbath as a blessed sign of that rest (notice verses 4, 9, 10). There is no joy like the joy that comes to a converted person who keeps God's Sabbath.

Your Response to Jesus

Before you can say "no" to the mark of the beast, you must say "yes" to the seal of God. Jesus is waiting at the door of your heart for an answer. Will you decide now to move under His glorious Sabbath banner as evidence that you have accepted Him as your Creator and Savior?

ANSWER: _____

What Important Question Does the Papacy Ask Protestants?

(Additional Study)

What Important Question Does the Papacy Ask Protestants? Protestants have repeatedly asked the papacy, "How could you dare to change God's law?" But the question posed to Protestants by the Catholic church is even more penetrating. Here it is officially: "*You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day, who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day; but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the ten commandments; you believe that the other nine are still binding; who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered.*" Library of Christian Doctrine: *Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day?* (London: Burns and Oates, Ltd.), pp. 3, 4.