

With the understanding derived from our meditation on the 'The Language of Prophecy', we feel convinced that we can take on "THE MARK OF THE BEAST." The subject is interesting and also very important. Before going to this part one - the mainstream of our meditation, we will want to establish the utmost importance of this subject. Turn with me to Revelation 20:4

".And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither its image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

So, partaking of the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting with Him in His throne, coming to that blessed hope of reigning with Christ a thousand years, requires the believer to have victory over the beast, over his image, over the mark of the beast, the name of the beast and the number of his name. The implication of this is that the beast and its associated elements is something every believer would have to contend with and seek to fully overcome. It is as the believer is found to have overcome the beast and its various marks that he is counted worthy of the honour of reigning with Christ on His throne. Thus, the beast, its image, its mark, its name and the number of its name are things that have always been. Since the time the church was instituted by Christ in His first advent, these beastly elements had been and would continue to be until the kingdom of Christ is established upon the earth.

Overcoming these beastly elements is not something exclusively required of the Lord's people at the time of the tribulation. Neither would it be after the church has been 'raptured' away, as some would have us believe. Let us understand that the mark of the beast is not a physical mark (666) that men will be forced to take on their foreheads and in their hands. If this is so, many, not wanting eternal damnation, will starve to death since they cannot buy and sell without the mark, as we had been taught. In addition, all believers who lived before the tribulation and even the twelve apostles would not be qualified to reign with Christ in His throne. Since we know this cannot be true, then it should be very clear to us that the beast and all the things revealed to us in Revelation 20:4, the details of which we shall find in Revelation 13 are things that have always been there throughout the church age. Paul, Peter, John and the other apostles must have fought with the beast and overcame

him and his name and the number of his name. The Lord Jesus Christ said to them in Matthew 19:28

".Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me (who have forsaken all to follow me), in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel..."

And again, in Luke 22:28, He said unto them,

".Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father has appointed unto me."

And when in Revelation 21 the glory of the heavenly city was shown, we are told that the name of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written in the foundations of the wall (verse 14). These passages of scripture confirms to us that the apostles will reign with Christ, showing them to have overcome. This is very important. Paul recounting his experience said in I Corinthians 15:31-32,

".I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die."

And in verse 33, he explains himself,

".Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God."

So, what we have done in introducing this important topic is to show that the beast, its image, its mark, its name and the number of its name are realities that have always been since the inception of the church age. All who overcame since the beginning of the church age are qualified to sit with Christ in His throne as we found in the promise to the church in Laodecia. Again, if this is so, the mark of the beast, received and retained disqualifying the believer from attaining to the honour of reigning with Christ, cannot be a physical mark. The number 666 imprinted all over my skin a thousand times over, will not change what I am in the Lord Jesus Christ, it will neither increase nor decrease my acceptance before God. Brethren, this attempt by the church to mystify things that the Lord has spoken so clearly in His word, is partly responsible for the sleep and spiritual dullness we find in our assemblies. Please, take this to mind the imposition of the number 666 upon you forcibly cannot make

you unacceptable in the sight of God.

What then is the mark of the beast? In Revelation 13, we are shown four things, any of which could be sufficient to keep an individual from favour with God. In other words, these four things attract the fiercest judgement from the presence of God. The first is the image of the beast, the second is the mark of the beast, the third is the number of his name and the fourth is the name of the beast. Now, in the closing verse of chapter 13, we are told,

"Let him that has wisdom count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. And the number is 666."

We begin by saying that 6 is the number of man. Man was created on the sixth (6th) day. And any Bible scholar worth his sort will know that six (6) is the number ascribed to man. Thus six emphasised thrice (666) will talk of the sovereignty of man, man in self-enthronement having rejected the headship of God. So, man as sovereign, man as god apart from God is the issue brought forth in the number 666, and it has practical implication. You know that Adam bequeathed a sour legacy to the human race: the sin nature. That nature gaining ascendancy over a man's life is the entrenchment of a condition that stands for an abandonment of the headship of God and the installation of man's headship over himself. So, the first point we are seeing is that 666 refers to a rejection of God through a rejection of His word. We may describe this as that state of affairs in a man's life or in the assembly of God's people when the Lord's word and Spirit are set aside and carnality rules. This must be noted carefully. Now what does this mean in practical terms?

We would realise that God has never hidden the things He approves from His people, nor has He been vague in declaring the things that He rejects. Take the ten commandments for example. We are told that they are given to us in two tables of stones written by the finger of God and handed over to Moses. In the first table is contained such commandments that have to do with man's duty towards God. It begins with this: ".thou shall have no other God before me." and ends with this: ".remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." . So, all the commandments in that bracket represent the first table and speak of man's duty towards God. Then, from the commandment, ".honour thy mother and thy father that thy days may be long in the land wither the Lord thy God shall give thee." to ".covet not thy neighbour's wife or property." constitute the second table and represent man's duty towards his fellow man. These ten commandments represent forever the things that God is looking for in His creation and which only the power of Christ can reproduce in man. In Romans 8:1-4, we

find that Christ makes possible the fulfilment of the righteousness of the law. The reference is to the ten commandments fulfilled in those who believe in Him. It says:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law (ten commandments) could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son (taking on humanity) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin offering condemned the power of sin.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For to be ruled by the flesh is death, but to submit to the rule of the indwelling Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:1-6)

When we are talking about the things that God reacts against and brings severe judgement upon, we are to have our minds clear that they have to do with either disobedience to the first table, the things that have to do with our duties towards God, or disobedience to the second table, the things that have to do with how we relate to our fellow men. Recall that in the seven letters, that the Lord caused Apostle John to write to the churches, there is revealed the things that the Lord Jesus Christ will not have in His church. So, taking those things and listing them and looking at them carefully will tell us the things that the Lord disapproves, things that brings His fierce judgement upon a people. These instructions are very plain. It is when the call to repentance from these things is not heeded that there is the possibility of the flesh coming to prominence and dominating a man's personality. This is taking what the mark of the beast is in a general way.

The works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21 (of which it is said a man who partakes of them cannot inherit the kingdom of God) gaining gradual ascendancy over the believer's life is the gradual taking on of the mark of the beast. The beastly nature has been fatally destroyed in the believer at the point of salvation. When the believer receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour, there is a death blow struck on the nature of sin so that sin can no longer exercise mastery over him. If the believer from that point takes on a life of consecration, walking closely with the Lord and submitting to His word and to His Lordship indeed, the sin nature will eventually be utterly destroyed as he is brought into the perfection of life in Christ. But when through earthiness, the believer begins to build an

image, an altar to sin, as it is said of Ephraim in Hosea 8:11, then the sin nature will revive and gain dominion over his life. We are shown in Revelation 13 that the beast had a deadly wound (which wound was received on the cross of Calvary) but the deadly wound was healed. And Roman 6:6 says,

".Knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth, we should not serve sin."

In verse 2, it says,

".how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein."

So, the mark of the beast represents the works of the flesh expressed in man's life. This should be clear considering our examination of the symbol of the beast. The beast is essentially an evil nature, character or attribute. When such nature takes prominence in a man's life or becomes characteristic, then the individual can be said to be beastly, possessing character marks of a beast.

We are told the mark could be received on the forehead or else on the hands. The forehead speaks of the mind, where the thoughts are formed and the course of action determined. To write upon the forehead or put a mark upon the forehead is to seal up a person unto a nature (a way of behaviour) through continuous instructions, teachings and doctrines. What a man is taught, what a man believes and is instructed in, shapes his life and conduct. Paul says, ".evil communication corrupt good manners.". Thus, to receive the mark of the beast upon the forehead is to receive erroneous and false teachings, which leads to worldliness, carnality and evil practices. Such doctrines tell you that as a believer, you are free to relate loosely with the opposite sex and you can engage in 'holy kiss' and do all such things even when you are not yet married to the person. Teachings that bring into your mind the evil knowledge that once you are a believer, your faith is sealed in Christ Jesus and you need not watch over your soul, you can in fact go on sinning that grace may abound, marks those who receive them with the beast name. Equally evil and of the same import are sermons that brings into your consciousness that the Lord wishes above all things that ye should prosper and so you can pursue this world riches without any moral restraint. Such doctrines only make men worldly, sensual, carnal and dull of hearing, so that they cannot pursue the matter of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. A man who rejects the Lord's control over his life loves to have and exercise dominion over others.

Revelation 2:20 says,

".thou sufferest that woman Jezebel which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."

It all begins with some teachings, some knowledge ministered to men's mind. So was it at the Garden of Eden. The seed of evil entered into the human race through some knowledge,

".hath God said., .ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

And that seed, that knowledge began to work upon the mind, the thoughts, the emotions, desires and will until it found expression in physical act of disobedience.

When evil, erroneous principles are established in a believer's mind, he has the mark of the beast upon his forehead. It will not be long before it is revealed in the works of his hands. The hands stand for services whether religious, social or economic. The Bible says, ".God shall bless the labour of our hands.". So, whatever we do in the day-to-day living in our homes, in our offices, in our businesses, in the midst of God's people, among unbelievers etc., reveal what is ruling over us in the inside. To receive the mark of the beast in the hands is to express in moral conduct and services that sin is a master over one's soul. It is to be found in sinful living or to be involved in promoting a system of things that does not represent God's interest, that does not glorify God. In Romans 6:6 that we read earlier, we are told we should no longer serve sin. And again in John 8:34, Jesus said to the people, ".he that committeth sin is a servant, a minister of sin.". So, dishonest dealing in business is a proof that the mark of the beast is already being formed in somebody's hands. Putting away God's rule in His church and the imposition of carnal mindedness, promoting the rule of man over the assembly of God's people is a clear sign that this obnoxious thing is come upon the right hand.

Again, being a Christian employer and not paying those who work under you their wages when due, and allowing that evil to be a growing feature in your life, you may get away with it, but it is a sign you are taking on the mark of the beast.

Now, in order to strengthen your confidence in the factualness of the observations, we will draw attention to two things. First, Exodus

13:9 read and considered side by side with Deuteronomy 1:18, shows that when the word of God comes to us, and we live in obedience to Christ preached, we are taking on a mark upon our foreheads and upon our hands. Again, in Ezekiel 9:1-4, and Revelation 7:1-4, this is made all the more manifest. In Revelation 7:1-4, we are shown how a people, said to be true servants of God are sealed on their foreheads. We are later to learn in Revelation 14:1 that what is sealed into their foreheads is the name of the Father. Truth received and lived by brings into and upon us the name of the Father.

In the same way, error, false and evil thinking, moral failures are elements in the mark of the beast. Truth ultimately produces life, and, what we are shown in Revelation 7:1-4 is the ministration of God's word empowered empowered by the Holy Spirit producing the life of Christ in a body of people. While throughout the church age, the greater majority of professed Christians have not allowed the nature of Christ to be formed in them sufficiently, there are those who had chosen to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, choosing a closer walk with Him and submitting to Him in all things. And at this time of the end, the nature of evil in man will be brought into full expression through satanic incursion. In like manner, the righteousness of God will be fully revealed in a people. Just as there is going to be the manifestation of the sons of Satan, the fullness of the mystery of iniquity revealed in and among a people at this end time, so also there is going to be the manifestation of the sons of God and the fullness of the life and power of God revealed in a people. May God grant you understanding, in Jesus name.

In Revelation 14:6-8, are shown an angel flying in the midst of heaven and announcing something. And, what was said is quite important in understanding the symbolism of the beast from the sea, the false lamb and the true Lamb treated in the preceding verses beginning from Revelation 13:1. Please note that the angel in question is not a spirit being. Revelation 1 set a precedence that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and from a proper consideration of that verse, we noted that the angels of the churches are the ministries which God has set over the various assemblies of His people. Now, the word 'angel' simply means a servant, a messenger, and whereas the spirit beings under the service and administration of God are generally referred to as angels (as we find in Hebrew 1). The word can be enlarged to include the human servants (messengers) of God. In the book of Revelation, the angels referred to in almost all instances are human persons within the church of Jesus Christ. This should be clear because spirit angels cannot preach the gospel of Christ. In I Peter 1:12, we learn that the angels desired to look into the details of the matter of redemption, but it was not appointed unto them but to us. Anyhow, we

are told that this angel was flying in the midst of heaven and says,

"Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgement is come: and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."

And we are told that another angel followed saying,

".If any man worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God."

So, worship is in view. The claim of God to rulership over His creation is the focus. Worshipping self, setting one self or something else as lord over one's life, over one's home, over the church of the living God, setting aside the principles of God's word and enthroning one's ways and practices represents a rejection of God's rulership. This must be taken to heart very seriously, and must lead to a true examination of oneself.

Now, we move a bit further. What is the image of the beast? Recall that the beast here referred to is the first beast, the beast that came out of the sea. But the activities of the second beast (the beast from the earth) made possible for an image to be raised to the first beast. All that the first beast stands for we would read from verse 3 through 10 of Revelation 13. Particularly, we find that it blasphemes the name of God, wars against the saints and take on dominion over the earth, ruling it as sovereign and asking ".where is God if there is any God.". To make an image to this beast is to raise up something that is an exact resemblance to what that beast is said to be doing. But, in order to sponsor a proper consideration of what we are saying, we will illustrate from every day life what raising an image means.

Consider that musician, Bob Marley, he is now dead. Also consider musicians like Fela Ransome (Anikulapo) Kuti. Now, they were musicians that made great waves in the time they were physically alive. But now, they are dead and gone. But there is seen in the land efforts of music stars to create again the days of these departed musicians. What they are simply doing is raising an image to them. If you are to go to some musical concert, you will not know that Bob Marley is dead. Musicians will be giving you the impression that he is alive. That is image making, casting an image that is a resemblance of that which was. Consider Mike Tyson, when he was a boxing star, there is an hair style he was always making and when men began to make the same hairstyle, people began to call it Mike Tyson.



So these persons are making an image, some kind of image of Mike Tyson. But the image here in Revelation 13 is not anyone of these things. Rather, it is taking on the character of the first beast.

Now recall that this beast from the earth is shaped like a lamb. Ordinarily, nobody gets frightened when he sees a lamb. The lamb is the young of a sheep. So, one does not get frightened. But when the lamb begins to speak, we are told it speaks like a dragon. His speech, character, betray its outward appearance.

The scriptures reveal clearly that this second beast is Christendom. The term Christendom is not synonymous with Christian world. It is rather an expression that signifies the counterfeit system that results from habitual deviation from the principles of Christ, the new testament revelation of Him and the institutionalisation of human ideals, unholy living and other acts of unfaithfulness to God in what was once the church of Jesus Christ. Dead orthodoxy and the varying degree of confusing abominable signals of almost all of the visible church system of our day answer to Christendom. It is an alternative kingdom much more opposed to the plans and purposes of God in Jesus Christ than it appears to be.

Thus, apostate pentecostalism can be said to be of this second beast. The beast is said to be a prophet, capable of performing miracles, but a false prophet. That the pentecostal movement has, in most of her denominational churches deviated from God's purpose is clear. This body is moving gradually and developing more and more of that pattern of things that existed in that "kingdom of this world" and in the Roman Catholic system. The things which men in the past stood and preached against, they are gradually going back to. This beast from the earth is already making an image to the first beast. It will amaze you that men and women in Christendom, in the pentecostal movement that have been great instruments in God's hand in speaking against the errors and evils of the orthodox churches would be found at this time of the end hands in gloves with them even becoming more determined, more daring, in undermining the spiritual and moral glory of Christ. We have already seen that moral failure and carnal mindedness pave the way for the installation of man as god over the Lord's house.

Now, if you will come with me to II Thessalonians 2, read in the light of what is shown in Revelation 13, your understanding will be more fruitful.

".Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be

revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (II Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Of course, the general understanding we have of Revelation 13, is that the man of sin is one individual. So, we are looking for the Antichrist to emerge from somewhere. But, John wrote the three epistles (the first, second and third books of John) after his encounter with the Lord on the Island of Patmos. His encounters are given to us in the book of Revelation. And drawing his understanding from those visions, he wrote,

".Little children, it is the last time: as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists." (I John 2:18)

So, antichrist is a spirit and whoever crystallises in his life the very effect of antichrist, a situation in which a man sets himself in opposition to God, in opposition to His word, that person is allowing the spirit of antichrist to rule through him or her. Antichrist is lording it over men, men conducting themselves as gods. Now, you will recall that we said right from the beginning that the seven letters contained elements that God must flush out of the church. And, two of the things shown there are moral failure and idolatry. Bowing to a graven image may be evil, but we know that the same considerations that make men bow down to graven images are present when men bow down to worship their fellow men. Lordly control over persons is something that is coming in the image of a beast. It may have the shape of a lamb but when it speaks, it speaks as a dragon. It is a subtle working, and may the Lord deliver His church from such sovereign control and manipulation of men.

I want to draw your attention in this closing part to Genesis. You will recall that which Satan told the first parents was that, ".look, if you set aside God's word and eat that which He says you should not eat, you will be as gods knowing good and evil.". And, this issue of men carrying themselves as gods and others submitting to such influences, has been an on-going issue throughout the church age. The last verse of I John 5 says, ".little children, keep yourselves from idols." .

The LORD bless you, the LORD cause His face to shine upon you. We know that enough has been said to start you thinking. When the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over your life, and you allow Him to take over the reins of your life so that the works of the flesh are taken out

of your life, and you receive Jesus as your Head and allow His indwelling Spirit to have the rule over you, crystallising the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23, you are already delivering yourself from the mark of the beast and ye shall stand acceptable in the sight of God. May the LORD bless you in Jesus' name.

When next we meet, we shall be examining another aspect of this topic - "THE MARK OF THE BEAST." (Part Two). We do earnestly covet your prayers even now. Stay blessed in Him.