

for us. Therefore, the Sabbath is a sign of trusting totally in God's righteousness and not our own! God's own character, exemplified in His holy law, is God's seal. Those who, through a faith in Jesus Christ, honor and obey God's holy law need not fear the coming mark of the beast crisis! After all, they have the seal of God!

More Than a Day

This issue is about more than "just a day." (Imagine Adam saying, "It was just a piece of fruit.") It is about Biblical fidelity and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. In short, the issue could be boiled down to the following sentence: Who is your highest authority: the Roman Church-State or Jesus Christ? This is an issue of loyalty and authority. It is an issue of the commands of God versus the traditions of man. It is also an issue of worship. The Sabbath is a sign of creation and redemption. Sunday is a sign of the church's authority and man's convenience. Which will you choose?

We're Not There Yet...

The key word in Revelation 13 relating to the mark of the beast issue is the word: worship. The second beast of Revelation 13 will enforce and command worship of the first beast of Revelation 13, the Roman Church-State. (Just like Daniel 3!) This will happen when Sunday sacredness is enforced by secular government. It will be a choice between God's law or man's law. The Biblical Sabbath will be forgotten, despised, and neglected.

A New Covenant

The Bible speaks of a new covenant between God and His people. It is absolutely essential that we look at the nature of this new covenant in seeking to understand the mark of the beast. The new covenant promises that God will write His law into our mind and heart - and that He will remember our sins no more. See Hebrews 8:8-12. Your mind (which has its seat in the brain) is right behind your forehead. The frontal lobe of the brain is where moral decisions are made. It is where our character resides, and where decisions related to character are made. God puts His law, His name and His character into our minds and hearts! How? By the power of the Holy Spirit! Our obedience is in response to God's mercy. Our obedience does not earn salvation for us. It shows that we have received God's salvation by faith. God writes His law—a transcript of His holy character, His holy name—into our minds! We are sealed with God's character by God's Spirit. God is our authority and King, not the traditions of men. We have the seal of God's righteousness and law, not the mark of the beast's authority and his law. Simple. See John 14:15; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14; Isaiah 8:16; Daniel 3; 6; Ezekiel 8; 9.

- › So who is your master?
- › Whose authority are you under?
- › Whose law are you going to obey?

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord..." Joshua 24:15

Presentation guide 6:

Who is the next Superpower?

A Unique Role

The United States is the most influential and militarily powerful nation in the world today. What role, if any, will it play in Bible prophecy? How will the destiny of this nation relate to end time events? There has been no small amount of speculation as to the significance of the US in the big picture of the great controversy between good and evil. What does the Bible have to say?

The Two Beasts

Revelation 13 describes two beasts. The first beast rises up out of the sea and has ten horns, the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion. This imagery comes directly from Daniel 7. Notice the sequence: 10 horns-leopard-bear-lion. This is exactly the opposite order that Daniel had seen them in. Daniel saw: lion-bear-leopard-beast with 10 horns.

Why the difference? Daniel was looking forward into the future, while John was looking backwards into the past! The first beast is the Papacy. Is there a good fit for the second? Note the following:

1. Rises out of the earth as opposed to the sea.
2. Has two horns like a lamb, but eventually speaks as a dragon.
3. No crowns.
4. Rises up around the same time first beast goes into captivity—1798.
5. Eventually possesses universal power and influence.

What nation arose around 1798, not by violent conquest as much as by quiet, plant-like growth in a relatively unpopulated and "new" area? Furthermore, it would advocate a democratic form of government, without king or queen, and it would seek to model and reflect lamb-like principles of liberty, freedom and fairness, and would eventually possess unprecedented global influence. Who could that be? The only possible nation that fits is the United States of America. Revelation predicts the coalition of these two entities: a super power with a super church—might and "morality" combined! Let's review each of the identifiers:

The United States of America:

1. Rose up in the "new world" of the western hemisphere, which was relatively unpopulated compared to the "old world" of Europe and the Middle East.

2. Espouses Christian principles of liberty, freedom, and the separation of church and state—this was a radical departure from the “old world” and ways.
3. Does not have a king or queen; it is a republic—a government “of the people, for the people, and by the people”.
4. Declared it's independence in 1776 and convened it's first Constitutional Convention in 1787; this fits the time frame perfectly.
5. Though a young nation, possesses unprecedented economic, political, cultural, and military influence and power.

In short, it's a perfect fit! Wow! Bible prophecy is reliable and simply amazing—remember Revelation was written nearly 2,000 years ago!

Forced Worship?

The central issue in Revelation 13 is worship. The word worship appears repeatedly in this chapter. Does God ever force people to worship? No! Forced worship, like forced love is meaningless. Love, loyalty, and true worship cannot be forced or otherwise coerced. God invites and asks His people to worship Him, he never forces. This insight is essential to grasping the loving character of God as contrasted with the manipulative and coercing character of Satan.

History Repeated

The Papacy has no army. It has always worked through existing civil governments to achieve its purposes. So the “image of the beast” (Rev. 13:15) will be a renewal of the kind of power and influence the Papacy had in its “brightest” and best hour—the Dark Ages! As one historian put it, “the noon of the Papacy was the midnight of the world.” Historically, the church worked through secular powers to achieve its ends. This will be repeated, and actually it has already begun! This is what 13:11 means when it says it will speak “like a dragon.”

So the image of the beast comes to life when the United States breathes its power into the Papacy. The image of the beast, which looks like the beast did in the Dark Ages, will come back to life. The United States works with the Roman Church to bring the nation, and eventually the world, “back to God”. This will climax when the Papacy's authority in religious matters is enforced, first with economic sanctions, and then finally on pain of death.

The Mark of the Beast

The secret to understanding the mark of the beast is understanding who the beast is! In our study of the Bible, we have identified the first beast of Revelation 13 as the Roman Church-State System. So to put it simply, the mark of the beast is simply the mark of the church's authority. In our lesson on Daniel 7, we learned how this system would seek to change the law of God, especially the fourth commandment. The church claims to have changed the Christian day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. This is her mark of authority. Remember, the key issue in Revelation 13 relating to the mark of

the beast is worship. The second beast will enforce and command the worship of the first beast. This will happen when the secular government enforces mandatory Sunday sacredness. It will be a choice between God's law or man's law. Many nations have already enacted such laws. Still, some think this is “impossible.” But the Bible is clear; Sunday sacredness will be enforced. This will be the enforcement of the mark of the beast. The transfer of the Biblical Sabbath to Sunday is the beast's mark. The United States will play a significant role in this enforcement, as Revelation 13 makes clear.

All Roads Lead to Rome

Protestant churches are making their way (in some cases, as fast as they can!) back to the “Mother Church”. This is sometimes called the Ecumenical Movement. This coming together of all the churches strengthens the plans and authority of the Roman Church. But just like in the days of Daniel, God's last day people will be forced to choose between “forced worship” and God's commandments. In Daniel 3 we find them standing strong by God's grace. So in the last days, Jesus will grant His people courage and power to stand for Him. May we say with Peter: “We ought to obey God rather than man.”

God's Seal Versus the Mark of the Beast

In order to really understand the mark of the beast, it helps to first understand God's seal. These two are the opposite of one another. If you have one, you cannot have the other. The issue, then, for the believer, should be about ensuring that they have the seal. In short, the seal of God should be the primary focus, not the mark of the beast. In obtaining the seal, one is guaranteed that they cannot also receive the mark of the beast. This contrast between the seal and the mark is part of the larger counterfeit motif in Revelation.

Here is a sampling: True Counterfeit

- › New Jerusalem / City Babylon (21:1-5) (17:1-6, 18; 14:8)
- › Father, Son, Holy Spirit (Godhead) / Dragon, Beast, False Prophet (Mt. 28:18-20) (12; 13)
- › Chaste woman / Church Harlot woman (12) (17)
- › Avoid wrath of God End-time message / Avoid wrath of beast (14:6-12) (13:15-17)
- › The seal of God (End-time identifier) / The Mark of the Beast (7:1-8) (13:15-17; 14:9-12)

The Sabbath and its Uniqueness Among the Commandments

The Seventh-day Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment is unique in the 10 Commandments as the one commandment that identifies God as the creator and redeemer. Satan knows well the power and purpose of the Sabbath, and he has sought firelessly to obscure it and to cause it to be forgotten. Yet, God's end-time people will not forget it. They will honor it and keep it as a memorial of both creation and redemption (Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). The Sabbath is a sign that it is God who can make us holy. Our own works cannot make us holy, we must trust in God's work