

The Mark Of The Beast

Revelation 13:16-18

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Jesus' Olivet prophesy is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and in Luke 21. Although every one of them contains an admonition or an admonishment to watch, only Matthew 24 records a major condition—a sign of the end—that it would be like the days of Noah. Now, let us look at this in Matthew 24, and there it says,

Matthew 24:37-39 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Undoubtedly, Jesus' concern in making that statement was not so much that people should be making a headlong pursuit of watching prophetic news events unfold from one place to another upon the earth, but rather that they not get so caught up in the ordinary events of life that they miss the spiritual significance of the signs of the times.

Notice what he said there, “they are eating, drinking, marrying, and giving and marriage.” It is in this context that the word “watch” appears in verse 42.

From what Jesus said, I would have to take it that during that period of time before the Flood, there were indications abounding all throughout the place that society was in the midst of a crisis that was taking it and them to their doom, but the people ignored the signs in society and they went about the ordinary business of life.

I have concluded, and maybe you will agree with me in this, that one of the tendencies of human nature is to become unbalanced in one's approach to life (I will say here, even in one's approach to religion), and give life far more

attention than it actually deserves. And, the other things that are more important are allowed to slide or to slip into the background.

I think that one of the clearest signs of maturity is when a person reaches that stage in life in which they have the ability, or wisdom, to be able to distinguish between what is important and what is of lesser importance. What is important gets their time and energy, and what is of lesser importance gets time or energy only if they have time after the more important things are taken care of.

It is this area I am talking about that enables a person to build character, because if a person is able to determine what is important, he will then discipline himself to do what is more important. Something that is less important, he may get a measure, or maybe a great deal of gratification for a moment, a period of time, but he does not allow himself to go into that, but he gives his time and energies over to that which is more important.

If we wanted to carry this just a little bit further, and this is another personal observation and opinion that I have noticed both from the Bible and from personal experience, that demon possessed people will absolutely take some area of life to an extreme—extreme depression; extreme paranoia and anxiety; extreme fear about something; mood swings that go from the very peak to the valley almost in a moment of time.

Now, I do not think that Jesus was concerned about demon possessed people at this point in time, but He was very concerned about His people, that their focus should be on the right things. If they were, then their approach to life at the end is very unlikely to get caught up in things that are of secondary importance. They would give their time and energies over to that which is important, and if there was time to spare, then those things of less importance would also be taken care of.

We are admonished in verse 42 to watch. More properly, it means to be alert. "Watch" is not wrong, because if a person is watching, it is very likely that they are alert. It is a matter of deciding what to watch—what to be alert about. It is here that the choice is made because everybody is going to be alert about something, but what is it that they choose to be alert about? That is what Jesus was concerned about.

We have generally interpreted that to mean to be alert to what is going on in the world, and that is certainly included within the scope of what Jesus is talking about, and we should be doing that very thing. But Jesus' focus, and the use of the word "watch," or "be alert," is really to be applied to something that is more important than that. That is the subject of what follows verse 42.

What follows verse 42 are four parables. Parable number one begins in verse 45. The general theme of that parable is that we are to be faithful in carrying out our duties to Christ. Be alert in that—be watching, be aware of what is going on in your life with regards to being faithful to carrying out your duties to Christ.

The second one beginning in chapter 25, regarding the ten virgins, is to be wise in the use (of) and being full of God's Holy Spirit.

The third one beginning in verse 14 of chapter 25, is to be growing in the gifts that God has given. Be watchful, be alert in your own life. Are you doing those things?

And then the fourth one, beginning in chapter 25 and verse 31 is, be serving the brethren. Now we are to be alert to carrying out these areas of Christian life.

The question has to be, then, why are these things so important? Well, there is a very simple answer to that. Turn with me back to Revelation 2:7:

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes . . .

Revelation 2:11 he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes . . .

Revelation 2:17 he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes . . .

Revelation 2:26 and he who overcomes . . .

I could go into chapter three, but I would be just a little bit more redundant than I already have been.

Why is Jesus so concerned that we be alert at the end, that we be watching these four areas of life—that we would be faithful, that we would be full of the Holy Spirit, that we would be developing the gifts of God, and that we would be serving the brethren? Because that is what we are being judged on. We are being judged on whether we are overcoming. Let that sink in a bit.

If we are focused on the wrong thing, even something as godly as (please do not misunderstand me) as watching world events (that is a right thing to do), we can actually get to the place if we are so focused on this, that we know every nuance of what is going on in the world. But I think that it is entirely possible that we can be so focused on news events that we are literally unprepared for the end, and it just flattens us like a train going eighty miles an hour because we are looking in the wrong direction regarding what Christ is concerned about. He is concerned about overcoming—overcoming human nature.

So we can see, we could be standing on the tracks, watching that locomotive bearing down on us. And we cannot get out of the way because we are so fascinated by the machinations of what it is that we are watching.

Let us add another factor to this.

Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.
Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

Is this lesson, here, about the time of the end? Yes it is! When the Son of Man comes—that takes place at the end. What is Jesus concerned about? Faith. In Matthew 24, what is He concerned about? Christian living. In Revelation 2 and 3, the message from Jesus Christ to the end time churches, and what is He concerned about? Overcoming!

These things are all related.

The parable that precedes this statement here in Luke 18:8 is concerned about persevering under the duress of a persecuting judge. Now the faith that was mentioned in verse eight is not belief. It is trust. It is belief in action. It is trust. You can tell that from the parable. What is He concerned about? His concern is that our faith is going to crumble during the process of the trial. The judge that is in this parable does not represent God. He is an evil judge. In fact, in the parable, God is actually contrasted to this judge, but the judge is persecuting the woman—the widow.

A widow in the Bible almost invariably pictures somebody who is in a position of weakness. She does not have a husband to go to bat for her. She does not have a husband to provide for her. She does not have a husband to be a companion and to give her comfort and to encourage her. She does not have a husband to give her love. So here is this poor woman in a position of weakness, and the judge is persecuting her.

How does God fit into this? God fits into it because God does not answer the woman's plea right away. Therefore, it is Jesus' concern when we get the lesson at the time of the end is: is our faith going to crumble? Or is it going to crash? Is it doing to diminish? Is it going to give out entirely before God answers our plea to Him? See: "God please, please intervene! I can't take it anymore!" Will you persevere? That is Jesus' concern.

It is Jesus' concern that before God answers, He is afraid that the faith—the trust—of His disciples is going to diminish to the place that they will recant their faith; that they will give up before God intervenes.

We already live in a culture that is blighted by materialism, by sensualism; there is a threat of war; earthquakes happening very frequently; there are famines, maybe not in the United States, but there are famines taking place in the world, very serious ones; riots; wars; we are being victimized in the streets; and there is the very real threat of economic collapse in the United States.

You already share with your fellow Americans these things that are going on daily. Now, what can be added to those things that is going to be of concern

to you and me, at the time of the end? It was certainly Jesus' concern. It was merely taking care of the cares of life: eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage.

Before we go much further in the sermon, we are going to find that eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—everything that they encompass—is going to become very, very important to a Christian.

Luke 12:16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully."

We are not going to go going to go through the parable, we will just read the concluding verse.

Luke 12:21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

It is rather ominous because it is entirely possible for you and me to be so focused on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and what they encompass, that we even become wealthy, but there is no treasure in terms of God. The focus is wrong. Verse 22 begins to make this very clear.

Luke 12:22-23 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."

Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—what Jesus says here agrees with that. There are things that are more important than eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. But it is not food, it is not clothing. Life is worth more than that. There is more to life than those things. Then He goes on explaining how God has provided for the creation:

Luke 12:31 "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."

Now, there is a promise: God will supply.

Luke 12:34 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Then comes verse 35, and guess what this verse begins? The same parable that is in Matthew 24, immediately after the verse that talks about watching, only here we see it in a different context, and it has a little line added to it that is so interesting, for at least this sermon.

Luke 12:40-41 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?"

We begin to find out that the parable was for them. Even though it may have been said in the public, it was really for them.

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?"

Who supplies our need? God. Who is our Master? Our master is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has made us stewards in His house to carry out certain responsibilities.

Luke 12:43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

It is very obvious that this parable is for you and me.

Luke 12:47 And that servant who knew his master's will, . . .

Please attach this to Matthew 24, and the things that we read there: the four parables—doing our duty to Christ, being filled with the Holy Spirit, developing the gifts of God's Holy Spirit, and serving the brethren—there is our Master's will for the time of the end! The issue is whether we are overcoming; the issue is whether we are going to have faith at the end.

Luke 12:47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

The warning is given in Matthew 24, Luke 21 (in a little bit different way), Mark 13 (in a little bit different way)—we had better be prepared when that time comes. When is the time to prepare? It is before we get to that time. It is the person, or the team (if I can put it that way), who is in shape when the game day arrives that is most likely to be the one that wins the game, because they are prepared, both physically and mentally, to meet the enemy. Do you know why? Because all along the way they have been preparing, day by day, for when the Super Bowl comes, they are ready for it.

Now the Super Bowl in the analogy is not here yet, but it is on its way, and our Boss said we had better get prepared.

The way that I have arranged these scriptures is to draw attention to the fact that at the end we are warned not to allow our focus to be drawn to ordinary daily concerns, but rather to be alert to the message of each one of the parables, and the issue at the end is going to be faith—trust.

Actually I would rather use that word, trust, because sometimes the word faith has such a broad application to it that we do not get the point. Christ is concerned about what we are practicing; not what we believe, but what we *practice*. And trust is faith—what we believe—in practice actually being done.

So the issue at the end is going to be trusting God, and it is going to be trusting God in very basic areas of life—food, clothing, water—to get by from one day to the next.

Now let us go back to the book of Revelation.

Revelation 6:7-8 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on

it was Death, and Hades [or the grave] followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

This is where I feel that we are in prophecy right now.

Let me explain that a little bit further. The book of Revelation was written on a scroll. It was rolled up in much the same manner as (I hate to use this analogy) a roll of toilet paper. It was not like a book that we are familiar with pages. Now, they had books, but the prophecy of Revelation was not written in a book. It was written on a scroll. And as it was written, it began to be rolled up, and every so often a seal was put on. This seal was usually a gummy substance like wax, and it was melted, poured on to the page, and then the roll was advanced a little bit further, and then of course, the wax solidified and that portion of the roll, then, would no longer be able to be opened until the seal was broken.

Seven of those seals were put on there. And then when the seventh one was put on there (which would be the first one that would be broken) the book was completed. You will find, then, in Revelation 4, that the apostle John saw the completed scroll there, and he actually wept because he did not think that there was anybody there that was worthy to open up the scroll and see what was written in there. He wanted to know what is on there, what is coming. Of course the Lamb was worthy to open it, and then He began, the Lamb did, to break the seals. This is important to understanding how these prophecies are fulfilled.

When the first seal was broken, if the scroll was re-closed, it would no longer seal because the seal had been broken. Therefore what we understand from that is once the seal is broken, the prophecy begins and nothing can stop it from that point on.

If the first one, let us say, was broken in 50 AD, it began and it continues until the Lamb who was worthy stops it. In other words, it was opened, and it continues to this day.

Then the scroll is unrolled a bit further and the second seal is broken, and now we have wars, and rumors of wars, taking place along with the false

prophets. Then the third one comes along and it is broken; and then the fourth; and then the fifth. And now you have all of these horrible prophecies operating in parallel, every one of them working from the time that they began.

But we also know from other prophecies that as we get to the time at the end, even though the prophecies began to be fulfilled way back in the first century, they are gradually going to intensify as we go to the end.

If you could imagine a graph in which the fulfillment of the first seal reaches the point of a certain level of intensity, and then it wanes. Then the second one is broken and it begins to parallel the first, and it reaches a period of intensity. But the first one, it also reaches another period of intensity that is higher than the last peak, then the next time it drops less—does not go down quite as far as it did the first time, and then it comes back up again and we have another wave of false prophets coming. And then it diminishes a little bit, but it never goes back down as far, until finally we are going to get to the end, and we are going to have all seven of these things going on at the same time, every one of them at the peak of intensity.

I believe that all six of the first six have been opened. We have not gotten to the seventh one yet. There have even been minor fulfillments of things that occurred in the 6th seal that have occurred in the past, but that thing is far from being fulfilled.

So, they are going to reach the peak of their intensity in just the near future, and our preparation must be in the area of living trust in God, or it is very likely that we are going to become unglued as the intensity mounts because there is going to be something persecuting us that will in all probability not be impacting on our non-Christian neighbors.

Revelation 13:15-17 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free

and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Without a doubt, this infamous mark is going to reach its zenith, its very peak, during the time that we know of as being the tribulation.

The events of the seals—please make a connection here because the mark of the Beast is a part of the fifth seal—and if past history is any indication, the events of the seals do not just suddenly appear. Rather they are gradually imposed on mankind in a way that almost seems as though they are sneaking up on us like a thief. And they will come, like I said, and they will reach a peak of intensity and then they will wane, and seemingly slip into the background, maybe for several generations, and then they will come back again with greater intensity than they had before.

We do not want to be caught when they are upon us and then have to deal with it. It is my sincere hope that none of us within the sound of my voice and many others besides ever have to deal with this thing when it reaches this intensity, because I guarantee you, you are not going to live through it. But we are going to have to deal with it between now and then, before it reaches that point. I do not think the time of the imposition of this thing is all that far off.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

Revelation 15:6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

Revelation 16:1-2 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

If one has the mark of the Beast, he will receive the seven last plagues of God's wrath, and they are going to be horrible beyond description. It would do us well to be prepared to resist this mark because the penalty for resisting it will be far less agonizing and horrific than the penalty for accepting it. The penalty for accepting it comes from God. The penalty for resisting it comes from Satan. Whose wrath would you rather face if you happen to be in that situation? It is going to come down to a simple choice. It is not going to be complicated at all.

In Revelation 13 again, we will look a little bit more closely at the reading of these two verses (16 and 17), and it should tell us that the mark of the Beast is going to be something that is going to be universally popular. Can you imagine anybody volunteering to die? I will tell you the person who volunteers to die, they are going to be very unusual; or who makes the choice to die by resisting the mark. Common sense ought to tell us that accepting the mark is going to be popular, and almost everybody is going to want it. Do you know why? Because everybody wants to live; nobody wants to die a horrible death. Everybody wants to be able to buy or sell; everybody wants to be able to make a living. But if you do not have the mark, you do not make a living; you cannot buy for yourself, you cannot get a job.

The choice for those who are thinking about what the choice is, and are able to see the difference between the two, and what lies beyond the choices, are going to see it clearly.

All those who really do not see the choice are going to be the great vast majority of people and that is what is going to make the acceptance of the mark so popular. That is why it says in verse 16, "And he causes all those small and great, rich and poor, free and slave," and by that description all of society is drawn into it. So it is something that is universally accepted and very popular.

The word that is translated "mark," here, has a very interesting usage in the Greek. It is the word *charagma* (transliterated) and it is used in a number of different ways. I am just going to give you four of them.

It is used as a "brand" because occasionally in the days of the book of Revelation, a slave was branded. This is kind of interesting, because the

Greeks were not in the habit of branding slaves, and neither were the Romans. They ordinarily did not do that. They only did it if the slave had run away. In other words, he was considered to be a law breaker, and then they would brand them. It was called, then, the *charagma*, but it underwent a name change, and this word I am going to use you are very familiar with. Once the slave was branded, that brand was called a “stigma.” You have heard of people with stigmas attached to them. Usually the stigma might be a racial identity or whatever, or religion. So the brand, *charagma*, became a stigma.

A second way it was used is that sometimes the soldiers branded themselves with the name of their favorite general. This has come over into society in the form of tattoos. In modern society, men usually, but some women also, if they get a tattoo it will often be the name of some person that they respect or the name of some organization. “I love Mary.” A guy writes “Mary forever,” on himself, and then promptly goes to another girl. But nonetheless it has survived in the form of tattoos.

A third way it was used is that contracts have to be validated. They have to have a seal on them. You and I very frequently will go to a notary public, and that notary public will put his seal witnessing your signature on that document—*charagma*—that seal, stamp, or certification.

Now, each one of these ways is one more way that it is going to be used, but each one of these ways indicates something metaphorically in the Bible. If the person was branded—he was a runaway slave—that indicated ownership. If the person tattooed the name of his general on himself, it was a mark of devotion. If it was a contract that was to be sealed, it then certified those who were worthy to worship the Beast.

Then there was a fourth way in which it was used: Roman citizens, usually about once a year or so, had to take a pinch of incense and go up to a roaring fire on the altar, and they threw that pinch of incense to the Caesar on the fire, and then after that was done the priest issued to them a *charagma*—a certification that this person was a subject of Caesar. It was a form of worship.

You ought to be able to see already that the only way in which a Christian could accept any one of these would be by denying Christ regardless of the category; the person would have to deny Christ.

It is very interesting but there is no record in the ancient world of any government forcibly putting a *charagma* on its subjects. You need to think about that. In other words, we are looking at something here that was never ever done before. There were occasionally some who were marked. But they were the exception rather than the rule. They did not do it as a common practice to the ordinary subject of that nation.

Now because of the usage here in verse 16 of hand and forehead, it is very similar to the way God has used hand and forehead in other portions of the Bible. We can come to know the hand and forehead metaphorically mean something having to do with the intellect—with the mind—something received and believed; the hand has something to do with what the mind believes being carried out, that is the practice of one's life. Therefore *the mark has to do with a belief which identifies who owns them, who they worship, and who they are loyal to in practice.*

So oppressive and effective is the social and economic impact of this mark that anyone not having it will be unable to buy or sell. That is dramatic. They cannot buy or sell. And it is not that the store will refuse to accept the person's money, but that they simply would not be able to buy, because they do not have any money, because they do not have a job! “Take no thought of what you shall eat or what you shall drink,” Jesus said. The issue at the end is going to be faith—do we trust God? It is the overcomers that He is concerned about, and that He is going to respond to.

And so, as we say today, those who do not receive the mark are going to be completely and totally out of the economic loop.

Verse 17 makes it clear that the mark belongs to *the Beast*. It is the mark of *the Beast*. The Beast is the political, economic, and military power described earlier in the chapter. Let us go back a little bit. In Revelation 13:1 the beast rises up out of the sea, then the beast is described.

Revelation 13:4-6 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

So we see a blending from the Beast, which is a political power, military power, economic power, that rises up out of the great populations of the earth, and suddenly the scene shifts. The Beast has become a man—a singular human being. And the Beast becomes identified with the head of that organization.

Revelation 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

We see the same process go through where John actually begins by seeing an animal, a beast, but the image gradually shifts until the beast is a human being. Just like the beast who represents the political power, the beast who represents the ecclesiastical power begins in the image of an animal, but then becomes a human being who speaks.

Revelation 13:12-15 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

This second individual is someone who is in the shadow of the first and supporting the first one's activities.

We are not going to go into all the details identifying this beast, because they are given elsewhere, and they do not have an important part in this sermon. The second beast is the religious leader who establishes a model of human civil government within the religion which he heads, a church (that is covered in verse fourteen), and he causes all to worship the first beast—the political power—and he is the one also who causes them to receive the Beast's mark. Not the church's mark, the Beast's mark.

At the same time, this second beast is the one who causes the martyrdom of the saints, and we will see this in verse 15 where it says that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast to be killed. We will see a little bit more of this as we go on.

Revelation 6:9-11 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

Now at the time that we see in verse 11, the time chronologically, it is looking back upon former tribulations, one specific tribulation pointedly, but it is telling you and me that as the time of the end comes, as the intensity of the seals increases, that there is going to be another tribulation in which there is going to be quite a number of martyrdoms.

Again, just connect that with Revelation 13:15. It is the false prophet, the second beast, which is responsible for causing the tribulation that we read of here in verses 9 through 11—the persecution of the church.

Why are these people dying? Because they will not accept the mark! I will tell you that is a tough situation to be in. You have heard of the lady or the tiger? Well, I will tell you in one sense this is worse than the lady or the tiger, because at least the man had a fifty-fifty chance of opening the right door. But in this case, either choice presents a person with death—either

death at the hands of the Beast, or death through the plagues of God coming on those who have the mark of the Beast.

I hope that you remember the Jesus said there in Luke 21:36, "Watch and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things."

So He holds out the hope that none of us will ever be so unprepared that we have to go through this. And if we are overcoming like Revelation 2 and 3 says, and if we are applying the lessons of those parables, we are not going to have to face this. It is very unlikely.

That is really the purpose of this sermon—to urge us all on, to be prepared, to be doing now what needs to be done, so that we do not have to face this horrible situation, where either choice leads to a horrible death.

So we find, then, in Revelation 6:9-11, that another persecution on the church, another martyrdom is going to come. Those who were killed beforehand were primarily killed in the persecution, the tribulation that is spoken of there in Revelation 12:6 when the woman went off into the wilderness for a time, times, and a half of time—twelve hundred and sixty years—and that tribulation is well documented. It was carried out by the Roman Empire at the behest of the false church, and many, many people lost their lives during that period of time.

Now, what we are looking at in Revelation 6 is the great tribulation that is spoken of there in Matthew 24, and you can connect these verses to it:

Matthew 24:9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

And, we can add one more series of verses to this.

Revelation 17:6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Every one of us knows that this is a symbol of the great false church, and God is assigning the blame—the blame for the martyrdom of the saints goes on the false church, but the false church causes them to accept the mark, and then the Beast carries out the execution.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded . . .

Think about that. Is that literally telling us how people are going to be put to death? Is the guillotine going to be resurrected once again? It is not very pleasant to think about.

Revelation 20:4 . . . for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

And so the thing that brought about the death of these people was their refusal to accept the mark, and by their refusal they showed who owned them. They were owned by God, not by the Beast. But the Beast had been given the authority by God to take their lives, and God has His reasons for those.

We find, then, these people who accept the mark, they live but they have to face God's wrath. Those who reject the mark, they die, but they are in the Kingdom of God. It is a kind of a gruesome choice.

The whole context here in Revelation 13 indicates that the mark is something that is forced on people on pain of death. It is a “do or don't” situation. If you do, you live. If you do not, you die.

But these people considered that the penalty that man would impose upon them to be less important than obedience to God and what He would impose. And so we find in Revelation 14,

Revelation 14:9-10 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on 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.

The mark is something that is branded, forced upon an individual, and if they do not accept it, then they are martyred.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Those who accept the mark refused to keep God's commands. Is that plain? So whatever the mark is, it is something that involves obedience to God. And because of the way this is worded here, and I will show you other places as well, it involves one specific commandment. This is why he keeps making this statement, "The saints keep the commandments."

Revelation 15:2-3 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

What is happening here in the book of Revelation? The book, right at this point, is paralleling the saints' experience with what occurred to the Israelites in Egypt and with the Pharaoh. Pharaoh is a type of the Beast. Israel stood on the shore of the Red Sea after God parted it, and they went

through. And what did they sing? They sang a great song of praise to God, and His servant Moses, which is later expanded upon in Deuteronomy 32. God miraculously delivered them.

Now here they are standing on a symbolic sea of glass. Remember the Beast is the human civil organization of Satan the Devil; it is the one that he uses to carry out the physical aspects of his scheme. And it is through it that he will carry out his persecution of the saints.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

So again, the saints are identified and described as keeping the commands of God; they are yielding themselves to God's rule.

What are we looking at here? Satan, like God, identifies his own. And those not receiving his mark are those who are going to be the ones receiving his wrath during the tribulation because they are not his!

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

Ephesians 5:3-6 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

We are getting more specific all the time. Revelation just identifies those keep the commandments of God are going to be the ones who escape the wrath of Satan.

We are beginning to get to specific aspects of keeping the commandments and obedience—fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, covetousness; all of them part of the Ten Commandments.

Colossians 3:5-6 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

If we go further, we find in verse eight he adds to these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth, do not lie to one another, and so forth. It is so plain.

At the end there are two distinct classes of people—those who keep God's commands, and those who do not. Those who refused to keep God's commands suffer the wrath of God. Those who keep God's commands suffer the wrath of the Beast.

Let us summarize up to this point:

1. The mark signifies the rejecting and breaking of the commandments of God. The identification of the mark has to follow the biblical pattern of what the mark is. The mark signifies the rejecting, the breaking, of God's commands. We can add to this James 2:10 where it says that if a person breaks one he has broken them all.
2. The Roman Empire is the real author of the mark. Are you aware of that? Constantine made the decision. Constantine was the emperor at that council in 325 AD. The religious people—the ecclesiastical leaders—did not make the decision. Constantine made the decision that Sunday was to be the day of worship. Who carried it out? The church carried it out, but it was the mark of the Beast.
3. The church causes people to be deceived into receiving the mark.
4. It is Satan who gives the Beast its power and authority; it is the political instrument he works through.

5. Those who refuse the mark are prohibited from buying or selling.
6. Many receiving the mark will be martyred.
7. Therefore the mark is something enforced by the church, but originating in pagan Rome which Satan seizes on as a means of deceiving people into breaking God's commands and holds a direct connection to holding a job and earning a living.

This summarizes all the scriptures that we went through.

As Satan is the arch deceiver, he is a counterfeiter *par excellence*. He chose the one commandment which he could substitute as a counterfeit; one which by solely human reason alone would never be able to see the difference. He chose the one most people feel is the least of the commandments. Of course you all understand, that what he chose to counterfeit was the fourth commandment. He could not come up with a counterfeit for the others which he could impress so universally and so easily.

Have you ever run into anybody in society outside of the church of God, or some of its affiliate organizations, by that I mean like the Seventh Day Adventists, who think the day of worship really makes any difference? Most people go right along with the world, do they not? It is Sunday or nothing.

People, then, were caused to accept this by the church, and it was for not accepting Sunday as a day of worship that many during the Middle Ages were singled out and killed during the tribulation of that period time, that period of inquisition. It was the church that caused them to be killed, but it was the state that did the actual killing.

Now the church caused them to be killed by declaring them to be an anathema, that is separate from, an enemy of Jesus Christ. And whenever the church branded them as anathema, then the state, the police state, carried out its form of execution however it happened to be in whatever particular area people happen to be living.

Even during the Middle Ages it the keeping of the Sabbath became so difficult that it could virtually not be done. Now, I want you to think, how well has Satan done his job? He has done it so well that the whole Western world has accepted Sunday as the day of rest.

You go over to Europe and even the calendars have Sunday as the seventh day of the week, not Saturday, not the Sabbath, but Sunday. Clever. You know that prophecy in Daniel about, “But he shall think to change times and seasons”? Well, they thought about it, but the only thing they were able to change was the day of worship because God has preserved the seven day week on the calendar, even though they have tried over and over again to institute new calendars. But God has refused to allow them to change the rotation of seven days a week, even though they thought about it and they want to do it. But He did permit them to change the day of worship.

Turn to Exodus 31. We will not spend a great deal of time here, but a special covenant between God and His people, a covenant separate from the covenant of Exodus 20 thru 24,

Exodus 31:17 It [meaning the Sabbath] is a sign . . .

Could we say a mark, or brand? We might, but it would not really be accurate. God called it a sign. I feel that He inspired the word “sign” to be used here. And there is a reason why.

Exodus 31:17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.

God commanded a sign be accepted and used. The difference between a mark and a sign is that a mark is impressed on one, a sign is something that is voluntarily accepted. The words mark and sign in some places could be translated either way. That is why I feel that God made sure that this word was translated as sign, even as you voluntarily accept to submit yourself to God in all areas of life. It is not something that God forces on you. He calls

you, He opens your mind, He stirs you up to want to obey Him, to submit to Him, to yield to Him, and part of that is the keeping of the fourth commandment. It is something that you voluntarily accept.

Everything in Revelation 13 shows the mark being impressed under the threat of death. There is no either/or. You either take it or you do not hold a job.

God made the Sabbath, then, to identify himself to His people; that His people worship the Creator. But it also identified His people to Him.

Sunday-keeping is the day—the sign or the mark—that identifies those who are devoted to, those who worship, those who are branded, and owned by Satan the Devil.

The Sabbath was made for man. It belongs to God. He is the owner of it. But He gave it to man as a gift to keep man in the true knowledge of the true God, and to protect them from idolatry.

Turn to Exodus 13. We used this verse just a couple of weeks ago. What is He talking about in verses 8 and 9? He is talking about keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread. He is talking about keeping God's Sabbaths there.

Exodus 13:9 It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, . . .

A little bit different wording. It means exactly the same thing, only it is a sign, it is not a mark, but it is the same place on the forehead, it is in the hands.

Deuteronomy 6:1 Now this is the commandment . . .

Deuteronomy 6:6-8 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when

you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as
frontlets between your eyes.

Here it expands out from one day, one commandment, to all of them—in the mind: intellectual belief and understanding; in the hand: practice of life in carrying them out—therefore witnessing to all the world who you worship, who you are devoted to, who owns you.

So, forehead and hand are terms indicating mind and practice in reference to law. Have I made that clear? A specific law—the Ten Commandments law. So mark, or sign, both of them in reference to law. God's law, the sign. Man's mark, the Beast. So therefore the mark has something to do with law.

Now some people believe, let us say like a credit card device, something like that, I might say a similar device, that it would be the mark. Well my answer to that is, no, that is not so. The Bible says that the mark has something to do with a specific commandment of God.

I am not saying that there might not be something like a credit card, but the credit card issuing a number, or something that is issued only to you, will merely be a device to enforce the mark. It will not be the mark itself. The mark has to do with law—who owns you, who you are submissive to.

Turn to Luke 21, and we will close this off very quickly. This is Luke's version of the same prophecy that is in Matthew 24. He tells His people that they are going to be betrayed by parents and brothers, relatives and friends, and they will send some of you to your death, and you should be hated of all for my namesake but not a hair of your head shall be lost.

Luke 21:19 By your patience possess your souls.

I am going to paraphrase that so that it is more easily understandable: “By standing firm you will save yourself.” You might lose your life, but you will be in the Kingdom of God. By standing firm, you will save yourselves.

The only thing that hinders this from being impressed is that the church does not yet have enough influence to enforce the mark. But there is coming

somebody who will be able to do miraculous things, as you know other scriptures say, and at the same time it will be a person of sufficient personal charisma that people will be drawn to that person and will want to do what he says.

God's last warning to His people is in Revelation 18 where He tells them to come out of Babylon:

Revelation 18:4 ... "Come out of her, my people, . . .

That applies to you and me right now. It is a call for us to live by faith, now! Do not put it off, live now! You can look at the keeping of the Sabbath as a very simple example of what it means to live by faith. It is not hard to understand it all. Why do you keep the Sabbath rather than Sunday? Because you believe it! You believe it enough to trust God that He is right, and so it was intellectually in your mind, but you are practicing it.

It is that simple. Living by faith might be hard to do, but the principle of what to do is so simple. If God says it, do it. That is not hard, and you will be living by faith. You will be prepared, because you have shown him you trust Him. You trust His Word. Like I said, that may be hard to do, but the understanding the principle that is there is so simple.

Most of the time, the cost of doing this is going to be nothing more than the deflating of our vanity, giving up a piece of time, giving up a piece of what we formerly believed, doing something that we have never done before. But we can see that God commands, and that may humble us, but that is going to stand us in good stead. It is going to be part of the preparation. I know, I feel confident, that if we will do this, we are going to be among those that God will account as worthy to escape all these things.