

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."*

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 156

#### THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH (continued)

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth...and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that *they should make an image to the beast*, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to *give life unto the image of the beast*, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Rev. 13:14-15).

The sole and ultimate purpose of the signs and wonders done by the beast out of the earth is that men may believe and follow the beast — the false prophet. For we read in the words of our text that by these he so *deceives* men that *dwell on the earth*, the *earth dwellers*, that is, the *carnal Christians*, that they do whatever the beast tells them to do. And who can deny that it is the manifest *blessing of God* in salvation, deliverances, healings, etc. which enables the church systems of man to *deceive* the people into truly believing that those very *systems* are ordained of God — His *church* in the earth!

And what does the beast instruct them to do? This is where we approach one of the most flagrant popular misconceptions and misrepresentations of this chapter — the mistaken notion that the false prophet makes an image either of himself, or of the first beast, and then commands men everywhere to worship that image. Nearly all commentators make this erroneous assertion, which is the result of an inexcusably careless reading of the text! Nowhere does it say that the beast *made* or *set up* an image! What it *does* say is, “*He deceiveth them that dwell on the earth...saying to **them** that dwell on the earth, that **THEY should make an image to the beast...***” Notice that the false prophet does not make the image, but that under his influence, as he speaks for the beast (human government, world system, worldly order), he entices the earth dwellers, the carnal Christians, to make such an image! Thus, it is the worldly, carnal-minded Christians who make the image, and the false prophet *causes them* to worship or pay homage to this image!

This image is everywhere in the earth today, and it is an indisputable fact that untold millions of earthly-minded, carnal Christians pay homage to this image. But let us look at how it all began. One historian has pointed out that in the early centuries of this age, as the church grew in numbers and wealth, the anointing and the anointed ministries were shoved aside, and startling developments began to take place. Bishops became influential, not as humble servants of the flock, but as powerful, authoritarian men. Dioceses and parishes were established. Ecclesiastical centralization commenced. The weapons of excommunication were forged. The festivals of the church (Easter, Christmas, etc.) were created, along the lines of pagan celebrations. Catechetical schools were created to teach the faith systematically. The formulas of baptism and the sacraments became of great importance. Costly and ornate edifices were constructed for worship. The services became ceremonialized and elaborate. Sculpture and painting were enlisted in the work of providing aids to devotion. Relics of saints and martyrs were cherished as sacred possessions. Religious observances were multiplied. The church, with its array of gaudily bedecked clergy and of imposing ceremonies, assumed much of the *stateliness* and *visible organization* and *worldly splendor* that belonged to the *heathen governmental-religious system* which it had supplanted. The church as a

*spiritual organism, the living body of Christ*, was lost sight of as its degrading role as a *powerful, controlling, state-sponsored political organization* took form. Christianity was now a pageant, a ritualism, a vain philosophy, a superstition, a formula, a powerful, dominating organization fashioned after the pagan governments of earth!

And thus, precious friend of mine, the IMAGE of the beast of the world system of man was complete! The church had become a human institution with human government, worldly wisdom, and political power — just like Rome! The divine order of God by the Spirit, could not be tolerated. What is said concerning this *image of the beast* applies to sectarianism as a whole and the human organization and carnal structures and programs and methods of all her so-called “churches.” They may differ as widely as the various systems of human governments and religions symbolized by the first beast, yet they can be represented by the single symbol of an *image* to the first beast, because they are all built upon the same general principles — are but human organizations, institutions, and systems, with sectarian names, unscriptural organization and government (boards, secretaries, presidents, committees, etc), static creeds, and unspiritual methods and practices, all contrary to the ways of the Spirit of God!

And is not this the same picture of every *organized church* in the world — including the so-called “non-denominational” denominations? Are they not all “incorporated” and “chartered” by the State (first beast)? Do they not all have a system of government patterned after the other denominations of Babylon and the business corporations of the world system? Do they not all have a “board,” “majority vote,” and an organizational structure mandated by the worldly government of man? Are their ministers not registered with the government, acting as civil servants of the government by carrying an “approved card” issued by a “state-chartered” organization so they can marry the living and bury the dead? Even if they are not, how often their lives are still tied to the beast system which controls their methods of operation. How the multitudes pay homage to the IMAGE of the beast! It is a sad fact that untold millions of Christians are more devoted to their church systems than they are to the Lord Jesus Christ. They can witness open rejection of God’s precious Word, blatant resistance to His Spirit, and the vilest profanation of His holy Name, without uttering a word of protest; but let anyone say a word against *their church*, and instantly they are aroused to the highest pitch of excitement — beast worshippers! To exalt such earth-born, man-made, carnally-controlled, unscriptural, unspiritual institutions and lead people to adore and submit to them is but a species of idolatry and rankest deception. Those who construct the “image” **are deceived**, as it is written, “*And he deceived them that dwell on the earth...saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast.*” Can you not see the mystery?

May we all be found faithful in fulfilling the ministry our Father has prepared to flow through us, whether it be teaching, preaching, gifts of the Spirit, administration, intercession, helps, or giving. These are all *spiritual ministries* that flow through those who dwell in union with Christ in the heavens of the Spirit. But let us never encapsulate these in a form or organization whose authority is conferred by the government of man. We are not a for-profit business, nor are we a non-profit organization. You will not receive a tax exemption from Caesar if you support us. Many years ago the Lord dealt with us powerfully that we should never form any kind of government-chartered religious organization, as that is but the first step into religious Babylon. The authority of all man-made, government-chartered organizations is derived from the State, as is evidenced when a minister says at a wedding, “By the authority vested in me as a minister of the gospel *and* by the state of Texas (or any other) — I pronounce you man and wife.” That preacher is able to perform a wedding as an *agent of human government* because of the ministerial credential he carries in his wallet. The Lord Jesus did not issue that credential! The government gave the authority *to the state-chartered organization* to issue that card! Its authority is not God — it is the government! The authority is from the wild beast out of the sea, the bestial world system of man! God doesn’t channel His spiritual authority through the government!

Every organized church and non-profit religious corporation is in *contract with the State* when they become “non-profit,” making the government a partner in, and grantor of, each religious corporation. It is our conviction that the kingdom of God must not be wedded to the carnal government of man, nor willfully subjected to any control of the State, for that is the spirit of the harlot. I am not a constitutional lawyer, but my knowledge both of the spiritual ways of God and the principles of human government lead me to the belief that the “chartering” by the State of a church entity is not only an abomination to God, but is patently

unconstitutional in the United States of America, and a blatant violation of the basic constitutional principle of the *separation* of Church and State. How can the Church and the State be *separated* when the Church is *chartered by the State*? And never forget — with the power to *charter* comes also the power to *control*, as some religious organizations have learned by bitter and costly experience. Cross that beast of human government and his vicious, wild nature will come out!

I cannot express this truth more powerfully than George Hawtin has done in his message on *Repentance Toward God And Faith Toward Jesus Christ*. He wrote, “Yesterday a minister sat in our parlor with whom we spoke freely of the ways of God. Before he left, he apologetically informed us that he was a member of a certain denomination, but he said with noticeable chagrin, ‘You almost have to belong to a denomination to be properly recognized by the government, to get income tax deductions, to perform marriages, and to obtain half fare on trains and buses.’ How interesting that is! Is there really something very special in the word *incorporated*, which is so proudly displayed on the official documents of every sect in the land? Have you ever considered that the word *incorporated* you so proudly display on your letterhead signifies that the system you think to be the church is in fact *incorporated* with the world system? Could Christ be a part of a thing like that since He openly declared, ‘I am not of this world?’ Was He not saying, ‘I am not of this world system?’ But you proudly display the fact that both you and your sect are openly *incorporated* with it when you should be as your Master who said, ‘I am not of this world.’ You should not partake of its systems nor in any way fall under its dominion. The true church is no more a part of this world system than Christ is a part of it. Well did He say to those about Him, ‘Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am *not* of this world’ (Jn. 8:23). Let all who long for sonship, all who would be peculiarly His, turn from all these vanities that men have devised. Let us break our connections with all that is from beneath and let us walk with Christ as pilgrims who have no continuing city in this world but who seek one to come, whose builder and maker is God.

“Let the heart of every faithful pilgrim be assured of this: Though the world is full of religious sects and denominations of every kind which blind men to truth and obscure that *holy virgin thing* which Christ called ‘My church,’ yet *His church* is in the earth, untouched, unsullied, and undefiled, a pure virgin church to be presented to Him without spot and without blemish. That church is not and never was a denomination, nor is it a sect of any kind. His church is as pure a virgin as Christ Himself. As Christ was born of a virgin undefiled and untouched by the powers of human organization or procreation, so also is the virgin church. His church is not *incorporated* with the world system. It cannot possibly be. The names of its members are written only in heaven, even in the Lamb’s book of life, founded long before the foundation of this world” — end quote.

We have endeavored to be faithful to the word of the Lord in our lives and stay clear of all Babylonish entanglements. Some precious brethren still entertain the notion that if they are not incorporated under the government they cannot function, and that without tax-exempt status the people of God will not support their ministry. That is a lie of enormous proportions! Is it the government that determines what we do in the kingdom of God, or is it the leadership of the Holy Spirit? The word of the Lord to us in this regard has been so powerful that we have been constrained to obey regardless of the cost. And it does cost, beloved, as I am sure there are those who will not give if they are unable to get tax deductions, and we ourselves must pay our taxes. But that is neither here nor there, for ultimately God is our source and if our work is His work He will see that it prospers unto that for which He has ordained it. Therefore, for the past forty-five or more years we have endeavored to “render unto Caesar the things that *are Caesar’s*, and unto God the things that *are God’s*” (Matt. 22:15-22). In my opinion *taxes* are Caesar’s — and *the ministry* is God’s! And I here and now bear record that ***great is HIS FAITHFULNESS!***

In our former days in the religious systems of man, in both thinking and actions we bore the image of the bestial system of this world. In all our religious promotions did we not think like the world, plan like the world, advertise like the world, organize like the world, promote like the world, and act like the world? Who would deny that the religious systems’ whole vision, methodology, and attitude is in accordance with the world’s system. Just as the church, following the time of Constantine, “paganized” Christianity by mingling with the worship of Christ pagan practices of idols, images, altars, incense, candles, vestments, saints (bearing the characteristics and virtues of the deposed pagan gods), Christmas, Easter, and a thousand other

things, so in our day the church systems' planning and program is all in harmony with the "spirit of this age" as they continually adapt themselves to what ever the world is doing!

Let the devil hatch rock music out of the cesspool of the demented culture of drugs and sex, and the church will immediately "Christianize" it by giving the harmonic dissonance "Christian words." They call it "Christian rock." It is not! You cannot have Christian rock any more than you can have Christian drug lords, Christian harlots, Christian thieves, or Christian liars! It is not even Christianized demonism — it is demonized Christianity! And now we have another Christianized perversion — "Christian" hip hop. The church systems are always trying to keep step with the world, appropriate to themselves the world's program, and somehow make it "Christian." It is the *image* of the beast! Let a worldly book come off the press about near-death experiences, and soon "Christian" books on near-death experiences will line the bookshelves. Let diet books become the big *money maker*, and immediately "Christian" diet books and programs will flood the market. What great *imitators* are those earth-dwellers, those carnal Christians who construct their "image" of the beast!

You see, my beloved, those who make an "image" of the bestial system of the world are not *leaders*, setting the standards for mankind, but *followers*, mimicking and adapting the world's standards and ways under the pretense of following Christ. If television talk shows is what the world is doing, then let us entertain the saints with "Christian" talk shows! These image-builders are always followers and imitators, and the "image" they construct — how much like the *beast* it looks!

God is not well pleased with the world of believers who are all too willing to proclaim the praise of God with their lips and raise their hands in seeming consecration, while they pay homage to the image of the worldly system they have created, prostituting the holy truths of God with the unholy program and methods of the world. God is *well pleased* with those who seek only His will, His ways, and His glory. God is *well pleased* with those who reject the fleeting pleasures of sin and the worthless glitter of the prestige and position of this world. God is *well pleased* with those who forsake the excitement and noise of the crowd, who abandon listening to all manner of fantastic oratory, who in their hearts are no longer entertained by man-made programs, soulish concerts, so-called Christian television shows, and carnal schemes of a church system that has forsaken the leading of the Spirit of God.

If the people of God today would stop following after preachers and personalities, turning a deaf ear to the slick advertising of unscrupulous men who love to promote themselves, if they would forget about revivals and crusades and supposed signs and wonders and begin to turn the knob of their prayer closet door, seeking not to run here and there, and do this and that, but seeking to enter into harmony with the mind of Him who worketh all things after the counsels of His own will, to do only those things they see the Father doing, to speak only those things they hear of the Father, then all the world would know that the Father is glorified in His *sons* even as He is glorified in His *Son*. Let us seek God that He might fashion our lives according to His eternal wisdom, conforming us into the *image of His Son*, so that the glorious *image of God* may be seen in us instead of the *image of the beast*!

"And he had power to *give life unto the image of the beast*, that the image of the beast should... speak..." (Rev. 13:15).

This verse reads literally, "And it was given him to give *spirit* to the image of the beast." "To give spirit" is the same as to give life. The Greek word is *pneuma* meaning "breath" or "spirit." With only one exception, in every other place in the book of Revelation where this word is used the reference is to the *Holy Spirit*. For instance, "I was in the *Spirit* on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the *Spirit* saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7; 2:29; 3:6). "And immediately I was in the *Spirit*" (Rev. 4:2). "The *spirit of life* from God entered into them" (Rev. 11:11). "Yea, saith the *Spirit*" (Rev. 14:13). "So he carried me away in the *spirit* into the wilderness..." (Rev. 17:3). "The testimony of Jesus is the *spirit* of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). "And he carried me away in the *spirit* to a great and high mountain..." (Rev. 21:19). "The *Spirit* and the bride say, Come..." (Rev. 22:17) Imparting "life" or "spirit" to the image of the beast signifies that now the life-giving ministry of the Spirit is being administrated through the image — the organization. "He had power" to give this life is in the Greek "it was given him" to give life to the image. It

is something that God cedes to him, that which he would have no power at all to do of himself. Every living body is animated by a spirit. “The body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26).

There are many organizations, including religious ones, that are dead, having no spiritual life in them at all. Political organizations, business organizations, charitable organizations, and the list goes on and on. Then there are religious organizations — Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and a thousand others that contain no spiritual life whatever, for HE who IS the LIFE has no place in them. But this image, this “Christian” image, in spite of being fashioned like unto the systems of the world, *does* possess a show of life! What many of us missed in times past is the *mixture* in this Christian beastly system. We thought this beast was *only evil, entirely a monster, totally non-Christian*, and that its appearance as “the lamb” was entirely contrived. We could not believe that he could perform any miracle that wasn’t a trick, or have any life that wasn’t demonic, or speak any word that wasn’t vile. But multitudes of the Lord’s people are in this beastly system, and there is *still* One who walks in the midst of the candlesticks! And the image speaks — proclaiming a measure of the word of the Lord. What a paradox this is! What a mystery is this!

Yet, this is not the true way of the Lord, nor is it sanctioned by the Lord. He truly condescends to meet with and bless those who call upon His name in spite of all the corruption surrounding them, but what a mixture it is! Only the Holy Spirit can teach us these things. Only the sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit can divide it, separating between *soul* and *spirit*. How we praise God that the consuming fire of His dealings and processings in the lives of all who have received the call to sonship has been kindled to THOROUGHLY PURGE AND CLEANSE OUR HEARTS from the spirit and ways and image of the beast, until once and for all we forsake all the apostasy and shame, giving ourselves wholly and only unto Christ, that He may teach us how to walk and worship and minister *in spirit and in truth*. When our minds are one with Him and all earthly tradition and program and system has vanished away and He takes His royal seat upon the throne of our hearts, then we are truly able to walk as the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Then are we led by His Spirit and can grow up into Him in all things, putting on His mind, conformed to HIS IMAGE, to be His sons and His daughters indeed! Aren’t you glad!

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, *and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed*” (Rev. 13:15).

Taken *literally* this certainly sounds ominous, and it is true that the earth has been stained by the blood of the martyrs who have been slain as “heretics” by the church systems of man, from the days of the Papacy, the Inquisitions, the Reformation, and in many lands then and now throughout the earth. Yet millions more have been slain *metaphorically*, that is, denounced, cast out, ostracized, excommunicated, anathematized, and cut off. The deeper meaning of “killed” is to be killed *spiritually*, that is, to be *condemned*. And because being condemned is signified by being killed, it speaks of all who pronounce damnation upon those who do not acknowledge the doctrine of their faith as the divine truth of God, and who condemn all who do not think as they do, and as far as they dare, they deny that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. And all this is done simply because men refuse to *worship their image* of the beast!

Consider both the image of the beast and the image of Christ. Which do you bear in your body, in your attitudes, words, actions, worship, and ministry? Ah, yes, God is forming the image, the very likeness of His Son in the lives of His called and chosen elect! We all understand that Christ is the *image of God*, the *express image* of His person; and we also understand that God is forming within us the very *image* of His Son. We know that this image of Christ is not a literal statue of wood, stone, or gold. Likewise, the image of the beast is not a literal statue as men suppose, but a *likeness* of the first beast, the beast out of the sea, the likeness of the bestial world system of man. “*Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*” It is not a natural, literal image that the earth-dwellers, the carnal Christians make, but a lifestyle, means and methods, structure, organization — and entire *system* of religion! And it is fashioned after the system of the world!

## THE MARK OF THE BEAST

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to *receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads...*” (Rev. 13:16).

For many decades and centuries God’s people have been speculating about the strange phenomenon John refers to as the “mark of the beast.” There has been an immense increase in such speculation over the past few decades as man has moved swiftly into the computer age. There has been much confusion surrounding this mark as people cast apprehensive eyes toward various events that arise — social security numbers, credit card numbers, account numbers, identification numbers, “bar code” marking systems, microchips, smaller than a grain of rice, that can now be implanted under the skin for tracking, health, or economic information, hand imaging systems, etc. — wondering if these developments portend some future hour which shall climax with a fearful “beast” or “antichrist” demanding that they take a mark, without which they cannot buy or sell, which might forever seal their doom, or else cause them to give their life in martyrdom as the price for remaining true to God.

It is a shocking marvel to see how easily Christians are deceived by the ***dead letter of the Word!*** There is nothing more carnal than the message men have preached about the antichrist and the mark of the beast. I say that it is carnal because it genders *fear*, not *perfection!* It has created a whole world full of Christians who are cowards waiting to be evacuated off to some far-off heaven somewhere instead of becoming overcomers right here upon the earth. Above all, it stresses a natural, physical concept rather than a SPIRITUAL REALITY! Most folks have the idea that the mark of the beast is the number “666” and that it will be laser tattooed or otherwise applied to, or inserted in, the right hand or the forehead. Now, it is true that there is technology available to encode a personal number for every person for tracking purposes, identification, health information, or to protect our security in financial transactions; but don’t you think that if we all get the same number, 666, it will be a bit confusing to figure out who is who and whose account is whose? Not only do people not have revelation — they simply don’t *think!* There have been multitudes of people who have lived their entire lives in fear of the mark of the beast. They died believing and fearing that some day this would come. I ask, my dear brother, my precious sister, what good did it do them to believe that? It did not bring life, deliverance, peace, joy, love, victory, overcoming power, nor any of the things men so desperately need. Without any hesitation whatever I must reiterate that this kind of literal interpretation and fear tactics ***has not added anything to our spiritual understanding,*** but has rather caused the Lord’s people to continue groping about in the dense darkness of spiritual ignorance and superstition.

It seems to me that the key to the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation is found in verse nine: “*If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear.*” Throughout the scriptures these words always accompany statements of profound ***spiritual*** significance. “It says what it means, and it means what it says!” a Bible-thumping literalist preacher will shout from his pulpit. But I beg to differ. It says what the Spirit of God says it says, and it means what the Spirit of God says it means! If the beast and his mark are to be fulfilled *literally* then one has but to read the words with natural eyes, understand them with a natural mind, interpret them with natural reason, and watch the panorama of world events to see the natural fulfillment. Any carnal-minded theologian or even an atheist, for that matter, could figure it out on that basis! But if the message is deeply *spiritual*, it will be understood only by “he that hath an ear to hear!” And so it is with this truth in mind that we have sought the Lord for an understanding of the *spiritual nature* of the *mark*, and would share with you that which has now been quickened to us. May the spirit of truth make it personally real to every heart!

The preachers have everyone looking outwardly for the mark of the beast and that’s exactly what the dragon inspires — get people to look away from the true source, from the spiritual realm, to fear inanimate objects of man’s invention. That’s the craftiness of the carnal mind — every new advance in technology, each new card, laser, or computer chip — surely one of these will be the mark of the beast imposed upon mankind! The spiritual mind understands that the mark of the beast is the mark of the second beast, the one that comes up out of the *earth*, out of the *soulical religious dimension* of man’s life. It should not be difficult to understand by this that it is, therefore, first and foremost, a *spiritual mark* — *not* an economic or political mark. The mark of the beast identifies those who have subscribed to the authority, doctrines, structure, practices, and spirit of the bestial religious orders of man. Practically every Christian living is in some way associated with, or submitted to, this wanton religious harlot who calls herself “the church.” The message of chapter thirteen of the Revelation is not, “You’d better watch out, be very careful or you will get

branded with the mark of the beast.” The message is, instead, that because of carnal-minded religion almost every believer already *bears* the mark of the beast and we must get *rid* of the mark of the beast! We must be transformed in the way we think, in the way we worship, in the way we serve, in the way we act. It’s not a matter of someone stamping, tattooing, burning, or inserting 666 on the forehead. Should the government arrest me today, knock me out with an injection, and somehow apply the numbers 666 on my forehead, there is no way under heaven that it could affect my relationship with my Father, because it would not change one iota the way I think, act, or my heart condition before God! Therefore, it cannot be an outward, physical thing! We are dealing with *spiritual realities*! You cannot examine any man or any woman physically to determine whether they have received the mark of the beast. It is impressed in the forehead or in the hand — signifying one’s *thinking* and one’s *actions*!

“Let him that hath understanding count the *number* of the beast: for it is the *number* of a man; and his *number* is six hundred threescore and six” (Rev. 13:18).

The *number* of the beast denotes the *nature* and *character* of the beast. The beastly system is ingrained in the minds of God’s people and they are so saturated with it in their very natures that they can neither think nor function apart from it. God’s name is not in their foreheads. They do not have the *mind of Christ*, but rather the distorted mind of the beast of *religion*. They are incapable of either thinking or acting outside the “box” of “going to church,” “being religious,” and “doing things” according to the carnal order of the religious systems. Someone has well said that *numbers* may not have the appeal of a modern “thriller,” nevertheless they constitute an integral part of God’s language unto man. The number of the beast is not a Greek number. It is not written with numbers as we have in English, but with Greek letters, just like Roman numerals. Each letter in the Greek alphabet has a numerical value — here the numerical value of the Greek letters given is 666. All the words in the New Testament have a numerical value. If you study Biblical numerics you will discover the perfection of the mind and wisdom of our God! The Bible is not an accident. It transcends every other book that has ever been written. No human genius could make it so finely devised!

Of all the words in the Greek New Testament there are only five words that have a numerical value of 666. There is neither time nor space to study all of these words at this time, but it is interesting to note that the very first one is used *thirteen* times — and that first word with the numerical value of 666 is the word *tradition*. Isn’t that fascinating! (The other four words are perish, side, wealth, and scattered). Jesus used this word “tradition” when He upbraided the scribes and Pharisees, saying, “*Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your **tradition***” (Mat. 15:6). While we’re waiting for the police to arrest us and tattoo a number on our forehead, or while we’re afraid it might be the bar code on our groceries, the credit card in our wallet, or a microchip under our skin, millions of the Lord’s people are willing to fight you for their religious traditions and will excommunicate you and declare you a dangerous heretic if you dare to question their time-honored traditions, dogmas, and religious myths, fables, legends, folklore, superstitions, and fairy tales! The church systems are heavy-laden with the traditions of men which have made the word of God meaningless, ineffective, and powerless. When you dare to attack their man-made traditions is when you witness the spirit of the beast rising up out of the earth! We not only want to be free from the beast, but our desire is to have erased from our minds the imagery we have of him, all the traditions in our thought processes that can only be consumed by the blazing light of HIS UNVEILING!

Another erroneous idea is that the beast *forcibly* inscribes or implants this mark up those who dwell upon the earth. Yet that is plainly not the testimony of scripture! The Greek here is quite different from the idea given in the English as to the application of this mark. Our English version says that the beast “causeth” all to “receive” a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. This might lead us to think that the mark was *forced* upon unwilling men. If you check the margins of most Bibles, or a Greek Interlinear, you will find that the original states that the false prophet “*causeth all...that they should **give themselves** a mark...*” The picture behind these words is that of masses of people cutting or burning the mark *upon themselves* as a result of the influence of the false prophet upon their minds and hearts. Oh, yes! The people *take upon themselves* this mark! This is the result of exposing themselves day after day, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, to the influence of the false prophets of the religious systems! Attending all the services, participating in all the functions, joining all the seminars, reading all the books, listening to the tapes and CD’s, watching hours of “Christian” television, like sheep led to the slaughter we yielded ourselves to the teaching, the program, the traditions, and the system, until we got all “committed” and so saturated with its

dogma, program, and ways that we could neither think nor function except in terms of established orders, denominations, non-profit corporations, boards, creeds, church buildings, programs, activities, meetings, seminaries, rituals, sacraments, ordinances, etc., etc. We *took upon ourselves* the mark, the number, the nature, the character of the bestial system!

This is what happens to *all* under the influence of the beast. John saw that he “*causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that they should give themselves a mark.*” What a word that is! It signifies classes of believers, all in the church, of whatever condition, stature, status, learning, or degree of growth and development in Christ, ALL under the influence of the beast take upon themselves his mark. Small and great — those who are babes in Christ, and those who have reached positions of ministry and power — ALL alike receive the mark! Rich and poor — those who are rich in word, gifts, abilities, and those who possess little of spiritual attainments — ALL alike receive the mark! Free and bond — those enslaved in the great and most powerful of religious systems, as well as those who are “free,” those in less controlling systems, the “come outers” and the “independents,” though they come out of Babylon, yet Babylon is still in their hearts and they at once commence to construct their own system — ALL alike bear the mark!

The particular Greek word which has been translated as “mark” in our text, is the word *charagma*. Eight times in the book of Revelation it is translated as “mark.” Its meaning is “an engraving, an impressed mark.” It is significant to note that this Greek word is from the same root from which we get the Greek word *charakter*, from which in turn comes our English word “character.” This unfolds to our understanding the true essence and quality of that which is engraved or impressed upon men — the inward thinking and outward actions which bring forth an expression of the CHARACTER formed in the image of the very source from which the mark comes. Either we will find ourselves expressing the character of God, or else the character of the beast! It signifies bearing in the manifestation of our life the very imprint and likeness either of the Spirit of God or of the bestial religious system of man. We all know how the “character of the beast” is stamped upon all the adherents of the religious systems of the world by one of the greatest brainwashing operations the world has ever known! Often by the style of their church building, by people’s dress, their ornamentation, the way a woman wears her hair, their mannerisms, speech, prayers, worship, in the unique way they pronounce certain words, or even in the way they carry their Bible one can discern which system’s mark they have taken upon themselves!

God has so dealt by His Spirit in the lives of His called and chosen elect until we have come to loathe and despise this confused and grotesque bestial religious system of man — yet we discover from time to time that even unto this day this little lamb-like beast is so subtle that it still seeks to seduce us into bearing its stamp upon our thoughts and actions. Ray Prinzing has pointed out in one of his booklets that the practices and handiwork of the carnal system, and the thinking thereof, are not overcome in one grand leap. There is a daily and continual “dying” to all the old as we take upon us the new. There is the constant hating of, and turning our backs upon the bestial system, and every phase of our soulish life, as we in turn “put on” the mind of Christ.

I want to know the Christ, the Lamb of God, not the beast with two horns like a lamb, who speaks as a dragon. I want to know not just about Him, I want to intimately and fully KNOW HIM. I want the Holy Spirit to take the things of Christ and make them real to me. Therefore I am more interested in THE FATHER’S NAME UPON MY FOREHEAD than I am in anything which belongs to the bestial system, since to bear the mark of God insures one against coming under the other (Rev. 13:8). Now Jesus came to IMPRINT OR IMPRESS HIMSELF UPON MEN! Even from the time of His first appearance He sought to have *His character* impressed upon those who followed Him. When Peter and John had healed the lame man at the gate of the temple, and addressed the multitude gathered, it is written, “*Now when they saw this boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13). Jesus came not to be just a great teacher or prophet. He came not to just forgive sins and take people to heaven. He came to IMPRINT OR IMPRESS HIS CHARACTER UPON US! Just as the influence of the beast causes men to *take upon themselves* his mark, so those who abide under the influence of the manifest presence of Christ *take upon themselves* the marks of His identity. “PUT YE ON the Lord Jesus Christ.”



Can we not see by this that God is acting to SUPERIMPOSE Himself upon us, completely saturating us, by the instrumentality of Jesus Christ. That is the glory of sonship! Both the Father's name and the mark of the beast are *superimposed* upon men. The word "superimpose" carries with it the idea of the fusion of metals, or even of unrelated elements. In some instances in this fusion, there is no definite line of demarcation left, for both the elements have completely mixed, while in other instances the fusion is there, but the elements do not mix. Today we have various alloys which are metals which have actually mixed together. But this does not always happen. We have an illustration of it in the tabernacle in the wilderness. Different elements were brought together but there was no fusion. The planks in it were all covered with gold, as were various other items and furnishings. The gold was superimposed upon the wood until only gold could be seen. The wood was completely hidden but was not mixed with the gold.

This hiding is what we are being brought to by the sealing of God, but in the end there will be the TOTAL FUSION OF GOD AND MAN. We are from both God and man, our spirit has come from the bosom of the Father, our body and soul from Adam. We are a combination of God and man! Once we were spirits superimposed upon by the life of Adam. Through redemption we are now men with God superimposed upon us through the putting on of Jesus Christ! We have not yet experienced this in its fullness, for when we do we shall have disappeared from sight and only GOD will ever be seen! "Now he that is *joined to the Lord is one spirit*." All through the ages God will so combine Himself with us through Jesus Christ that we will be ONE with Him, but only HE shall be seen!

God superimposed Himself upon us by measure when He first sealed us with the "earnest," which is the "firstfruits" of the Spirit. "*And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:3-4). "*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*" (Acts 10:44). Here the words "upon" and "on" denote SUPERIMPOSITION — upon, over. While the saints tarried, while Peter spoke the word, the Holy Spirit SUPERIMPOSED THE CHRIST upon all who were present. And now we continue on from glory to glory! Praise God, to some degree God has STAMPED THE IMPRESSION OF HIMSELF UPON US! Daily growing in grace, knowledge, wisdom, love, peace, joy, righteousness, and power we are constantly being changed by the Spirit to bear in our lives the mark, the image, the character of God! The end of the work is that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The deep cry of our heart is so wonderfully expressed in the words of the hymn:

"Oh to be like Thee, Oh to be like Thee,  
Precious Redeemer, Pure as Thou art;  
Come in Thy sweetness, Come in Thy fullness,  
STAMP Thine own image — deep on my heart!"

I am blessed by the following words from the pen of John Macbeath. "Christ's influence is attractive; it is authoritative, and *it is assimilative*. In the days of his strenuous apostleship Paul declined the counsels of his friends and claimed the right to tread the appointed road: '*From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*.'" What these marks were we cannot precisely tell. It is certain that he bore traces of weariness and suffering for Christ's sake. Imprisonment, persecution, torture, left their marks upon a life prematurely old. All sorts of marks are branded on our lives; worry and care carve their wrinkles on the brow; poverty, toil, dissipation stamp their seal upon our nature; self-indulgence and evil passion leave their mark somewhere, and the mark will not always hide. Purity, refinement, high-mindedness inscribe their form upon our lives. The thing that masters us, in some inscrutable way discloses its mastery to the world. Paul was attested by the marks of Christ. They were possibly the scars a cruel world had inflicted, but to him they affirmed the ownership of Christ, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

"But there are other marks, the marks of likeness, traces of resemblance, evidence that we are being 'changed into the same image.' Divine dream and human hope meet here! God's high purpose is that His people should be 'conformed to the image of His Son.' This is sure evidence that human hopes are justified and destined to fulfillment. 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness,' urges one who, waking morning by morning, endeavored every day to bring his life nearer to the Divine likeness and yearned for the satisfaction that could only come with perfect resemblance" — end quote.

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY