

The Head Or The Hand?

Conrad Baker

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The Mark On Every Man?

The Mark of the Beast is introduced in Revelation 13 where the great crisis that confronts the people of God before the Second Advent is brought to view. In Revelation 14 are the Three Angels' Messages, the last message of God to the world before the return of Christ. The third angel declares:

“If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead or his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of-God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation and 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.

This fearful warning, the most awful in all scripture, is given to the last generation of the world, the generation that will be guilty of worshipping the beast and his image and receiving his mark. Now our God is a very reasonable God, and he would not issue such a threat if we did not understand what the mark of the beast is. There are too many who claim that no one else knows what this mark is. Many say that they do not understand Revelation and they claim that no one else understands it. If that were true, then this warning that God gives to the last generation off earth would all be in vain. Therefore, we must be able to understand what the mark is. The invitation to God's people is to “seek and ye shall find”, and when we search the book of Revelation we are able to find the answer.

Who is the beast of Revelation 13:1-10? In a previous chapter this question has been fully answered. (1) A beast represents a kingdom.

In Revelation 13 there are at least fifteen points that identify this kingdom. Down through the centuries most Christian scholars have been agreed that this beast represents only one power, and that is the Papacy. Every single point fits and no other power in all history begins to fit the specifications. Among other things, the Revelator speaks of the mark of the beast, the mark of Rome, which will become a sign of submission on the part of the majority of the earth. It is very important, therefore, to discover what the mark is.

“He causes [compels] all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads and that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark.” Revelation 13:16, 17.

In the coming crisis, this mark will be enforced upon all, and any who will not comply, will be boycotted or persecuted. This mark will be enforced by law. Therefore it is important that we understand what the mark is, that we might know what to do about it, how to make preparation, and how to escape when the great crisis comes.

What then, is Rome's mark? Let us go back in history to the time of the Reformation. The Protestant Reformation was a marvelous event. The eyes of millions of people were opened to the truth of God when they heard the Word of God. What blessing and joy it brought to millions. The motto of the Reformers was, “the Bible and the Bible only”. This was their stand, this is what they preached, “the Bible and the Bible only”. At that time this concept was like a bomb amid the Papacy. It shook the Church of Rome to her foundations, and as a result of this preaching, millions of people left Mother Church. The Reformation,

with its stand of “the Bible and the Bible only”, hung like a menacing cloud over the church of Rome and forced her to do something about it.

In response there was mounted what is known as the great Counter Reformation. The leaders of this reaction were the Jesuits. They were especially formed to counter the Reformation and to destroy Protestantism. It is important to remember this, for this is still the purpose of the Jesuits and sadly they have well nigh succeeded.

To aid in the accomplishment of the Counter Reformation, a great church council was called, The Council of Trent, from 1545-1563. This was the greatest council conducted to that time by the Church of Rome. It lasted for eighteen years, not continuously, and its purpose was to find a way to weather the storm of Protestantism. Authorities have admitted that The Council of Trent was the greatest council of the Roman Catholic Church.

The main issue was whether the church was to stick to tradition, as it had done through the years, or to turn to the Bible and the Bible only, with which Protestantism was rocking the world. Rome, with her stand on tradition, was losing out; there was a move therefore to return to the Bible. Year after year this council continued with this weighty discussion and debate, in order that Rome might know what to do in her desperate situation. Must she alter her position and admit that Protestantism was right? Could tradition stand? Finally at the end of the eighteen-year council, the church of Rome made her decision. The Schaff-Hertzog Encyclopedia on the Council of Trent, says,

“From a doctrinal and disciplinary point of view it was the most important council in the history of the Roman Church, fixing her distinctive faith and practice in relation to the Protestant evangelical churches.” (2)

Thus the church of Rome made her momentous decision. Would she accept the Bible and the Bible only? Would she stick to her tradition? Finally she made her decision. She would stick to tradition. Cardinal Pole, the Papal legate, declared at that time:

“Our beliefs and our worship in their entirety depend upon tradition. “ (3)
Nampon, writing on Catholic doctrine as defined by the Council of Trent, said,
“‘Tradition, not scripture,’ Lessing says, ‘is the rock on which the Church of Jesus Christ is built.’ (3a)

The Reverend J. Faa di Bruno wrote,
“Like two sacred rivers flowing from Paradise, the Bible and divine tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gem of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are of equal sacredness, still, of the two, tradition is to us more clear and safe.” (4)

J. H. Holtzman, in referring to the Council of Trent, declared:
“Finally at the last opening session on the 18th January, 1562, in the Council of Trent, their last scruple was set aside, The Archbishop of Reggio made a speech in which he openly declared that ‘tradition stood above scripture.’ (5)

That was the stand of the church of Rome. Collier declared,
“Without tradition we could not prove that the Old any more than the New Testament contains the Word of God.”
“Tradition, not Scripture, is the rock on which the church of Jesus Christ is built.” (6)

This momentous decision was made by this impressive council when the Church of Rome was in her crucial hour. What was it that led Rome to take her stand on tradition and reject Scripture as the sole authority? What weighty evidence was it that made Rome decide for tradition? What were the overwhelming facts that carried the day? What were the indisputable points that convinced this great council?

What unquestionable authority was brought to light, to bolster her stand that it was tradition and not Scripture? Notice again the words of J. H. Holtzman,

“Finally, at the last opening session of the 18th January, 1562, their last scruples were set aside. The Archbishop of Reggio made a speech in which he openly declared that tradition stood above scripture. The authority of the church therefore, could not be bound to the authority of the scriptures.”

Why? Notice carefully,

“Because the church had changed Sabbath into Sunday, not by command of Christ but by its own authority.” (7)

There is Rome’s reply. The fact that carried the day, the overwhelming evidence that convinced that great assembly in the hour of its crisis, that it could still stick to tradition and reject the stand of the Protestants, was the fact that she, of her own authority, had changed a plain command of God. She had changed the Sabbath from the seventh day, to the first day of the week. The change of the Sabbath was the evidence of her authority.

It is very significant to notice that at the time of the Protestant Reformation, there were many disputes between the Protestants and the Catholics. There is one debate in particular in which Luther engaged Dr. Eck at Leipzig. This particular debate Luther did not win. Why? It was because of the challenge that Dr. Eck issued to Luther. Dr. Eck declared:

“The church has had power to change the Sabbath of the Bible into Sunday. If you turn from the church to the Scriptures alone, then you must keep the Sabbath which has been kept from the beginning of the world.”(8)

Luther had no satisfactory answer to that challenge. If Rome changed the Sabbath as she claims, of her own authority, then Protestants who claim to go by the Bible only, are in error in observing Sunday. The Lutheran church in its official confession of faith admits this. Notice the admission in the Augsburg confession.

“Attention is hereby drawn to the fact, that the Sabbath has been changed to the Sunday, contrary to the ten commandments and no example is held up so high, [by the Catholics] and so forcefully pointed to by them, as the change of the Sabbath, and in this way, they desire to prove that the power of the church is great, because they have interfered with or dispensed with the ten commandments and have altered some what thereof.” (9)

Here is striking evidence of the importance of the Saturday-Sunday issue. Here is the answer to any who claim that the Sabbath is not important. It was so important to the Church of Rome, that in the great hour of her crisis, it was the deciding factor. She had changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. The Augsburg Confession of Faith admits that “no example is held up so high by the Catholics and so forcefully pointed to by them as the change of the Sabbath”. Over the years, in the many verbal and literary clashes between Protestants and Catholics, the church of Rome has generally been triumphant. Though Rome is so unscriptural and so erroneous in her teachings, she has nearly always has won out. On what grounds? Because almost every time the Church of Rome would come back to the Sabbath question and she would say to the Protestants,

“If you follow the Bible and Bible only, why then do you keep Sunday?” One leading Catholic publication issued the challenge,

“The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the Ten Commandments. You believe the other nine are still binding, who gave you [Protestants] authority to tamper with the fourth?” (10)

Another Catholic publication declared:

“It was the Catholic church which transferred this rest to the Sunday, thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants, is an homage they pay in spite of themselves to the authority of the Catholic Church.” (11)

Another Catholic spokesman wrote,

“Sunday is an institution of the Catholic Church and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church. It is well to remind the Presbyterians, the Methodists and all other Christians that the Bible does not support them anywhere in the observance of Sunday.” (12)

The Catholic Church has used this argument repeatedly and convincingly. Rome’s change of the Sabbath has been the great mark of her authority. In her official published statements, the Catholic Church has clearly made claim to the fact that because she changed the Sabbath, that is the mark of her power. In an official Catholic catechism by the Revelation Keenan is the following.

“Question: Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?
Answer: Had she not such power she could not have done that in which all other religionists agree with her, she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.” (13)

The leader of the Catholic Church in the U.S.A., in answer to a question addressed to him as to whether the act of changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday is recognized by Rome as Rome’s mark of her power gave the official answer.

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act; it could have not have been otherwise, as none in those days ever dreamed of doing anything in matters spiritual or religious without her, and the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” (14)

How plain this is. The change of the Sabbath to Sunday is Rome’s mark. This leading Catholic authority declared it and put it into print. In the “Catholic Record” printed in London, Ontario, Canada, is another admission:

“Sunday is our mark of authority. The church is above the Bible, and this transferring of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.” (15)

Thus those who have concluded that Sunday observance will be the Mark of the Beast have been justified in so doing. It is an entirely logical conclusion. As far as Seventh-day Adventists are concerned, they do not teach that those who currently keep Sunday have the Mark of the Beast. The Mark of the Beast is yet future. When this day is enforced by law on behalf of the church of Rome, then it becomes the Mark of the Beast. It will become the medium in enforcing world government. The Mark of the Beast will be a spiritual mark and it will be revealed by the observance of the day that Rome has foisted upon the world. All who accept it will be counted as having submitted to Rome. Now, it is understandable why Protestants stiffly oppose the claim that the Mark of the Beast will be Sunday observance. They have refused the light of truth regarding the Sabbath. But in spite of the refusal of Protestantism to acknowledge the facts concerning the mark, it is confirmed by Rome herself. Rome has and does claim that Sunday is the mark of her authority. On the other hand, search where you may, there has never been produced a satisfactory alternative as to what is the Mark of the Beast.

In the third angel’s message of Revelation 14 it declares:

“If any man worships the beast-and receives his mark, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.” Revelation 14:9, 10.

This reveals how important the mark is. It shows what the attitude of heaven is in regard to the Sabbath question. If any man receives the Mark of the Beast, he receives the wrath of God. Revelation 15:1 declares that the seven last plagues comprise the wrath of God and they fall upon earth’s last generation prior to the Second Advent of Christ.

On the other hand, the book of Revelation reveals that there is another mark. God also has a mark and this mark he is to place in the foreheads of his servants prior to the Second Advent. This mark is brought to view in Revelation 7. In a prediction concerning the latter days, it declares:

“After these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow an the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.”

Winds in prophecy denote war, strife and commotion; the judgments of God.

“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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed thee servants of our God in their foreheads.” Revelation 7:1-3.

This mark is termed “the seal of God”. Before the judgments of God fall upon this earth, God is to seal his servants in their foreheads. What comprises this seal? In scripture the words sign and seal are synonymous. Every kingdom has its seal, every government has its seal, every law to be valid must have its seal. There are three elements in a seal. For example, the seal of the Queen of Great Britain contains her name, her title and her territory or dominion - Elizabeth II, Queen, of Great Britain. These three items in the seal indicate what one is, who one is, and where one is. So it is with God’s seal. It contains these same three elements. Just as every law must have a seal in order to be valid, so there is a seal connected with God’s law.

“Seal the law among my disciples.” Isaiah 8:16.

When the ten commandments are examined, the seal is discovered right in the heart of that divine law. The three elements of the seal are found in only one commandment - the fourth commandment -- the Sabbath commandment. The name of God is in the first three commandments, but only in the fourth commandment is found God’s name, title and dominion,

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shall thou labor and do all thy work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in than is and rested the seventh day.” Exodus 20:8-11.

In the fourth commandment is God’s name - “the Lord thy God”; his title - “the Lord made heaven and earth”, i.e. Creator. Throughout scripture the true God is designated by the fact that he is the Creator. (15) This is what distinguishes the true God from all other gods.

The third element of the seal is his territory or dominion - “heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is.” This embraces the universe. In the Sabbath commandment, then, there is more than meets the eye. It is more than a command to rest. In it is God’s seal declaring who he is, what he is and where. Thus according to the prediction of Revelation 7, in the last days a special message concerning the true Sabbath is to be proclaimed, implanting in the foreheads or minds of God’s servants the lost truth of the Sabbath. In the last days then, in the coming crisis, the issue will take the form of two marks, two signs, or two Sabbaths. One Sabbath will be the sign or seal or mark of Jesus Christ, the Creator and Recreator. The other Sabbath will be the sign, or mark of the Antichrist - the creature. Other scholars have recognized a similar significance in the Sabbath.

Dr. Evatt, a Baptist scholar, declares:

“The Sabbath was made a seal of God’s covenant with Israel, an ordinance so essential for the maintenance of religion, it actually became a proof and measure of it, not only for them, but to all ages.” (16)

James Murphy in his commentary on the book of Exodus declares:

“The observance of the Sabbath connects man with the six days of creation and with the Creator himself. The Sabbath thus becomes a sign by which the believers in the historical revelation are distinguished from those who have allowed these great facts to fade from their remembrance.” (17)

The godly Anabaptists in their German Sunday Book have written, "Blessed are they who bear God's sign. As truly as the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant between the true God and his people, so truly must this sign be found with those who belong to God's people." (18)

These scholars confirm that the seal of God, in the heart of the ten commandments, is the seventh-day Sabbath. Today God's mark or seal is being proclaimed throughout the world. Why is the seal of God described as being placed in the forehead? Because the Sabbath commandment begins with the word "remember", "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy", With what do we remember? The memory involves the frontal lobes of the brain - the forehead. In these last days God is placing in the mind and memory of his people the truth of the Sabbath. "Hurt not the earth till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads". There are millions of God's servants around the world who, as yet, are unaware of God's seal, who are unaware of the truth of the Sabbath. To them must come the message concerning the true Sabbath, calling them to remember to keep it holy, to hallow it, for the prophet says,

"Hallow my Sabbaths and they shall be a sign between me and you that you may know that I am the Lord your God." Ezekiel 20:20.

On the other hand, the Mark of the Beast is also to be placed in the forehead or in the hand of those who follow the beast. In what way will this be fulfilled? When the Papacy reaches the peak of her power and the nations agree to enforce papal policy, it will be enforced in the form of Sunday observance. When the law declares that all activities must cease on Sunday, millions will obey knowing in their minds that they are paying homage to Rome. By this decision they will receive the Mark of the Beast in their foreheads. On the other hand, there will be millions of people who are not interested in religion; when the law declares that they must cease all labor, etc., on Sunday they will receive the Mark of the Beast in the hand. The hand is a symbol of labor and in ceasing work they will receive the mark in the hand. Thus, all the unsaved will be involved.

It is important to note that the seal of God is placed only in the forehead. Why only the forehead? Because to cease labor on the Sabbath is not necessarily observing the Sabbath. Sabbath-keeping, primarily is an act of worship. It is a recognition of the Creator, that the God who created in me a clean heart and put in me a right spirit is also developing in me, by his grace, a new character, a new life like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the significance of Sabbath keeping.

"Hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you that you may know that I am the Lord that sanctify you." Ezekiel 20:12.

The divine sign of sanctification or holy living according to scripture is the genuine observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. So, then, in the coming crisis the issue will take the form of two days, two Sabbaths - Sabbath or Sunday. It will be a clash of authorities.

It will be between Jesus Christ and Anti-Christ. It will be a clash between the commandments of God and the traditions of men, between truth and error. The response of true believers will be to leave the traditions of men and to come over to the side of the commandments of God. As Father Enright once declared:

"The Bible commands you to keep the Sabbath day. Sunday is not the Sabbath day, no man dare assert that it is, the Bible says as plainly as words can make it, that the seventh day is the Sabbath, that is, Saturday, or we know Sunday to be the first day of the week. The observance of Sunday is solely a law of the Catholic church. The church changed the Sabbath to Sunday and all the world bows down and worships on that day in silent obedience to the mandates of the Catholic church." (19)

If, therefore, we are to be true to Jesus Christ, there is only one thing that we can do and that is to leave the traditions of men, of Rome and come over completely to the side of Jesus Christ. In describing his faithful people of the last days, the Lord says,

"Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

The faith of Jesus goes hand in hand with the commandments of God. When men say, “What difference does a day make?” one can now see that it is more than just a day; it is a question of which God, it is a question of, at which altar do you worship. A man holds in his hand a piece of blue cloth. He treads that piece of cloth underfoot and no one cares. He then takes a piece of white cloth and likewise treads it underfoot. He next takes a piece of red cloth and likewise treads it underfoot and no one takes any notice. However, if he takes a piece of red, white and blue cloth, which is the flag of our nation, and treads it underfoot, one would rightfully object. Why? Is it not simply a piece of cloth with a design on it? Yes! It is only a piece of cloth, but now it represents something. It represents a people, it represents you and your nation. It is more than a piece of cloth, it is what it represents. Likewise, with the Sabbath, the true Lord’s Day. It is more than a day. It represents Jesus Christ, the Creator. Likewise with Sunday, it is more than a day, it is the false Lord’s Day, it represents the Antichrist. It is his mark, his day, his sign, his flag. Thus there are two flags, two authorities, two Sabbaths; the true Sabbath and the false Sabbath of the Antichrist. In these last days God’s special message calls us to come out and stand under the true flag of Jesus Christ, and turn our backs on the flag of Anti-Christ. Which flag shall we accept? There can be no neutrality in this issue for Christ declares:

“If any man worships the beast and his image and receives his mark, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.” Revelation 14:9, 10.

In past years the Sabbath was not a test. In these last days it is to be the great test and all will be judged according to their reception or rejection of it. Some say, “My family will object”, and sometimes families do object. However, the Lord says that if we place family before him we are not worthy of him.

“He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after me, is not worthy of me.” Matthew 10: 37, 38.

Others may say, “My business prevents me,” or “My occupation involves Saturday work.” This really is no reason. If you were called into the armed services to defend your country, you would have to leave your business. Your occupation would have to take second place. So it is when Jesus Christ calls us. All these things must take second place and God promises.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [our occupation, business, or family etc.] shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33.

The Lord never forsakes His people. “He that honors me, him will I honor.” In honoring God, we are to honor his day, his commandments. If we say, “It is too hard,” or “too narrow”, just think of Jesus Christ. He had nowhere to lay his head. He was “a man of sorrows”. He was crucified. Was the way too hard for him? He trembled before it but he accepted it. “Not my will, but yours be done,” he said. And he says to us,

“If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Matthew 16:24.

This is the call of Christ and if we love him we will respond. We will serve the Creator and not the creature, we will choose truth and reject tradition. We will keep the commandments of God and turn our backs on the commandments of men. We will submit to Jesus Christ and reject Antichrist. We will take the Sabbath, the seal of the living God, and reject the mark of the beast. May God help us to make the right decision.

In one particular city there was a man who was the foreman of a welding gang. When he heard God’s Sabbath message, he was convicted that he ought to obey Jesus Christ. He went to his boss to seek freedom from work in order to keep the Sabbath. His boss would not listen. He pleaded with him, but to no avail. In the end, he was led to give up his job. For three weeks he sought work but could not find any. Someone suggested that he start up a business of his own, which he did successfully. Ere long there sailed into the harbor a ship laden with munitions. While it was being unloaded, one of the laborers accidentally dropped a lighted cigarette into the hold of munitions. He said nothing. Soon they saw a wisp of smoke floating up from the hold. There was panic. The authorities sent into the city for a welding gang to cut a hole in the

ship's side and allow the sea in. Out came the gang, the very gang of which this man had been the foreman. They got to work but it was too late. There was a terrific explosion and the gang was never seen again. Parts of the ship were scattered far and wide. When this happened, the man who had tried to obtain Sabbath freedom in that particular firm, now knew why it was that he was not successful. You see, the Lord did not want him in that job or in that place.

When we serve Christ with all our hearts, God leads us to the place where he wants us to be, and his way and his leading is always the best. It is always right. It might not seem so at the beginning, for often God tests us, but when we are true to him, he never lets us down.

Let us make the decision that will lead us to the kingdom of God.

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