

## 11. God's Seal or the Beast's Mark? (2Q 2018—Preparation for the End Time)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 17:9–11; Exod. 31:13, 17; Rev. 13:17; Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 4:9, 10; Rev. 15:3.

### Quotes

- We had spiritually marked ourselves. This marking began...when the counterculture of political correctness began, and the assault on Christian values and traditions began. At first it seemed so ridiculous that it was harmless, kind of like a disease to which we were all immune. Soon, however, it was recolored to equal compassion, fairness, acceptance, tolerance, and equality. From there it evolved into a power with the ability to take any truth and repaint it as a lie, to take any lie and re-label it as truth. *John Pontius*
- The Antichrist is often identified with the second beast in the Book of Revelation that arises from the land, the beast that tries to make everyone worship the power of evil. *Elaine Pagels*
- It will be said again, Then all Sunday-keepers have the mark of the beast; then all the good of past ages who kept this day had the mark of the beast; then Luther, Whitefield, the Wesleys, and all who have done a good and noble work of reformation had the mark of the beast; then all the blessings that have been poured upon the reformed churches have been poured upon those who had the mark of the beast. We answer, No! And we are sorry to say that some professedly religious teachers, though many times corrected, persist in misrepresenting us on this point. We have never so held; we have never so taught. Our premises lead to no such conclusions. *G.I. Butler*
- Those who receive the seal of God, have the Lamb's "Father's name written in their foreheads" Rev. xiv, 1. Those who receive the mark of the beast, receive the "mark of his name." Verse 11. Name is used in a figurative sense to denote authority. In the name of the people, in the name of the king, signify by the authority of the people, or of the king In the name of Jesus Christ, means by the authority of Jesus Christ. Hence, the mark of the beast is a sign or token of his authority, standing in opposition to the sign of the authority of the Father. *R.F. Cottrell*
- Who is the beast? According to Daniel, the secular power, or any power that attempts to control the world for its own purposes, in opposition to Christ, who only has a right to rule. Mark of the beast then is evidently the lust of power. It seems plain to my mind, therefore, that those who do not worship the beast, or his image, are those who submit to Christ; and that those who do not wear the mark of the beast, are those who have put away all lust for power, and laid their entire being at the foot of the cross. *Charles Fitch*

### Questions

What issues do we have in identifying the seal of God and the mark of the beast as simply different days of worship? How do we differentiate ourselves from the Pharisees who also worshiped on the Sabbath but were condemned for hypocrisy by Jesus? How do we explain the mark of the beast to those keeping Sunday?

## **Bible summary**

The physical sign of God's covenant with his people in the past was circumcision (Gen. 17:9–11); the religious sign was the Sabbath (Exod. 31:13, 17). Without the mark of the beast in the end buying and selling is impossible (Rev. 13:17). Eph. 1:13, 14 identifies the Holy Spirit as God's seal. Heb. 4:9, 10 says there is still a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. Revelation 15:3 records the song of praise to God.

## **Comment**

How much misunderstanding there has been over the seal of God and the mark of the beast! While the two aspects are identifiers of what is true and what is false, the worship of God in contrast to following the Devil and so on, we need to remind everyone that the final separation is still future. Jesus told his parable of the tares growing among the wheat for a reason. The end time judgment remains to come.

That said, we can identify aspects of the two “camps” even now as we review the great controversy. The real test is holding on to the truth as it is in Jesus, and not following the ways of this world. All too often religion is the result of human invention rather than accepting the wisdom of God. But in the end the choice is either following the ways of Jesus or bowing down before Satan the usurper, as the latter made clear during his temptations of Jesus.

So now, here comes the real question: can you believe you have the seal of God and still be lost? If we simply equate the seal of God to observing the seventh-day Sabbath, then yes. For there were many in Jesus' own time who kept the Sabbath, but did not accept Jesus. In fact they crucified the Lord and then ran home to keep the Sabbath.

Similarly with the mark of the beast. This is not simply Sunday-keeping, but an identification with an apostate system of Christianity which in essence denies Jesus' provision of free and full salvation. We need to be very careful when we speak about the mark of the beast. It is still future, and is far more than simply a day of worship—it is this false belief system that centers on our own works, ineffectual rites, and most significantly, on a false picture of God.

For in the end that's what it comes down to. What God do you worship? What is he like? Does he have the face of Jesus, or is he clothed with the attributes of the Deceiver, the one who wanted to make himself like the Most High God?

## **Ellen White Comments**

The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. Here is the line of distinction between the worshipers of God and those who worship the beast and receive his mark. The great conflict is between the commandments of God and the requirements of the beast. {1T 223}

The first thing recorded in Scripture history after the fall was the persecution of Abel. And the last thing in Scripture prophecy is the persecution against those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast. We should be the last people on the earth to indulge in the slightest degree the spirit of persecution against those who are bearing the message of God to the world. . . . {CTr 356}