

Preparation for the End Time

God's Seal or the Beast's Mark?

Lesson #11 for June 16, 2018

Scriptures: Genesis 17:9-11; Exodus 31:13,17; Revelation 13:15,17; 15:3; Ephesians 1:13-14; Hebrews 4:9-10.

1. This lesson will discuss the key identifiers of two very important groups found in Revelation 13&14. What are the two great sides mentioned in those chapters?
2. Read Revelation 15:2. Why is this called the song of Moses and the Lamb? Compare Exodus 15. Moses and Miriam were celebrating the deliverance from Egypt. What will the sealed of God be celebrating?
3. Seventh-day Adventists have long stated that our messages for the world in these end times are the three angels' messages. How well are we doing at presenting these messages? Do we clearly understand them? Do we understand how to explain them in a gracious and convincing way? The third angel's message is the most fearsome warning in the entire Bible.
4. These last chapters of Revelation speak much about Babylon. Who? Where? Or, what is Babylon? (See 1 Peter 5:13.) Remember that ancient Babel, the original site of Babylon, meant "gate of the gods." The builders of that tower believed that they were going to find a way around God's plans!

Babel (ba'bel). [Heb. *Babel*. According to Gen 11:9 the name means "confusion," based, evidently, on the fact that the Hebrew verb *balal* means "to confuse." The Babylonians, however, explained the name of their city, which they called *Bâbilu*, to mean "gate of god" or *Bâbi-ilâni*, "gate of the gods" (*RLA* 1:333).—Horn, S. H. (1979). "Babel." In *SDA Bible Dictionary** 108. Review and Herald Publishing Association.

5. In this lesson we will focus on the implications and meanings of the terms *the mark of the beast* and *the seal of God*.
6. So, what does a sign or mark imply? For what does a nation's flag stand? The flag is nothing more than a piece of cloth with different colors on it. However, it means a great deal to those who hold it in respect.
7. Read Genesis 17:9-11; Exodus 31:13,17; and Ezekiel 20:12,20. **In Old Testament times, there were two marks or seals which were signs of one's relationship to God. They were the Sabbath and male circumcision. In New Testament times, the sign of male circumcision was replaced by the ordinance of baptism.** Both of these signs were intended to imply that a person's mind and heart were dedicated to the Lord. (See Deuteronomy 30:6 and Romans 2:28-29. Compare 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; 6:15.)
8. While virtually all Christian churches have acknowledged that the rite of male circumcision is no longer a mark of true Christianity—they were originally a mark of Judaism—there is considerable disagreement about the role of the Sabbath in our day as well as the role of

baptism. Remember that Jesus Himself said, “The Sabbath was made for humankind.” (Mark 2:27, *NRSV**) We know that the Sabbath was given as the original covenant or sign between God and His creatures. See Genesis 2:2-3.

9. Read Revelation 13:15,17; 14:9-10; 16:2. What do these passages teach us about the significance of the mark of the beast? There are some very strong statements made in the book of Revelation about those who receive the mark of the beast. On one side, we are told that unless one receives this mark, s/he will not be able to buy or sell or will even be killed. On the other side, we see that God’s “wrath” will be poured out on those who receive the mark of the beast; and, finally, they will receive the plagues of God. If both of these statements were actually carried out, everyone would die!
10. We have noted, repeatedly, that the prophecies of the book of Daniel are closely parallel to several of the prophecies about beasts pictured in Revelation. Daniel 7:25 tells us that the little horn power of Daniel 7&8 will seek to change times and laws. That little horn power is very similar in its characteristics to the sea beast in Revelation 13:1-10. Compare Revelation 12:3,9. This beast is clearly at enmity with God and His people.
11. What law was it that the little horn power tried to change? Didn’t it have something to do with time? It is interesting to note that in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:3-17, the one commandment which deals with time is the Sabbath commandment. Has anyone tried to change that commandment? The answer, of course, is yes. The little horn power—the second phase of the mighty Roman Empire—has claimed the authority to change the day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday which they would claim is the day of the Lord. Notice something interesting in Revelation 12-14. Whereas Revelation 14:7 is the only passage that speaks about true worship, there are six others that warn against the false worship of the beast and his image. See Revelation 13:4,8,12,15; 14:9-11.
12. Read Revelation 13:10 and Revelation 14:12. Why do you suppose these two verses which are in very important and critical places in Revelation call for endurance on the part of God’s people? What is implied by *endurance* in these passages?
13. A careful reading of Revelation 12-14 makes it very clear that at the end, there will be only two groups of people on this earth. There will be those who worship the Creator and keep all of His commandments, including the Sabbath commandment; and there will be those who worship the dragon, the sea beast, and accept the false sabbath.
14. Let us investigate carefully what was implied when the Bible writers referred to a *seal* or *mark*. Read Ezekiel 20:20; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 7:1-4; 14:1. So, what can we learn from these verses? First of all, it is clear that the seal of God is a mark of ownership, signifying that we belong to our Creator. Furthermore, it is clear that those who receive that seal on their foreheads will, one day, stand on the sea of glass and be recognized as God’s faithful, redeemed people.
15. Read Revelation 7:3 in contrast to Revelation 14:9. What do these verses teach us about the seal of God versus the mark of the beast? It is the “servants of our God” who receive His seal on their foreheads. It is the “worshippers of the beast” who receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads or on their hands.
16. It is important to notice that the seal of God is placed only on the forehead. This implies

that only those who are fully committed to, and willing to give their lives for, the truths they believe will receive that seal. By contrast, the mark of the beast can be received either on the forehead, indicating those who truly believe in the beast's message, or it can also be received in the hand, signifying those who just go along because it is more convenient to do that than bucking the tide.

Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 216.1.

17. In light of what we have learned so far about the seal of God and the mark of the beast, how are these things related to the Sabbath and its proper observance? We know that in the days of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees were worshiping on the Sabbath in a wrong way and for wrong reasons. Could that happen to any of us? How and why should we correctly worship God on the Sabbath? Why do you think Revelation 13:10 and Revelation 14:12 call for endurance on the part of God's faithful people?
18. Before we rush too far ahead in our thinking, it is important to notice that the mark of the beast will only be placed on the foreheads and hands of people just before the second coming of Christ. No one has received the mark of the beast yet. Remember that we are now supposed to be calling God's faithful people out of Babylon.
19. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Hebrews 4:9-10. We recognize that the Sabbath is intended to be a day of rest. God rested on that day at the end of creation week. He set it apart as a sign of His covenant with us. It is those who correctly worship on the Sabbath—with all that implies—who will receive the seal of God. So, what does worshiping on the Sabbath imply to you? It should imply several things: 1) That we recognize God as our Creator and that although we recognize that those accounts are very brief, the words in Genesis 1-11 signify actual events in relatively recent times. 2) The Sabbath is supposed to be a special time of worship in which God Himself agrees to draw near to us; it is a time of special communion between God and His people.
20. So, if that is what the Sabbath stands for, what does Sunday stand for? Those who worship on the Sabbath and to the best of their ability follow God's directions for keeping that day holy, stand in stark contrast to those who worship on Sunday. Observe the way faithful Seventh-day Adventists keep the Sabbath in contrast to the way many in the world keep Sunday simply by attending a brief church service and then going about their favorite activities. **Given what we know about Satan's kingdom, a day set up by him would suggest an attempt to save ourselves by our own works.**
21. Do we have inspired descriptions of what it means *to be sealed in our foreheads*?

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come.

Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 173*,* (1902); *FLB** 287.7; *4SDABC** 1161.6; *LDE** 219.4; *Mar** 200.2; *OFC** 83.6; 328.2.

The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false Sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. **While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 605.2. [Bold type is added.]

22. Seventh-day Adventists have accepted a tremendous challenge: How do we present a very controversial truth, the truth about the Sabbath versus Sunday, without being argumentative or irritating or overly controversial? Is there a way to present the Sabbath truth graciously and winsomely? What does it mean to be “settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually”? It is mental and spiritual, and it has become a part of you.
23. Will there come a time when it will be obvious who is on God's side and who is on Satan's side? If you could look forward prophetically to see the people in the whole world just before Jesus comes back, would you be able to tell which ones have the mark of the beast? Could you tell which ones have the seal of God? If we are going to be targeted to be killed, how will they know who is to be killed? Is it clear in your thinking what each of these marks or seals represents? And who will wear them? Does the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as a true time of communion with God clearly mean, in your mind, a faith in the Creator and an entire dependence upon God for our salvation? Remember that at that time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church *as we know it* will have ceased to exist because it will be against the law to worship on Sabbath.
24. If Sundaykeeping Christians living in your area could observe how you keep the Sabbath, would they be attracted? Or, repulsed? How has keeping the seventh-day Sabbath affected your life? Jesus attracted large crowds of people, partly because of His healing ministry. Will we be able to do that?
25. If you look on the Internet, you will discover that many people have come up with crazy notions about *the mark of the beast*. How is it related to the number 666? (Revelation 13:18) Do you think any of those modern suggestions by artists are in any way accurate? Will it be some kind of barcode or computer chip that identifies which side you are on?
26. We are told that the governments of the world will pass laws that all who have the seal of God are to be killed on a certain day. (Revelation 13:15-17)

As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration.

It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness. The same argument many centuries ago was brought against Christ by the “rulers of the people.” “It is expedient for us,” said the wily Caiaphas, “that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” John 11:50. This argument will appear conclusive; and a decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment and giving [616] the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death. Romanism in the Old World and apostate Protestantism in the New will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.

The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob’s trouble. “Thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.... All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Jeremiah 30:5-7.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 615.2-616.1.

Though a general decree has fixed the time when commandment keepers may be put to death, their enemies will in some cases anticipate the decree, and before the time specified, will endeavor to take their lives. But none can pass the mighty guardians stationed about every faithful soul. Some are assailed in their flight from the cities and villages; but the swords raised against them break and fall powerless as a straw. Others are defended by angels in the form of men of war.—*Ibid.** 631.1.

27. How will they identify those who have the seal of God? Will we be forced to have some kind of number tattooed on our arms like they did to the Jews in the time of the Holocaust?
28. It is interesting to note that there are seven seals discussed in Revelation 6:1-8:1. The sixth seal (Revelation 6:16-17) speaks about the wrath of the Lamb!
29. Ellen White had some very powerful words to say about the wrath of the Lamb.

Divine love has been stirred to its unfathomable depths for the sake of men, and angels marvel to behold in the recipients of so great love a mere surface gratitude. Angels marvel at man’s shallow appreciation of the love of God. Heaven stands indignant at the neglect shown to the souls of men. Would we know how Christ regards it? How would a father and mother feel, did they know that their child, lost in the cold and the snow, had been passed by, and left to perish, by those who might have saved it? Would they not be terribly grieved, wildly indignant? Would they not denounce those murderers with wrath hot as their tears, intense as their love? The sufferings of every man are the sufferings of God’s child, and those who reach out no helping hand to their perishing fellow beings provoke His righteous anger. This is the wrath of the Lamb. To those who claim fellowship with Christ, yet have been indifferent to the needs of their fellow men, He will declare in the great Judgment day, “I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke 13:27.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 825.4.

30. Are we reaching out to others with the urgency implied by this passage? Or, do we finally want to end up experiencing the wrath of the Lamb?
31. In ancient times, small lumps of clay were impressed with a metal or stone seal something like a signature to demonstrate who was the owner of a piece of property or the sender of a document. Many of those lumps of clay have been found in cities which were burned to the ground many years ago. They are very helpful in establishing the history of those places. It is interesting to notice that those lumps of clay have survived far better than the scrolls or documents that they were meant to identify and protect.
32. Read Ezekiel 9:4-6. What do these verses tell us about how the seal of God will be placed at the end of time? Who receives the seal? Why?
33. If God is placing His seal on us, does that imply that we recognize that everything we have and are belongs to Him? What do we have that does not come as a result of God's gifts?
34. Does our keeping of the Sabbath clearly identify us as the sealed people of God?
35. Read Deuteronomy 6:8 and Exodus 13:9. The *tefillin* or "phylacteries" (Matthew 23:5) were supposed to remind the Jewish males of their complete subjection to the law of God. That involved not only their thinking but also their actions.
36. Finally, we need to remember that both the seal and the mark are signs of worship. What does that imply? What does it mean to worship something? It means to hold that thing in supreme reverence or worth. Do we consider our relationship with God as of supreme worth to us? Is that clearly shown by our worship on the seventh-day Sabbath?
37. Could there be people like the Pharisees of old who are "keeping" the Sabbath but who are really on Satan's side?

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