



THE BEAST AND HIS MARK.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation." Rev. 14:9, 10.

The message of the third angel follows that of the first and of the second, to all parts of the earth, and closes up the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. The next event in the prophecy is the coming of the Lord. Verse 14.

The message of the second angel shows that Babylon has reached a high pinnacle of power, and the message following shows that there is a direct conflict at this time between Babylon and God.

Every man will be called on to decide whom he will serve. If he elects to obey God, he must be prepared to face the wrath of the dragon: if he decides to worship the beast, he must drink of the unmixed wrath of God.

Who is the beast, and what is his mark? Without going into the prophecy in detail, we can ascertain sufficient to answer these questions.

In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we read of the great dragon, and learn that he is Satan. Verse 9. In the thirteenth chapter we find a beast with great power and authority, which he receives from the dragon. In the eleventh verse we read of another power, lamb-like in appearance, but betraying his connection with the dragon as soon as he opens his mouth. This power so deceives the people of the earth that they are beguiled

into doing again, themselves, what Satan had before done in making the first beast. They make an image to the beast.

Thus we have three powers closely connected. The dragon is the origin and father of the beast, and the image of the beast is, of course, exactly like the beast. As soon as the image receives life it reveals the characteristics of the beast. All work together in perfect unison.

Notice that while the dragon is the father of the beast, both work together during a long period of time. A certain number of years is mentioned as a time {629} when they especially oppress the church of God. In Rev. 12:6, it is 1260 days; in verse 14, "a time and times and half a time"; in Rev. 13:5, "forty and two months." In the Jewish reckoning a time is a year. See Dan. 11:13, margin; "at the end of times, even years." A time and times and half a time would be three and a half times, or years. This period is equal to forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days, by the Jewish reckoning of thirty days to the month.

Now look at the seventh chapter of Daniel, and you will find the same power spoken of, doing the same work, and for the same length of time. This prophecy has been fulfilled most strikingly in the history of the Papacy.

But the prophecy shows that while the Papacy should at some time receive a deadly wound, this would be healed. The deadly wound has been inflicted, but to-day it is healing fast. Nor is this all. Not only will the beast recover from its wound, another beast of like nature will be formed, the very image of the first, and this will demand worship for itself upon pain of death.

We are living in solemn times. This last generation is to witness the final conflict, and those who would serve God and obey Him, must be prepared to look death in the face as our fathers have done many time in the ages past.

What is the mark of the beast? At the very time that this mark is to be enforced, God is marking His own. The winds of strife are held until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God. Rev. 7:2, 3.

The conflict between the beast and the servants of God is no metaphysical hair-splitting. The issue is clear and definite. It is over the commandments of God. Commandment-keeping is the characteristic of God's servants. "The dragon was wrath, . . . and went to make war with the remnant . . . which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 12:17. Again, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12. On the other hand, the characteristic of the beast is an attack on the commandments of God. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle." Rev. 13:6. "And He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Dan. 7:25.

But where is there any chance of a conflict over the law of God? Remember that the beast is professedly Christian. The conflict comes over the fourth commandment. God

commands us to keep the seventh day holy. The beast has thought to change the law of God, and to make the first day sacred. The world has obeyed the beast, but the time has come to return to God, and obey Him only.

What does God say about His seal?—"Verily My Sabbath ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." Ex. 31:13.

What does the beast claim as its mark?—"The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage which they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Roman Catholic] Church."

Sunday stands for the beast. It is a commandment of men, by which they think to make the commandment of God of none effect.

The Sabbath stands for the memorial of God's creative work, as manifested in making new creatures. More than that it stands for God's rest, into which only the believer can enter, when he ceases from his own works as God did from His. Heb. 4:3, 4, 9, 10.

The Sunday is the mark of the Papacy, which puts man's work for God's. The Papacy gives us a woman as our chief intercessor in the place of Christ, traditions of the fathers instead of the Word of God, salvation from sin and purgatory by works and money and penance, a priest in the place of the Holy Spirit, and a rest-day appointed by men instead of the one appointed by God.

The Sabbath is the seal of God. True Sabbath-keeping means that man gives up his own way, and allows God to work in him; it means confidence in the power of God and not trusting in the flesh, obeying God's voice at any sacrifice, and following Him even if no one else does so.

When we see that Sunday stands so fitly and completely for the principles of the Papacy, we can understand the effort made by the image of the Papacy to compel everyone to receive the mark. He decrees "that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark."

Sunday-keeping does not become sinful until it is known to be the mark of the beast. Then it is treason to God to allow it longer to supersede His own commandment.

Even now, men who have no faith in God fear starvation if they should obey Him and keep His Sabbath. But the conditions will soon be harder still. Nevertheless there are many promises for the obedient, and God can care for His children, even in a desert.

While the conflict may centre around the Sabbath and the Sunday, it will embrace every principle represented by these. The Sabbath is the essence of a pure Gospel, justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ revealed in human flesh: the Sunday is the essence of human perversion of the Word of God, the exaltation of the human above the Divine, and the labelling of hypocrisy and guilt with the titles of holiness and truth.

The strife will soon be here; the beast will seek to enforce its conditions upon us. Happy those who have made their choice, whose feet are treading the pathway of obedience to God, and who have learned that through trials and tests God's Word holds

true. They will not quail before the threats of men. They will gain the victory over the beast and his image, and stand at length on the sea of glass, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Rev. 15:2, 3.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. 22:14.

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