
The Mark of the Beast



*L*EFT BEHIND is a fictional series based on a sensational interpretation of Bible prophecy. It speculates about the end times, teaching of a secret rapture, a seven-year period of tribulation, and the rise of an evil dictator called the Antichrist. In the eighth book of the series, the Antichrist “brands” people with a mark on their hand or forehead.

There is another bestseller, however — one that has outsold even these popular books. And it has the answers to our questions: What is the mark of the beast? How can I avoid getting it? Who is the antichrist?

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ Mark: (1) A visual symbol such as the golden arches of McDonald’s or the interlocking rings of the Olympic games. (2) An action that marks a person as a member of a group, such as (in the religious world) trips to Mecca or regular attendance at a synagogue.
- ♦ “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water...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’” (Revelation 14:7, 9, 10). Verse 7 says to worship God; verses 9 and 10 warn us not to worship the beast. The issue is one of worship—a conflict between truth and error.
- ♦ Revelation shows two groups, one worshiping the Creator and another worshiping the beast (Revelation 14:7, 9). What is the basis of true worship? “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will were they created” (Revelation 4:11). God wasn’t created, nor did He evolve. We worship Him as the Creator.
- ♦ In the Ten Commandments God gave us a memorial that points to Him specifically as the Creator—the fourth commandment. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-10). The Sabbath is a sign of our acknowledgment of God. “Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12). Seals customarily contain a name, title, and territory. Name: The Lord. Title: Creator. Territory: The heavens and the earth.

♦ "Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal [the Sabbath, a sign of faithfulness to God] of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads'" (Revelation 7:2, 3). The forehead represents the mind. Before the end of this earth, God will write His law in our hearts so that we love to obey Him instead of loving sin.

♦ Satan attacks the Sabbath because it is the seal of God's law—a reminder that He is the Creator and the only object of true worship. Daniel 7:25 prophesied that an earthly religious power would rise and would "think to change times and laws." Since the final issue of earth's history is worship, what group claims to have the authority to change God's law? A parish priest from St. Catherine's rectory wrote in 1995: "Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday...not from any directions noted in Scriptures, but from the Church's sense of its own power...People who think that the scripture should be the sole authority should logically become Seventh-day Adventists and keep Saturday holy." A document issued from the Vatican reads: "The Pope has the power to change times, to abrogate laws, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ."

♦ No church can be condemned; each individual has a conscience, and many wonderful Christians belong to all the different denominations. Each person is responsible to study, to gain knowledge about God's law and God's Word, and to follow it. We are not to judge others.

♦ Who is the beast power?

■ **The beast would be a Roman power. "And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name...Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard; his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion...The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority"** (Revelation 13:1, 2). We saw these animals before: the lion is Babylon, the bear is Medo-Persia, the leopard is Greece, and the dragon represents pagan Rome.

■ **The beast would become a worldwide religious power.** After pagan Rome fell, Constantine moved his capital to Byzantium (Constantinople), Italy, turning over his throne in Rome to Pope Sylvester 1, AD 330. "All who dwell on the earth will worship him whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

■ **The beast would be a religious power dominating civil powers. "And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation"** (Revelation 13:7). One historian wrote: "Under him was very nearly made good the Papal claim that all earthly sovereigns were merely vassals of the Roman pontiff. Almost all the kings and princes of Europe swore fealty to him as their overlord. Rome was once more the mistress of the world."

■ **The beast would be a blasphemous power. "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven"** (Revelation 13:6). Historically, the Pope has said: "We hold upon this earth the place of God almighty." "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5). "If we confess our sins, he [Jesus, not another human being] is faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

■ **The beast would be a religious power that would dominate for 1,260 years. "And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for 42 months"** (Revelation 13:5). Remember that papal

dominance began in AD 538 when Emperor Justinian's decree went into effect making the bishop of Rome head of all the churches. "And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Revelation 13:7). This period in history is filled with persecution. "And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded" (Revelation 13:3). In AD 1798 Napoleon's General Berthier entered Rome, abolished the papal government, and instituted a secular government.

■ **The beast's deadly wound would be healed. "...And his deadly wound was healed"** (Revelation 13:3). Sometime after 1798 Papal Rome would regain power. In 1929 the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran this article headlined "Mussolini and Gaspari Signed Historic Roman Pact": "The Roman question tonight was a thing of the past and the Vatican was at peace with Italy...In affixing the autographs to the memorable document healing the wound, extreme cordiality was displayed on both sides." ■ **The beast would have worldwide end-time prominence. "And all the world marveled and followed after the beast"** (Revelation 13:3).

♦ The mark of the beast must be the sign of the Roman church's authority. It must have to do with worship, since we are warned not to worship the beast but the Creator, and it must have to do with the commandments, the true worship of God's law. The seal of the commandments is the fourth commandment to rest on the Sabbath day. Thus the mark of the beast must be the opposite of keeping the Sabbath. What does the papacy claim as its sign of authority? An associate of Cardinal Gibbons wrote in 1895: "Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [from Sabbath to Sunday] was her act. And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority and power in religious matters." *The Catholic Record* of September 1, 1923 affirmed: "Sunday is our mark of authority. The church is above the Bible. And this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact."

♦ No one will receive the mark of the beast until religious legislation is passed enforcing the substitute sabbath day. Then each person will have a final choice to make about whom to worship.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

♦ **"And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand [actions] or in their foreheads [thoughts, beliefs] 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"** (Revelation 13:16, 17). "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Just between you . . . and God:

♦ It's not a matter of one day versus another; it's a matter of loyalty, which can be seen in obedience. In the conflict between good and evil, it matters very much which day you keep. The Lord who loves you asks you to remember Him by remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy—a reminder that He, and no one else, is our Creator God.