

The first mention of the seal of God is in Revelation 7:1-3. In these verses we notice that, unlike the mark of the beast, the seal of God can be received only in the “forehead,” not in the hand alone. The reason for this is simple: God only accepts a worship that is lovingly given from the heart. He will not force us to serve Him. Only those who truly love and honor the Lord will receive His seal.

Later in Revelation the seal of God is called something else: the “Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1). The name of the Father in the forehead is the same as the seal of God in the forehead.

The word *seal* comes from a Greek word that means a signet or sign, that by which anything is confirmed, authenticated, proved genuine (see Strong’s and Thayer’s). The word *name* comes from a Greek word that means the character or authority by which a person is distinguished from others (see Strong’s and Thayer’s).

The idea is very similar in both cases, but our understanding enlarges as we take both into consideration. The seal of God is some specific sign that distinguishes Him as the one true God; it expresses His character and reveals the source of His authority. Those who bear this seal distinguish themselves as loyal worshipers of the Creator. It seems logical then that the mark of the beast serves to distinguish that system’s character and authority, and those who receive the mark distinguish themselves as followers of the beast.

The seal-of-God concept in Revelation is a symbolism drawn from an ancient custom that many nations still employ today. For thousands of years persons of high authority and honor—such as emperors, kings and presidents—have used a seal to authenticate and give authority to their laws and documents. These seals include three pieces of vital information: (1) the name of the person whose authority is represented by the seal (such as George Washington), (2) his title or distinction (President), and (3) his dominion or territory (USA).

Such seals were common during the time when Revelation was written. The author employed the seal to convey a vital spiritual truth. God has a seal, a sign by which He and His followers are distinguished from every false system of worship. Where in Scripture do we find such a comprehensive revelation of God’s character and authority?

Only in The Ten Commandments. Notice how the fourth commandment reads: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

The Sabbath contains all three of the elements we need for God’s seal:

1. Name: “The Lord thy God.”
2. Title: Creator—“The Lord made.”
3. Domain: “Heaven and earth.”

The Sabbath is a weekly memorial that reminds us of the one and only Creator-God. It was first established at Creation by the Creator Himself (see Genesis 2:2-3). When we keep holy the Sabbath day, we keep fresh in mind our absolute dependence on the One who made and sustains us. The Sabbath immortalizes the truth of salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ alone, for it teaches us to rest in Christ (see Hebrews 4).

We have already considered passages that seem to point to the Sabbath as the seal of God. Beyond those Scriptures there are Bible verses that specifically tell us

that the Sabbath is God’s sign or seal (see Exodus 31:13-14; Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

Even the word *Sabbath* itself bears testimony that the Sabbath is God’s seal. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is *Shabbath*. A little word study reveals a rich understanding. There are three divisions to the word with individual meanings. Together they form a powerful message.

SHABBATH:

1. *Bath or Beth* means house of or sign of. We find much usage of Beth in Hebrew. Bethsada means sign of fish. Bethlehem means sign of bread.
2. *Ab*, from which we get *Abba*, means *Father*.
3. *Sha* means *sire, aged or eternal one*.

The full meaning of Shabbath is *Sign of the eternal Father*.

The Sabbath is God’s signature on Creation. It proclaims, *There is one God who made everything, and He made you. He is your Father. He is the only one worthy of your spiritual loyalty and worship*. When we keep the Sabbath we distinguish ourselves as worshipers of the true God.

What, then, is the mark of the beast?

You will remember that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the beast power system is that it attempts to exalt itself above God by tampering with His holy law (see Daniel 7:25). Think about it: If a religious system can obtain an obedience to its authority that requires disobedience to God’s law, that power has effectively usurped the loyalty that belongs alone to the Creator. It should come as no surprise then that the Catholic Church claims Sunday observance in place of the Sabbath as the mark of her authority:

“Sunday is our mark of authority. The Church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of the fact” (*The Catholic Record of London, Ontario, Canada, September 1, 1923*).

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. And the act is the mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters” (*Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 14, C. F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons).

The God of heaven says, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for it is the seal of your loyalty to Me.” The Catholic Church says, “No, keep Sunday as a demonstration of your loyalty to the Church.”

There have been and are many people who have kept Sunday in place of God’s Sabbath in sincere ignorance. God does not hold us accountable for what we don’t know. But mark this point with care: Revelation warns us of a time when the mark of loyalty to the beast will come into direct conflict with the seal of loyalty to the Creator. The mark of the beast will be enforced on penalty of economic boycott and even death. Religious freedom will be severely threatened as a world-wide system of false worship seeks to require the homage of the world. When that crisis comes upon the world, then, and only then, will Sunday observance in place of Sabbath-keeping become the mark of the beast.

With messages like these, how can we doubt God’s love? It is obvious He does not want us to be deceived. He bears us upon His heart with infinite love. He knows the devil is working overtime to secure our destruction. And He knows we will find our truest happiness in loyalty and love to Him.

So He speaks His final message of mercy. Will we listen?



Unlocking Revelation

The most crystal clear truth of the Bible is that “God is love” (1 John 4:16). His love for our fallen race moved Him to give His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer the penalty for our sins. At the cross God did more than claim to love us, He “*demonstrates* His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NKJV).

God’s love also leads Him to warn us of impending danger when it approaches. Because His highest priority is to save us, He finds it necessary to tell us some things that may seem a bit hard at first consideration. But on second thought, when your life is threatened, you want to know the truth that will deliver you—straight and clear—even if it does hurt some.

In every age God has had a special message of “present truth” for the world (see 2 Peter 1:12). In Noah’s day God sent word that a flood was coming because of all the violence and immorality that permeated the world. Noah called the people to repentance and offered them a divine rescue plan from the coming destruction. No doubt many of the people felt Noah’s message was too negative because of its warning tone. In reality, his message was about the only positive thing happening on the planet at the time. It was the only hope of salvation.

We’ve come to the place in earth’s history when things are drawing to a close with rapid stride. God will judge the world in righteousness. Every person’s eternal destiny will be fixed beyond change. Sin and suffering will soon be no more. But before that time comes, God has a message for every man, woman, and child on earth. It is the most solemn message of the Bible.

The final message from heaven to earth is symbolically represented in the book of Revelation as being proclaimed from the sky by three angels:

“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’

“And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.’

“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead or in 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. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.’

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:6-12, NKJV).

The First Angel’s Message

“The everlasting gospel” is the first thing God wants us to understand. The apostle Paul defines the “gospel of Christ” as “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Romans 1:16-17). Jesus put it this way: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17, NKJV).

The gospel is the plan of salvation. Its foundation is God’s love. Its purpose is to save us from sin and death and restore the righteousness of God’s character in our lives. Its way is faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and lives to make intercession for us.

Jesus died for every person (see 1 John 2:2). By His death He has triumphantly paid the purchase price for every human soul (see Hebrews 2:9). Full and free salvation is the gift of God to every man, woman, and child (see Romans 6:23). Through faith in Christ and repentance for sin we may receive the precious gift of redemption as an experiential reality (see John 1:12; Acts 20:21).

The first angel’s message also issues a three-fold call to (1) “fear God,” (2) “give glory to Him,” and (3) “worship Him who made heaven and earth.”

To “fear God” is to reverence Him, not to be afraid of Him as an enemy. He introduces Himself to us in the Bible as a loving Father, a caring Husband and a trustworthy Friend (see Matthew 6:9; Isaiah 54:5; John 15:15). When we understand the true character of God, His “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18, NKJV). But He is, nevertheless, the Almighty God, deserving our absolute respect and reverence. To a world that mocks God’s name or denies His very existence, the message to “fear God” is timely.

Giving “glory” to God is the highest privilege any person can know. God’s glory is His character of goodness (see Exodus 33:18-19). Because we have sinned, we have “come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That is, we have failed to experience and exhibit His character because of the influence of sin in our lives. And yet, a major facet of God’s plan for humanity is to renew the glorious image of His character in us. To give glory to God means to live exclusively for Him, in harmony with the principles

of His kingdom (see 1 Corinthians 10:31). The first angel urges us to live life, in every aspect, in such a way that will honor God and make known His character of love to the world.

The first angel calls us to worship a very specific God—the Creator of all things. We live in a world of many false gods. The true God of the Bible distinguishes Himself as the One who has created all things (see Psalm 96:5; Acts 4:24; 14:15).

In His wisdom, God has given us the Sabbath as a memorial of His creatorship designed to keep fresh in our minds a knowledge of Him as the one and only true God (see Exodus 20:8-11). Worshiping the Creator-God according to His Word includes keeping holy His seventh-day Sabbath. Jesus expected His followers to keep the Sabbath after His death down to the end of the world (see Matthew 24:20). Even after the saved are ushered into God’s eternal kingdom, they will forever gather to worship the Creator each Sabbath day (see Isaiah 66:23).

There is one more element to the first angel’s message: “the hour of His judgment has come.” God has appointed a specific time of judgment (see Acts 17:31). Jesus spoke of the judgment as being future to His time (see Matthew 12:36). Paul reasoned with Felix of the “judgment to come” (Acts 24:24-25).

But sit up and take notice. The first angel’s message declares that the hour of judgment *has* come. It is happening now! We who live here at the end of time, just prior to the second coming of Jesus, are living in the judgment hour. God is now investigating every life and determining every eternal destiny for either life or death. In light of this sobering reality, the world is now called with compassionate urgency to receive the gospel, to fear God, to give Him glory, and to worship Him as the only true God.

The Second Angel’s Message

The second angel’s message proclaims the fall of modern Babylon and calls God’s people to come out of the corrupted city. Of course ancient Babylon is no longer a force in the world. So the warning of the second angel must concern a spiritual Babylon existing at the end of time.

Ancient Babylon was the center of false teachings and false worship. Every false religion can trace its roots to ancient Babylon. Babylon originated sun worship, nature worship, idol worship, and the idea that human beings are or can become gods, among other teachings and practices that are in direct contradiction to God’s Word.

The false religions of our world, including those professed Christian churches that mingle the false teachings of paganism with the truth of Scripture, constitute the Babylon of Bible prophecy. Those systems of worship which lay aside the clear truths of the Bible for the traditions and teachings of men are represented as Babylon. Yet, God has truehearted people who are involved with Babylon because they do not know any better. He does not condemn them for what they do not know. Rather He calls them to separate from Babylon so they are not included in her ruin. So important is this message that it is repeated in Revelation 18:1-5.

The Third Angel’s Message

Without question, the third angel’s message is the most solemn warning contained in the Bible. Here we are warned to avoid at all costs worshiping the beast or his image or receiving his awful mark. If we do fall prey to the beast, the consequence will be very serious. The wrath of God in full strength, unmixed with mercy, will be poured out on all the false worshipers who receive the mark of the beast.

Surely God does not intend for this message to come across as a cruel threat, but rather as a merciful warning. He who loves us so much as to give His Son to die for our sins longs for our salvation. He does not want us to misunderstand the seriousness of this final issue that will divide the world into two camps. So He speaks to us in unmistakable terms: *If any person worships the beast or his image or receives his mark, that person will be eternally lost.* Then He tells us how we can be absolutely certain we are on His side—“Keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” This is our only safe course according to the third angel’s message.

In Study 15, we allowed the Bible to identify the beast of Revelation 13. We noticed nine biblical characteristics of this power. Without any speculation, we concluded that there is only one entity in history that accurately fits the description. The symbolic sea-beast is the Roman Catholic church-state.

It is important that we keep in mind that the Bible does not condemn the individual men and women who are members of this church. Rather, in compassionate care for each person, the Lord warns us of a political-religious system that ultimately leads away from Christ. There are countless people involved with false religious systems who are honest and sincere in their relationship with Christ. They live in loving harmony with the truth they understand. God does not condemn them for what they do not know. They are eager to learn more of God’s will, and when they encounter the truth, they move forward to serve the Lord with clearer vision.

The Mark of the Beast

The third angel’s message warns of the mark of the beast in language that gives us a basic concept of its nature. Do not “*worship* the beast and his image,” nor “*receive his mark*” in your “*forehead*” or in your “*hand*,” proclaims the third angel. The warning in chapter 13 is very similar. The beast will “*cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed . . . and he causeth all . . . to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads*” (Revelation 13:15-16). From these Scriptures it is clear that the mark of the beast has to do with “*worship*,” which stands to reason since the beast itself is a false system of worship. The mark of the beast, then, will be some type of coerced means by which the beast will receive spiritual allegiance.

Another clue is that the mark of the beast is received in the right hand or in the forehead. Some have assumed that this indicates a literal, visible mark such as a tattoo or a bar code on the flesh of the hand or forehead. Others have suggested that the mark will be some kind of microchip inserted under the skin. Neither view harmonizes with the deeper issue of worship so clearly brought to view in Revelation. Worship is an issue of the heart, calling for the loyalty of the mind and the compliance of the body. To receive the mark of the beast in the forehead implies the agreement and loyalty of the mind. To receive the mark in the right hand suggests unwilling compliance for the sake of self-preservation. Some will worship the beast and support its system because they believe in it with the mind. Others will reluctantly yield the homage of their hand for fear of persecution.

Another clue as to the exact nature of the mark of the beast is “the seal of God.” In Revelation the seal of God is the sign of loyalty to the Creator in opposition to the beast and his mark. If we can ascertain from Scripture what God’s seal is, we will have no problem identifying the mark of the beast, for they are conflicting expressions of faith in two opposing systems of worship. The mark of the beast is the sign of allegiance to the beast. The seal of God is the sign of allegiance to the Creator.