

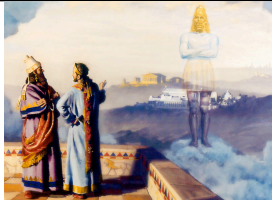
18 – Forever Marked



How to Avoid Receiving the Mark of the Beast



Back in Daniel chapter two, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a strange dream. He saw a great metal image.



When he awoke he wasn't able remember what it was, but Daniel revealed to him not only its meaning but the dream itself. Nebuchadnezzar could think of nothing else! After all, he was the head of gold! His kingdom stood unrivaled in the world.



He became defiant and ordered his servants to make a statue all of gold. Not just the head, but the entire body! It was the king's way of signifying to the world that his kingdom would last forever. It was also his way of defying the prophecy God had given through Daniel.



On an appointed day thousands of important dignitaries in the king's empire assembled to witness the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold.



Suddenly a hush fell over the vast crowd. The king's spokesman instructed that when the music began to play all were to bow down and worship the image the king had set up. A warning was given that those who refused to worship would be thrown into a fiery furnace.



The music sounded. All the people fell down and worshiped the image. Well—almost all the people.



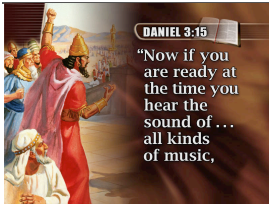
In the vast kneeling throng stood Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—three Hebrews who refused to disobey God by bowing and worshipping an idol. Word soon reached the King. Furious that anyone should dare defy his direct command, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the offenders to be brought before him.

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As the king looked at the three Hebrews, he recognized them at once.

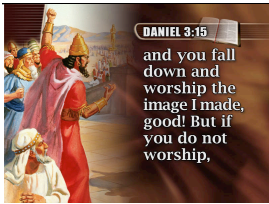
They were extraordinary young men with great intelligence and many talents. He decided to give them another chance.



DANIEL 3:15
“Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of ... all kinds of music,

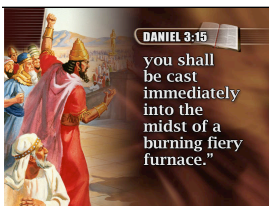
(Text: Daniel 3:15)

“Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of ... all kinds of music,



DANIEL 3:15
and you fall down and worship the image I made, good! But if you do not worship,

and you fall down and worship the image I made, good! But if you do not worship,



DANIEL 3:15
you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Daniel 3:15.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could see the flames from the huge furnace. There could be no doubt about the king’s intention.

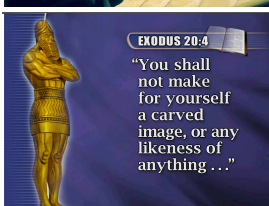
What should they do?



Should they disobey the king, and live, or disobey a direct command of God, and die? What would you have done? Oh, it would have been easy to rationalize that it wouldn’t hurt just once to bow to an idol under such circumstances. After all, their lives were at stake! Shouldn’t they show respect for the king?



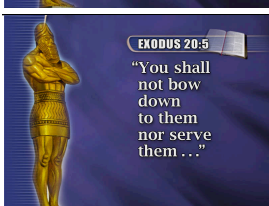
Evidently such thoughts never crossed their minds, for they had been taught God’s commandments from childhood, and one of those commands said,



EXODUS 20:4
“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything ...”

(Text: Exodus 20:4, 5)

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything...



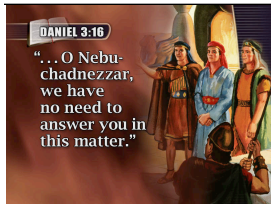
EXODUS 20:5
“You shall not bow down to them nor serve them ...”

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them...”

Exodus 20:4, 5.

Calmly and without hesitation came their reply:

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(Text: Daniel 3:16-18)

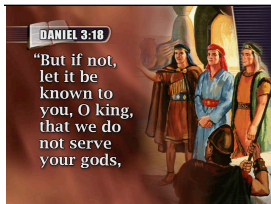
“...O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.



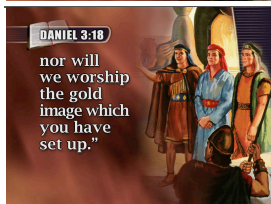
If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,



and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.



But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods,



nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”
Daniel 3:16-18.

The king was furious!



He commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be bound and thrown into the fiery furnace.

The fire was so intense that the soldiers who threw the three young men in the furnace fell back dead.

What an amazing story!



Did you know that this fascinating story is also a type, or prophecy, of another great test yet to come to God’s people? In the book of Revelation the prophet John uses the imagery from Daniel chapter three to describe what is going to happen at the very end of time.

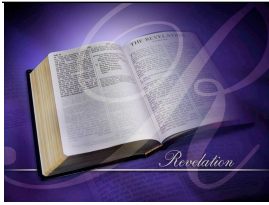


Like the three Hebrews, everyone living during earth’s last hours will be faced with a similar choice!

A choice that will forever seal their destiny! A choice once again involving a counterfeit. A choice regarding worship. A choice

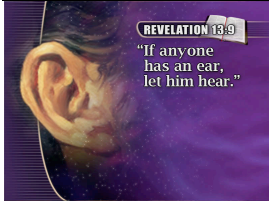
about obeying God even if it costs them their lives.

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Perhaps the most serious warning ever to be given to earth's inhabitants is warning them about this choice. Evidently God considers this message to be vitally important, for He said:

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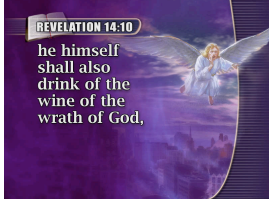
(Text: Revelation 13:9)
“If any man has an ear, let him hear.”
Revelation 13:9.
We must listen to this most urgent message!

26



(Text: Revelation 14:9, 10)
“...If any one worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

27



he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God,

28



which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.

29



He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”
Revelation 14:9, 10.

30



According to Bible prophecy, at the very end of time, earth's inhabitants will be divided into two groups: those who are loyal to God and obey His commandments, and those who worship the beast and receive his mark.

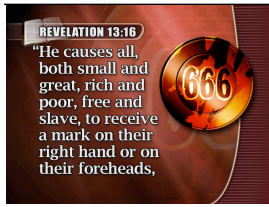
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Intense pressure will be brought to bear on those who refuse to worship the beast or receive his mark.

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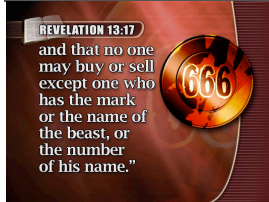
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(Text: Revelation 13:16, 17)

“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,

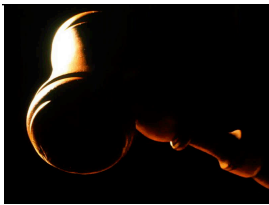
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and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

Revelation 13:16, 17.

34



Eventually, a decree will be passed condemning to death those who refuse to worship the beast and his image.

35



(Text: Revelation 13:15)

Of the second beast of Revelation, the Bible says: “He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak

36



and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

Revelation 13:15.

37



Man says, “If you do not worship the beast, we will not buy anything from you or sell anything to you, and eventually we will kill you.”

38



God says, “If you worship the beast, you will receive the wine of the wrath of God.”

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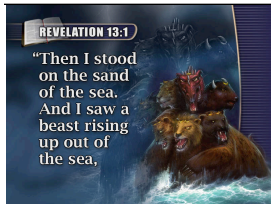
Every person on earth will be faced with the most difficult decision they have ever had to make.



But God would not allow these things to happen without warning His people! In the book of Revelation we find the clues to understanding what this power is and how it will seek to counterfeit the worship of God.

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(Text: Revelation 13:1-8)

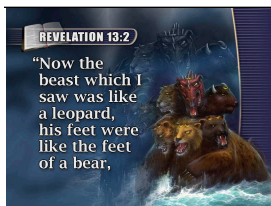
The disciple John wrote: “Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea,



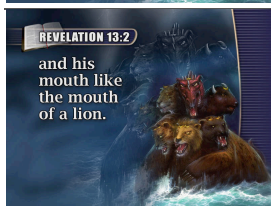
having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns,



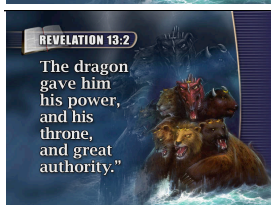
and on his heads a blasphemous name.



Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear,

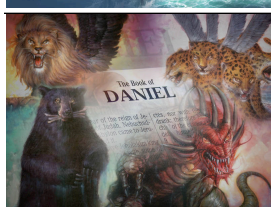


and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.



The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.”

Revelation 13:1, 2.



What could such a beast symbolize?

Daniel 7 taught us that beasts represent kingdoms or ruling powers. Here in Revelation, we find pictured something truly spectacular—a composite beast made up of all four of Daniel’s

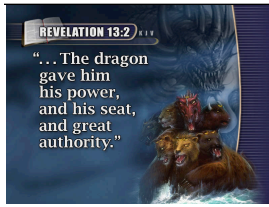
great beasts!



The beast of Revelation 13 is a power that inherits characteristics of all four of these great world empires.

Speaking of this beast, John wrote,

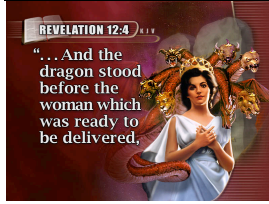
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(Text: Revelation 13:2)

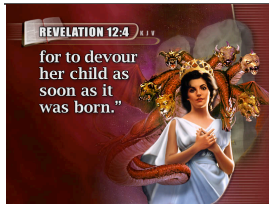
“The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”
Revelation 13:2.

We find that in Revelation the term “dragon” represents both Satan and the great dreadful “beast” he worked through – Rome.



(Text: Revelation 12:4)

Speaking of the devil’s attempt to kill Jesus soon after His birth, Revelation says: “And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered,

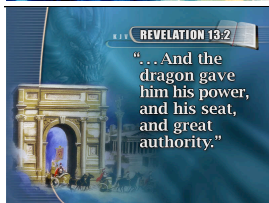


for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Revelation 12:4.

Of course it was through Herod the Great that Satan tried to accomplish this. He decreed that all male infants in Bethlehem, up to the age of two, should be killed! Baby Jesus narrowly escaped Bethlehem’s tragic bloodshed.

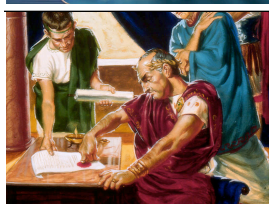


Here we see Satan working through the Roman Empire. The prophecy further predicted that this power, pagan Rome, would



(Text: Revelation 13:2)

give its “power,” its “seat,” and “great authority” to the beast. Did pagan Rome fulfill this prophecy? And if so, to whom was it given?

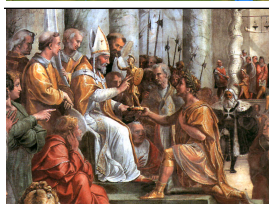


For many centuries, the Roman church used a document entitled “The Donation of Constantine” to prove its right to the city of Rome. This document, later proven to be a forgery, gave them claim to the church’s right to rule Western Rome, both politically and religiously.

This document was the basis used to justify their power as a kingdom, with the pope as the king.



In A.D. 330, Constantine moved his capitol to Byzantium and changed the name of the city to Constantinople. When Constantine left Rome he gave his seat to the bishop of Rome.



The Bishop of Rome became the head of the church, as well as a king upon a throne.

A union of church and state resulted, with the church ruling over the state.

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Vatican City lies in the middle of Rome, the city that was the seat of the old Roman Empire.

The Roman church continues there even today, not only as a religious power but as a political power as well. Almost every nation of the world sends ambassadors to the Vatican.



It is very important to keep in mind that the prophecy is talking about an organization, or a system of theology. It is not singling out individuals! There are great numbers of sincere people who worship God but do not yet know what you are learning today from Bible prophecy about this power.



A close study of the identifying marks of the first beast power in Revelation 13 makes it clear that it is the same power as was symbolized by the little horn of Daniel 7, which we have already studied.

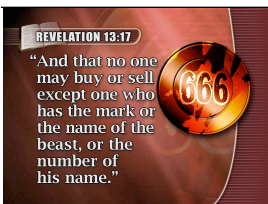


The prophet John predicted that this beast power would have a distinguishing mark and that it would try to force it upon everyone in the world!



(Text: Revelation 13:16, 17)

“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:

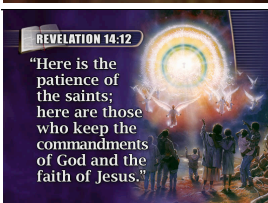


and that no one may buy or sell, except one who has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:16, 17.



According to God’s Word, this mark must be a symbol of rebellion or disloyalty to the government of God.

The Bible clearly predicts there will be a group who will not receive the mark of the beast.



(Text: Revelation 14:12)

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

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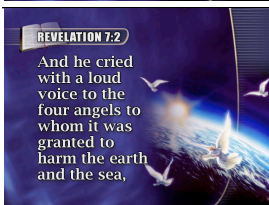
Make no mistake, the great issue to which this world is coming will center on obedience to the commandments of God! One group of people receives the mark of the beast, while the other is loyal and true to God by keeping all His commandments and maintaining faith in Jesus.



God's people will also receive a mark, but it will be God's mark, God's seal. It will be placed on the foreheads of His followers.



(Text: Revelation 7:2, 3)
“Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal 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,



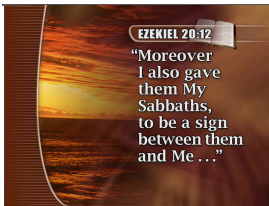
saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees,



till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
Revelation 7:2, 3.

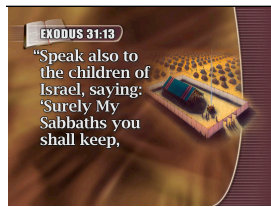


I want that seal, don't you?
Nothing is more important than that.
The final conflict of world history is over the seal of God or the mark of the beast. It's between God's sign and a counterfeit sign.
When we discover God's seal, or mark, it will be easy to discover the counterfeit mark that the beast power will enforce.
God tells us what His sign or seal is:



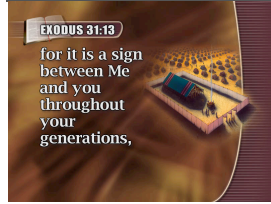
(Text: Ezekiel 20:12)
“Moreover I also gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me...”
Ezekiel 20:12.

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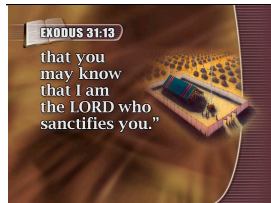
(Text: Exodus 31:13)
Again, God says, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep,

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for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations,

74



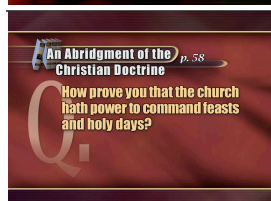
that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.”
Exodus 31:13.

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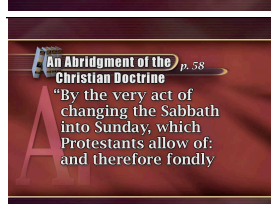
God said that the Sabbath is His sign or mark of authority.
What does the beast power say is the mark of its authority?

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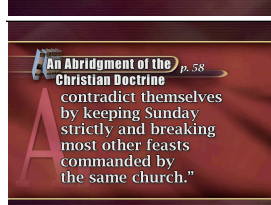
The following quotation is taken from a Catholic catechism:
“QUESTION: How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

77



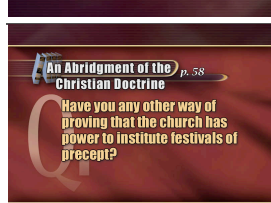
“ANSWER: By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly

78



contradict themselves by keeping Sunday strictly and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

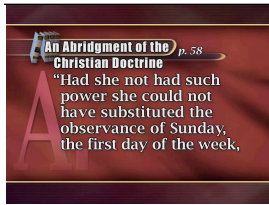
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“QUESTION: Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?

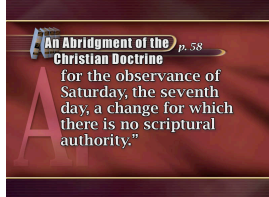
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“ANSWER: Had she not had such power she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week,

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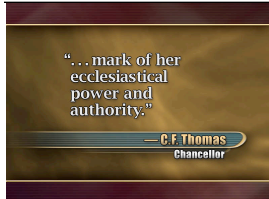
for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no scriptural authority.”
–*An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine*, Henry Tuberville, p. 58.

82



Sunday worship is the mark of the Roman Church’s religious authority, according to her own testimony. She readily admits that she changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, and further,

83



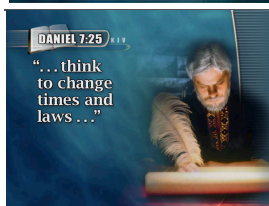
she says this act is the “mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority.” (*Letter from C.F. Thomas, Chancellor to Cardinal Gibbons*, October 28, 1895.)

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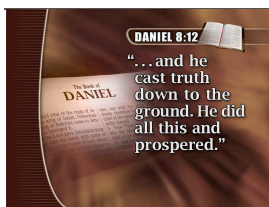
The Roman Church challenges Protestants to show why they have desecrated God’s day and turned from the Bible Sabbath to follow a day that was instituted by custom, tradition, and the church of Rome.

85



(Text: Daniel 7:25)
Remember that Daniel predicted that this beast power would “...think to change times and laws...”
Daniel 7:25.

86



(Text: Daniel 8:12)
He also predicted that this power would cast “...the truth to the ground. He did all this and prospered.” Daniel 8:12

87



Yes, friends, John the Revelator is seeing the same power that Daniel of old had written about. John sees a time in the future when again there will be coerced religion, and forced worship. Only this time it will not be a golden image on the plain of Durah, it will be a requirement to worship on a counterfeit day.

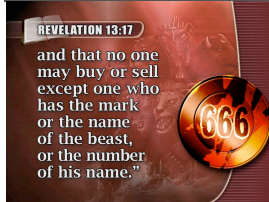
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(Text: Revelation 13:16, 17)

“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,

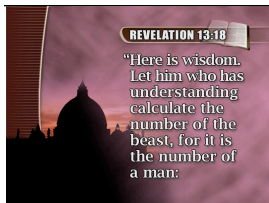


and that no man may buy or sell, except one that has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

Revelation 13:16, 17.

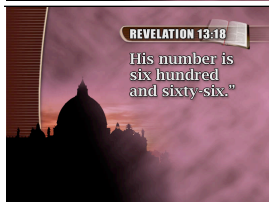


In order for this power to fulfill all of this prophecy, it will have to use the power of civil governments to enforce its mark of authority. In the middle ages, a union between church and state existed, and this power will create a replica, or image, of that medieval beast! Notice another identifying sign:



(Text: Revelation 13:18)

“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man:



His number is 666.”

Revelation 13:18.

Let’s be clear: the Bible doesn’t call 666 the mark of the beast, even though many think it does. The Bible says that it is the

“number of a man.”



Perhaps more than any other kingdom in history, the Roman church has been symbolized by one man, one office. The chief pontiff, or ruler, of the church is the Pope or Rome. Again, we must be clear, the Bible is here speaking about a system, an office, not an individual person.



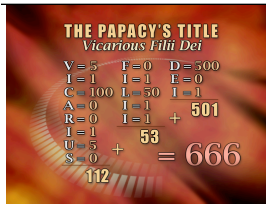
One of the pope’s titles is Vicarius Filii Dei, meaning “Vicar of the Son of God,”

In the ancient world, letters had numerical value as well. For

example, we still refer to “Roman Numerals” as a way of writing

numbers with letters. If we tally the numerical values of the pope’s title we find a surprising result!

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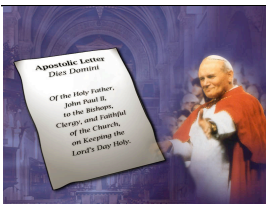


The numerical values of the Latin letters is easy to calculate
 Vicarius Filii Dei
 Vicarius 5,1,100,0,0,1,5,0 = 112
 Filii 0,1,50,1,1 = 53
 Dei 500 0 1 = 501
 =666

This by itself doesn't prove the papacy to be the subject of this prophecy. But with all of the other unmistakable clues it adds to the certainty of our conclusion!



We can see that the time is coming and is not far distant, when everyone will be required to keep the first day of the week in direct violation of the command of God!



A directive entitled: “Apostolic Letter, Dies Domini, of the Holy Father, John Paul II, to the Bishops, Clergy, and Faithful of the Church, on keeping the Lord’s Day Holy,” was sent out to church leaders admonishing them to press for the keeping of Sunday as a time of rest and worship.

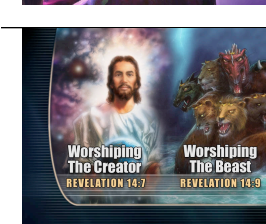
Could it be that this well-intentioned letter is setting the stage for laws favoring Sunday observance rather than the Bible Sabbath?



The letter even goes so far as to suggest that they should work toward civil legislation to make it a reality.
 Does that sound familiar?
 It is just as the prophecy says!



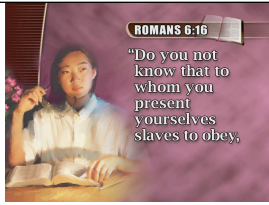
A question that many people ask is, “Does anyone have the mark of the beast now?”
 No, not a single person has the mark of the beast yet.



When the mark of the beast is enforced by civil law, every person must then choose between allegiance to God by keeping the Sabbath according to the commandments of God—or allegiance to the beast by keeping the day substituted by man’s authority.
 Then, and only then, will anyone receive the mark of the beast!

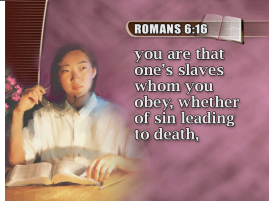
To every soul will come the crucial test: Shall I obey God or shall I obey man?
 It is not just a matter of days.
 It is a matter of masters!

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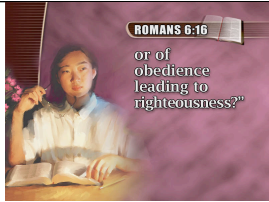
102

(Text: Romans 6:16)
Paul wrote: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey,



103

you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death,



104

or of obedience leading to righteousness?"
Romans 6:16.

A most solemn moment will soon face every inhabitant on Earth. No one will be able to buy or sell who does not have the mark of the beast.



105

First comes a boycott, then the death decree.
And for those who receive the mark of the beast, the seven last plagues.

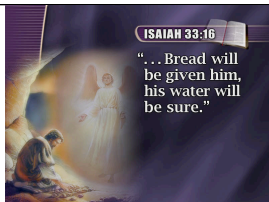
Do you see why this issue is so important?
Why it is a life and death matter?

Why it is so vital that we choose now to honor God?



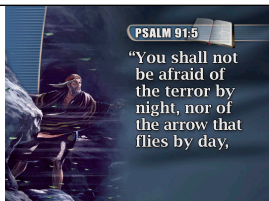
106

There is good news for those who choose to honor God and receive His seal. They may not be able to buy or sell, but God says,



107

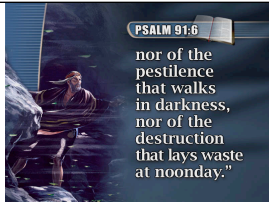
(Text: Isaiah 33:16)
"Bread will be given him; his water will be sure."
Isaiah 33:16.



108

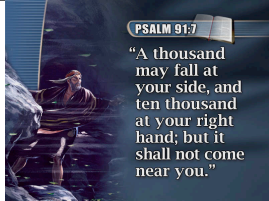
(Text: Psalm 91:5-8)
And concerning the plagues to be poured out upon the earth, God promises: "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,

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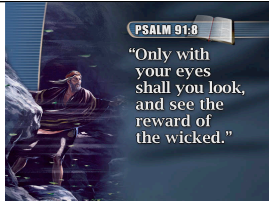
109

nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.



110

A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.

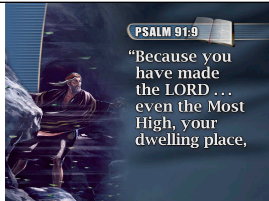


111

Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.”

Psalm 91:5-8

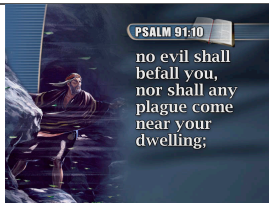
And, as if you might still wonder what will happen, the Bible says,



112

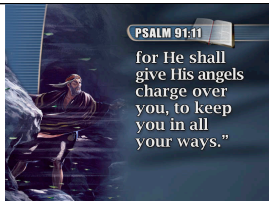
(Text: Psalm 91:9-11)

“Because you have made the Lord ...even the Most High dwelling place,



113

no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

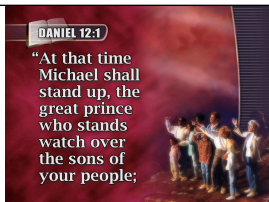


114

for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

Psalm 91:9-11.

But God gives a wonderful promise to those who choose to follow Him:

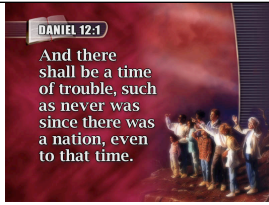


115

(Text: Daniel 12:1)

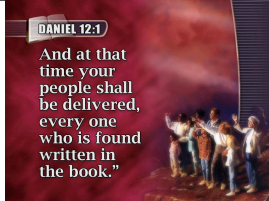
“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people.

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116

And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.



117

And at that time your people shall be delivered. Everyone who is found written in the book.”

Daniel 12:1.

Yes, my friends, God’s people will be delivered. Remember the story of the three Hebrew boys in ancient Babylon?



For obeying God instead of man, for worshiping God instead of Babylon’s image, those three boys were thrown into the fiery furnace. The heat was so severe it even killed the soldiers who threw them into the flames. King Nebuchadnezzar must have been satisfied. Those who dared defy his orders had been destroyed.



Then suddenly, the king was on his feet staring at the opening of the furnace. He shouted to his advisors that he saw four men walking around in the flames and that the fourth one looked like the Son of God!



No, the king wasn’t just imagining things. He had been allowed to see with his own eyes that God takes care of His own. God was with the three Hebrews in the flames. He is always with those who are persecuted for His name’s sake.



The fire of the furnace had not hurt God’s faithful followers. The flames had only consumed the ropes that bound them! So in the last days God will deliver His people from even the persecution of spiritual Babylon!

Notice how John describes those who follow Jesus and His truth:

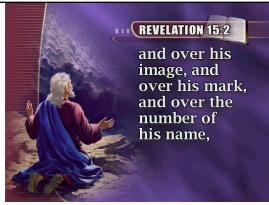


122

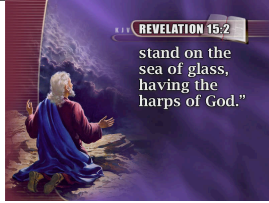
(Text: Revelation 15:2)

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast,

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and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name,



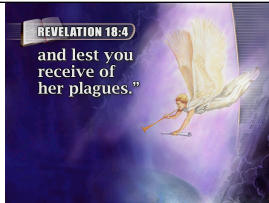
stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.”
Revelation 15:2.

Even now, God is pleading with His true followers to step out of the counterfeit religious systems to follow Him completely. Calling to His children still in spiritual Babylon He says:



(Text: Revelation 18:4)

“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins,



and lest you receive of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4.



It costs something to choose to follow God. But Jesus promises to be with you. He promises to deliver you. He simply asks you to choose. He asks you to choose who you will follow. Won't you follow Him, my friend? Won't you choose His word, His commandments, over the traditions and urgings of man?



God through His Holy Spirit has been speaking to you through these meetings. He is making his last call to a dying world to get ready for the Second Coming of His Son. Another image is coming. Another sign of allegiance, another test on penalty of death. But if there's anything clear about these prophecies, it is that there will also again be men and women, like the three Hebrews, who will stand fearlessly and faithfully for the Savior they love. God will point to them as evidence that not everyone has bowed to the spiritual confusion of the devil's deceptions. God will say,

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(Text: Revelation 14:12)

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Revelation 14:12.



I want to be in that group of people. What about you, my friend? Do you want to be among those found worshipping the Savior when He returns? Do you want to receive His mark, because you're worshipping Him as He asks?

If this is your desire this evening, please kneel with me as we have a word of prayer.

[Suggested Prayer]

"Dear Father in Heaven, Tonight we have studied a serious topic. We've looked at one of the sternest warnings in all of scripture. Lord we know that these truths sometimes cut close to our hearts. We know that if the devil's counterfeits weren't close to the true, he wouldn't deceive nearly the entire world. And so tonight we come to you asking for your help. We need your grace and your Spirit to guide and strengthen us as we follow you. We want to obey you and not man, we want to receive your seal in our foreheads, not the mark of the beast. Tonight we ask you to make us a part of your commandment-keeping people. We ask that when you come again you will be able to recognize us as your own. We pray that you will be able to point to each of us and say, "Here is the endurance, the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." May this be our experience by your grace, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen."