

# ***A Contrast of Two Marks***

## ***The Seal of the Living God vs. the Mark of the Beast***

### **Introduction [Ron]**

#### **Introduction [Greg]**

If we're attentive to what John wrote in Revelation, we'll see a clear contrast between two marks that people receive on their foreheads in the end times. Notice that the two marks are distinguished from one another in the span of just four verses (13:16-14:1).

Last week our lesson consisted of an overview of the **three series of seven**: seals, trumpets, and bowls. Revelation teaches about these events—mostly judgments—between chapters 6 and 16. The portions of Revelation that most directly address the two marks are found in the “white space” where John takes a break from describing the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

The 144,000 servants of God are said to be **sealed**. What was the cultural significance of a seal in biblical times? From ancient times, and thus in both the Old and New Testaments, seals have conveyed notions of authority, authenticity, identity, ownership, mystery, worthiness, and preservation (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 766). **Some equivalents** in our culture might be watermarks, law enforcement badges, tamper-proof seals, driver's licenses, and company logos.

The 144,000 and the followers of the beast each bear their mark on their **foreheads**. What kind of symbolic meaning does this convey? The Scriptures refer to the forehead most often “as a place where one wears an identifying mark, either literal or figurative. . . . In apocalyptic visions, people's foreheads receive marks of identity, either good (sometimes for purposes of protection) or bad . . .” (299). An example of a figurative mark is found in Ezekiel 9:3-7. In this text the inhabitants of Jerusalem who are marked on their foreheads are protected from the outbreak of God's judgment on the city.

### **The 144,000 [Ron]**

#### **Who Bears the Mark of the Beast? [Greg]**

##### **Nature of the Mark**

*Marked on the right hand or forehead with the beast's name or number (13:16-18; 14:9; 14:11; 20:4)*

### **Revelation 13:16-18**

16 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, 17 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.

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 14:9**

9 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,

### **Revelation 14:11**

11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

### **Revelation 20:4**

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 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.

## **Object of Attention and Worship**

*The beast (13:4; 13:8; 13:12-15)*

### **Revelation 13:4**

4 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?"

### **Revelation 13:8**

8 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 13:12-15

12 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. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 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. 15 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.

## Characteristics

*The majority of the earth's population (13:3; 13:8)*

## Revelation 13:3

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

## Revelation 13:8

8 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.

**those who dwell on earth** »» "Those who dwell on the earth" are apparently the mass of the world's inhabitants who are not followers of the Lamb (3:10; 13:8; 17:8). They will marvel at the beast's appearance (17:8) and will be deceived into worshiping him (13:8, 12, 14). Furthermore, they will liaise with the great prostitute (17:2). Unlike the spiritually victorious of Philadelphia, and presumably other conquerors, they are destined for "trial" (*peirasmós*) (3:10). They will be judged for martyring Christ's followers (6:9-10) and will be subject to the trumpet judgments (8:13). They will endure torments inflicted by the two witnesses, and will celebrate when the latter die (11:9-10).

*A group that excludes those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8)*

## Revelation 13:8

8 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.

*Deceived by another beast/the false prophet (13:11-14; 19:20)*

### **Revelation 13:11-14**

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. 12 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. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 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.

### **Revelation 19:20**

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

## **The Fate of the Sealed in the End Times [Ron]**

### **What Is the Fate of Those Who Bear the Mark of the Beast? [Greg]**

#### **Fate in the End Times**

*Avoid persecution and risk of execution at the hands of the beast (13:7-8; 13:15-17)*

### **Revelation 13:7-8**

7 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. 8 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 13:15-17**

15 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. 16 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, 17 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.

*Targeted by certain divine judgments (16:2)*

### **Revelation 16:2**

2 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.

*Excluded from Christ's thousand-year reign (20:4)*

### **Revelation 20:4**

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 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.

### **Eternal Destiny**

*Tormented with fire and sulfur—suffering the wrath of God in the lake of fire (14:9-11; cf. 20:10)*

### **Revelation 14:9-11**

9 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, 10 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. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

### **Revelation 20:10**

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

## **Conclusion, Part 1 [Ron]**

## Conclusion, Part 2: What Does It Mean to Bear the Mark of the Beast? [Greg]

### Essential Meaning

*Symbolizes an unbeliever's rejection of God's authority through worship of an impostor, justifying his/her eternal condemnation (14:9-11)*

### Revelation 14:9-11

9 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, 10 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. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

### Points of Controversy

Who or what is the beast? Beyond the spiritual dimensions of being a beast-follower, is there some physical token of this identity? What is the significance of the number 666?

### Source Quoted

Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.