

SIGNS *of the Times*

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

Do you see what I see? Pt.2

Is the “mark of the beast” a microchip that will be surgically implanted under the skin of your hand or forehead? Is it one of the Covid-19 vaccines? Is it the United States Supreme Court’s 2015 decision upholding gay marriage? Or is some new digital currency implemented by the WEF? These are just a few of the many ideas being promoted today.

It may be interesting to speculate about such things, but the Bible is the only authoritative Source for truly understanding the beast, its mark, and what these things mean for God’s people in the last days.

WHO OR WHAT IS THE “BEAST”?

In a previous study, we learned that the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8 is the same power as the beast in Revelation 13:1, 2. In that earlier study, we also recognized the sad truth that these symbols represent the Christian church itself. The beast of Revelation 13:1, 2, is not a political tyrant or an anti-religious power. It is the church—a church that during the Dark Ages largely lost sight of Jesus Christ in its quest for worldly power.

1. How long would this church continue to exercise unrestrained power? (**Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:5**)

In AD 538, the Roman Church assumed the authority of the crumbling Roman Empire. Forty-two prophetic months (1,260 days) equals 1,260 years of real time. And in 1798, at the end of the 1,260 years, the church suffered a “deadly wound.” (Revelation 13:3) Louis-Alexandre Berthier, a French general, marched on Rome, captured the pope, and put an end to the papacy’s worldly authority.

2. What happens when the church’s “deadly wound” is healed? (**Revelation 13:3, 4**)
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On February 11, 1929, Mussolini signed a concordat with the Vatican, restoring its political authority. Today, the world looks to the pope as a moral leader who shapes world affairs. The Bible predicts that papal authority will continue to grow until the whole world accepts it.

A SECOND “BEAST” EMERGES FROM THE EARTH

3. What are some identifying characteristics of this second beast?
(Revelation 13:11-16)
- (a.) It arises out of the _____ (vs. 11), which is the same place the woman, or church, went to escape persecution. (Revelation 12:16)
 - (b.) It has two _____, (vs. 11) neither of which has a crown like those on the first beast. It is not a monarchy.
 - (c.) It looks like a _____, but speaks like a _____, (vs. 11)
 - (d.) He exercises all the _____ of the first beast in his presence. (Revelation 13:11, 12)
 - (e.) It causes those who dwell on earth to _____ the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. (vs. 12)



Many of these identifying characteristics refer to actions that are still in the future. But no other power besides the United States of America could possibly fit the outlines of this prophecy! This power arises

from the earth—not the sea, which represents multitudes of people. (Revelation 17:15) The United States is the only nation that rose to power in the New World as the 1,260 years of papal supremacy were ending in the late 1700s.

4. What does the prophecy predict about the future course of the United States? (**Revelation 13:11, 12**)

Although it appears as a lamb, it will speak like a dragon and exercise all the authority of the first beast. Bible prophecy teaches that the United States and the Vatican will work together to restore everything the Roman Church lost at the close of the Dark Ages.

5. Why are the dragon (Satan) and his followers so angry with God's people? (**Revelation 12:17**)

God will have a faithful remnant in the last days who keep His commandments and cling to the testimony of Jesus in spite of Satan's persecutions and temptations.

IDENTIFYING THE MARK OF THE BEAST

6. What warning does heaven give regarding the mark of the beast? (**Revelation 14:9-11**)

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7. How does the Bible describe those who do NOT receive the mark of the beast? (**Revelation 14:12**)

Those who do NOT receive this mark are keeping God's commandments. So, clearly, those who DO receive this mark are not keeping them. The mark of the beast has to do with God's commandments.

Of all God's laws, one in particular deals with our allegiance to Him—the Sabbath commandment. Ezekiel 20:20 declares that the Sabbath is a special sign between God and His people, a special mark of allegiance to Him.

The Roman Church declares that its authority is above the Bible; it has established its own mark of allegiance—a counterfeit to God’s holy seventh-day Sabbath.

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

“Of course, the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. And that act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” (James Cardinal Gibbons)

The seventh-day Sabbath is God’s mark, or sign, of allegiance to Him. Sunday, the counterfeit to God’s Sabbath, is the mark of those who do not keep God’s commandments. Prophecy is being fulfilled. The scene is being set for the last great conflict. The United States is busy building bridges back to Rome, while Rome is putting all the final pieces in place for people to receive the mark of the beast.

8. Why is it important to keep God’s commandments? (**John 14:15**)

We don’t keep God’s commandments in order to be saved. We keep them because we *have* been saved—and because we love our Savior. Obedience demonstrates our love for the One who died for us. It’s not just a matter of days of the week; it’s a matter of love and loyalty.

MY DECISIONS

- I want to show my love for God by keeping His commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath.
- I ask God to guide me as I pray about the information I am learning in the Bible about the Sabbath.

MY PRAYER

Father, thank You for the blessings of the Sabbath. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, help me to stand faithfully for You in all things. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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