
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is the "mark of the beast"?**

Consider the following passage:

Revelation 13:11-18

¹¹ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

¹² 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.

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

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.

¹⁵ 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.

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,

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.

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.

If you read the entire chapter of Rev 13 you will discover there are two beasts mentioned. The first beast arises out of the sea (verse 1) and the second beast arises out of the earth (verse 11).

The first beast is the same beast which the prophet Daniel prophesied about in the Book of Daniel 7:7. This beast symbolizes the Roman Empire which was threatening the Lord's church in the first century when the apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation. The emperor at that time was Emperor Domitian. He demanded that everyone address him as "Lord Domitian" and he demanded that he be worshipped as if he were divine. Christians who refused to worship the Emperor were considered disloyal to the Empire. Some Christians who refused to worship had

their property confiscated. Some were marked and they were not allowed to buy or sell in the markets. Some were imprisoned and others were executed.

The second beast in Rev 13:11 has a job assignment of enforcing worship of the first beast according to verse 12. In other words, this second beast was also part of the Roman Empire and his job was to enforce Emperor Worship. This beast symbolizes the Imperial Cult of the Roman Empire who enforced the laws and decrees of the Emperor. In other words, this beast is the Gestapo or the "secret police" who has informants all over the empire reporting to him those who will not conform to the rules.

Rev 13:16-18 says this second beast (the Gestapo) places a mark on everyone who worships the Emperor. The "mark of the beast" is the number 666. What does this mean? First, let us begin by saying what it does not mean. This does not refer to a microchip which is implanted under the skin of citizens. The Christians of the first century who received the Book of Revelation would not have known what a microchip was and the theory of a microchip would have been totally nonsensical for the seven churches of Asia. Nor is the mark of the beast a tattoo which is literally tattooed on the foreheads of people.

The Book of Revelation uses numbers symbolically. The number "7" is the number of divine perfection and completeness. The Holy Spirit of God is called "the seven spirits of God" (Rev 1:4) – the number "7" symbolizing the Holy Spirit's fullness and completeness. There are "7" churches in Asia (Rev 1:11) to represent and symbolize all of God's churches throughout the entire world. The number "6" is one short of perfection. The number "6" is the Jewish equivalent to our number "13" – it symbolized evil, imperfection, and incompleteness. Understanding this helps us to understand the meaning of the mark of the beast. It symbolizes total evil, total and complete imperfection. Those who worship the Emperor are marked in the sense that their lives reflect evil and devotion to Satan.

To illustrate the symbolism of "666" being a mark or sign on the heads of lost people, consider the following passage:

Deuteronomy 6:6-8

⁶ "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ 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.

⁸ **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.**

Here is the mark of God on the hand in and on the forehead of His people. The passage says that God's commands become a "sign on your hand" and "as frontlets between your eyes." This

means that God's faithful people consider God and His word as more important to than anything else in life. Dt 6:6-8 is not teaching that God's people have a literal tattoo on their foreheads or a microchip under their skin.

- His word controls **decisions that are made in the mind.**
- His word controls **the actions of people – i.e. what the hands do.**

Likewise, those having the "*mark of the Beast*" will have the Devil controlling their minds and actions. They do not have a literal tattoo nor do they have a microchip. The Devil's children are recognized because they think and act in rebellion to the instructions given by God.

Matthew 7:20

²⁰ [Jesus said] Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

You can see the Devil's name on people:

- By how they dress.
- By how they talk.
- By how they are uncorrectable.
- By how they shut their ears to the truth.

In this dramatic way God is warning His people to take His word seriously. God's people are those who take His word seriously and obey His commandments (1 Jn 2:3-5).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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