

THE MARK Do you have it?

By

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The book of Revelation should give assurance to the Christian of the victory of Christ and His church, but many are using it today to instill fear, doubt and confusion.

A current example is the *Left Behind* series of books and video movies such as *Vanished*, *Left Behind*, *Tribulation*, and the latest, *The Mark*. These end time books are built around prophecies that are taken out of context in order to fit the fiction stories.

Here is the brief reference to the mark found in the book of Revelation: “And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there should be given them a mark or their right hand, or upon their forehead and that no man should be able to buy or to sell save he that has the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name....And his number is Six hundred and sixty and six” (Rev. 13:16-18).

From social security numbers to computer chips, there has been speculation about what constitutes the mark. Almost any bureaucratic extension of control arouses new concerns over the mark.

The book of Revelation was written in code, the symbols and mystical numbers to be understood by the Christians who had a background in Old Testament types and symbols, but mysteries to the enemy. It is altogether possible, as many Bible scholars believe, that that which is symbolized by the number 666 could identify one of the rulers of John's day. In fact, Nero was the sixth Caesar and the numerical value of the letters of his name total 666.

By this same token — numerical value of letters in a name — many people have been identified as the Beast, from the first Pope to many modern day political figures.

THE SYMBOL. But what of the mark on the forehead or on the hand? Does this refer to credit cards or to a social security number? Or could it be an invisible number to be read at the checkout counter at the supermarket as some claim? Such a number would be no different-in principle from the present system of having a code number on your personalized checks, and, in fact, would serve the same purpose as a signature on a check or charge account. In any case, such numbering would not qualify as the prophetic mark, which is 666 and the same for all who worship the Beast. The identification numbers mentioned above are all different.

The overall picture John gives is that of citizens who willingly serve and idolize the world rulers and marvel at worldly power (Rev. 13:4), who are deceived by the “great signs” of religious leaders (Rev. 13:13,14) and become their tools. In that they willingly

serve the Beast they are marked in the forehead and the right hand. The forehead is mentioned several times in this symbolic way because the frontal lobe of the brain is that part which “wills” or determines personal preference and action.

Aaron was to wear a signet on his forehead to declare that he was Holy to Jehovah. (Ex. 28:38). The signet was worn on the forehead to indicate that he was submissive to God and was God's servant. After the nation's gross idolatry, God said to Ezekiel that “all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart” (Ex. 3:7). The heart refers to their affections and the forehead to their wills. The people who devote themselves to the beast are the ones John saw in his vision as bearing the Beast's mark. Their willingness to do the Beast's work was portrayed by a mark on the hand, the right hand signifying a person's work.

The mark which John saw was the symbol of a reality that is much more meaningful than all the interpretations which suggest some physical mark.

CHRISTIANS MARKED. Just as the servants of the Beast are stamped with his mark, so the servants of God receive on their foreheads God's stamp of approval. “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3; 9:4). John also sees the saints - with the name of God written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1; 22:4).

Jesus, the example for every Christian, said that he bore the seal of his Father. “Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the son of man shall give unto you; for him the Father, even God has sealed.” (John.6:27). He emphasized throughout his ministry that he came to do the Father's will (John.6:38, 4:34). Christ's purpose was to do God's will by keeping His commandments and thus become the sin offering that He might redeem us and give us eternal life. He was “sealed” in that he had God's complete approval in what he said, what he thought and what he did for it was his will to do God's will. He said, “If any man wills to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God” (John.7:17). Assurance of one's relationship to God is not merely by believing in God but rather by submitting one's will to God's will and then “will” to do all He desires. One may not perfectly perform all that he purposes, but he and God both know that he wills it, that it is his desire to do it, that it is his purpose to do it, and thus he is sealed in the forehead.

Paul writes that in Christ, “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13. cf. 2 Cor.1:22). This was the promise made by Peter at Pentecost: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The promise was not a physical mark, nor a sign such as peaking in “tongues.” Many religions promise that. Even the spiritualists who oppose Christ are often marked by speaking in tongues and prophesying as well. But the seal of the Holy Spirit is in the mind of the believer. He knows how he has believed and repented. The godly life he lives is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) and the outward sign of the seal.

What John saw was a mark or a name on the forehead of the saints, the symbol of the reality, which is a literal submission of the saint to God. Our wills are “marked” in that we will to do God's will. We no longer serve self and Satan u the powers of the world that are devoted to ungodly purposes, but are servants of God. God's Spirit guides our lives by the fact that our decisions are based upon the revelation of His will through the Bible.

Contrariwise, those who follow Satan and the Beast are marked, not by a literal figure, but by the things they will to do. They obey Satan because they are his servants. “His servants you are whom you obey” (Rom. 6:16). They think his thoughts and do his will. The reason for corruption in the arts and literature of our day is because the populace willingly thinks evil thoughts and prefers them to the pure, and thus bears the mark in their foreheads. Vice, violence,, and crime flourish because men exercise their wills by their actions, and so bear the mark of the Beast on the right hand.

FAITH, NOT FEAR. In the last chapter of Revelation John saw all those who are salvaged from the world and its dissolution and given immortality. They have the name of God written on their foreheads. There will be none in that New Jerusalem save those who have submitted their wills to God and have been sealed to Him. In spite of the Beast mentioned in Revelation 13 and in spite of the tribulation in the world, those who belong to God have the seal of God's spirit and His providential care in this world, plus the blessings of glorious life with Him in the world to come.

Satan's only power is to tempt and to deceive. We know that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, but “will with the temptation also provide a means of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13). This means that Satan cannot defeat you against your will. Paul explained that Satan works “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:9-10). A Christian loves the truth. He seeks to know it and wills to do it, and thus bears God's mark. In like manner the followers of Satan bear his mark in their minds (wills) and by their works.

The book of Revelation was not given to confuse us and keep us in a state of fear. This is the work of Satan, not God. Christ and the apostles left us with words of assurance that if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness He will provide what we need and that we are not to fear what men may do, for not even the gates of death can prevail against us. (Matt.6:33; 10:28; 16:18).

There were many antichrists in John's day (1 John.2:18; 4:3, 2:22; 2 John 7). But .John’s message was, “You are of God, my little children, and overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John.4:4). Christians would do better to read the truth of God than men's fantastic speculations based more on imagination than on revelation.

We need to take our eyes off the deceivers and antichrists, and keep looking to Jesus in faith and obedience, that we may be found pleasing unto God our Father.

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