

>From our previous meditation on The Mark of the Beast (Part 1), it was clear that we would have to go through this topic again, approaching it from yet another angle, and reinforcing the things we found in the first consideration. So, we are taking: "THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Part 2)".

Turn with me to Revelation 22:1.

".And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Notice, here we are told of the throne of God and of the Lamb, not the thrones of God and of the Lamb but throne, the word is used in the singular sense. If the word is given to us in plural, we will be talking of two personages, but being singular, it shows us that the occupant of the throne is called God and also called the Lamb. Thus setting forth two prominent characteristics in the occupant of the throne. Both combined to give us the blessed hope. The blessed hope is to be like Jesus; and that speaks of Jesus as a Lamb. The blessed hope is to reign with Christ, which speaks of Jesus as God. So, God's plan is to make man God, but he that is to sit on the throne must first of all be a Lamb. Satan's plan is to make man god apart from God. So, we will be considering Jesus as Lamb and Jesus as God very briefly.

Now, the one who is almighty, who is sovereign and perfect in all His attributes, able to exercise that sovereignty to the blessing of humanity, is Jesus the Lamb. The ruler of the whole universe who has all power has Lamb-like qualities. Revelation 14 that sets forth the true picture of the Christ says:

".And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand (other lambs), having His Father's name written in their foreheads."

So, we know at once from the first verse that the Lord is giving us insight into what is in store for us in the blessed hope. Our inheritance among other things, will invest us with attributes of divine power and wisdom coupled with the lamb like qualities of love, peace, patience, gentleness, meekness and the like to all who overcome (crystallise the same sublime nature we see in Jesus). But, we quickly move straight to Matthew 1:21, talking of the issue of the significance of a name. The angel announcing Jesus' conception, birth and what he should be called said,

".and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

That a man's life may be expressed by his name is in all scriptures. So, if you are going to look at a Bible character, what name he answers has a lot to say about what kind of person he is. When he is the exact opposite of what his name indicates, you know that there is a subtlety, some hypocrisy about that individual. Like Jezebel, for example, her name means virtuous, but we know that Jezebel is the mother of harlots. So, the very fact that she portrays herself other than she is, makes her all the more dangerous. In addition, every letter of the Hebrew alphabet carries a number. So, every word in the Old Testament carries a number, which is a summation of the various numbers of the letters that make up that word. So, every name in the Hebrew language carries a number. This becomes important when we see that the mysterious lamb of Revelation 13 that speaks as a dragon has a number. The number of his name adds up to 666. Now, this has led many at various times in church history to begin to look at some certain individuals who have stood in authority and manifested such great evil against God's people and against the cause of Christ as the antichrist. And they looked at their names and tried to identify those whose names add up to 666 in the Hebrew language. Others have named some Roman Emperors and some Popes as the antichrist while yet some have said the antichrist was born as a child in one of the Arabian states sometimes this decade, in the nineties.

But, we know names and numbers are used in scriptures to represent a nature, a characteristic or attribute or an office. And, as we said earlier on, the number 6 is associated with man. So, 6 twice repeated represent man as sovereign. Remember 3 is the number of completion in relation to divine things. When we speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are talking about three manifestations of the Godhead. So, when man carries his number with a triple emphasis, he is showing that he is sovereign, he is lord, having repudiated the headship of God, and he has set himself up as god in the place of God.

Again, in the second part of this meditation, we read from II Thessalonians 2 and found that it is something that has always been there. And, at the time of the end, the man of sin, that corporate man: that man that consists of many members would sit in the temple of God showing himself to be God. Some suppose that this temple of God is a physical temple that will be built in Jerusalem where this man of sin would sit upon and declare himself to be God. Brethren, in understanding, we should be men. God has forever done away with

worship and sacrifices of the Old Testament arts.

The knowledge that God shall restore in the age to come the Old Testament order of temple worship is as erroneous as it is destructive. We are told that at the offering of Christ, the perfect sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, the veil into the Holiest of All was torn asunder from top to bottom. Men may now freely approach unto God their creator in true worship. If the building of a physical temple like that obtained in the Old Testament under the Aaronic priesthood and its order of worship is restored in Jerusalem in a time to come, it will profit nothing. God can never be drawn back to that order of things. The temple of importance is the temple of our being,

"know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?."

Paul asked. And he goes on to say,

"if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (I Corinthians 3:16, 17)

And when we talk of defiling God's temple, the first thing that comes to our minds as Christians is moral failure, especially sexual sins. While that is true and constitutes a grievous mark of the beast, worldliness and carnality are things that equally defile God's temple. And more importantly, that passage reveals that when men are held in reverential adoration that borders on worship, it is idolatry and constitutes a defilement of God's temple, it brings very severe judgements. James 4:5 says,

"know ye not that the Spirit of God that dwelleth within us lusteth unto envy."

So, whenever another sits over the throne of our hearts, exercising lordly control over our lives, and doing so pretentiously, giving religious reasons and that he has right from God to so exercise himself over the thrones of our hearts and affections, that scriptures in II Thessalonians 2 is being fulfilled. You see, there is a deception that comes with supposing that the antichrist is first going to be one man. True, there is going to be a head of the coming World Empire, the head of the Antichrist system, which shall take on both political and religious expressions. This shall become known more prominently years after the church has been perfected in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (of this, we shall speak more particularly in a time to come). But, such would simply be taking on

those characteristics that are already being developed in a multitude of people. The Apostle John, writing to the Church after he has received the Book of Revelation has this to say,

".And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists;."

So, antichrist is a spirit, and whoever incorporates that spirit in his life is an antichrist. Antichrist means something set in an opposition to Christ. We know that the setting aside of God's clear word is the setting aside of Christ. So, what we have said so far is that man's attempt to lord it over his fellow men whether in the political, religious, social or economic sphere has always been a problem. This is more dangerous in the religious sphere especially in the sphere of God's own kingdom. When a man's power becomes so prominent that it is celebrated, he will want to think himself as God and to gather the people around to lord it over them.

This has always been a temptation among God's people. Remember, in the days of Paul, he went ministering somewhere together with Barnabas, and there was so much display of grace, glory and power. And the people said, these are the very gods that have come down from heaven, the first is Jupiter and the other is Mercury. The people bowed down to worship them and were ready to make sacrifices. But, notice the reaction of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14). It is something all of us in our little worlds, whether the world of our office, the world of our homes would contend with. We have good example in Paul and Barnabas. They tore their clothes and said "God forbid, there is only one God and He alone is to be worshipped.". If it were to be a modern day preacher, he would rejoice on the occasion and get it filmed and used to give evidence of their greatness.

But now, look at John, a great apostle, the Bible reveals (Revelation 19:10 and Revelation 22:8) that he was ready to bow down and worship the angel that was showing him the visions contained in the Book of Revelation. But, he was told by the angel,

".see that thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren the prophets and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

This subtle working of Satan is something that has always been a temptation to the Lord's people and which we have to think upon very seriously if we must stand approved in the sight of God at this time.

Let us understand God's purpose is never hidden from His people. In Micah 6:8, the prophet says, ".he has shown thee O man what to do." . And in the same verse, he spells out in three sentences which read and considered properly reveals man's duties towards God and towards his fellowman. It says, . ".but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." . When a man walks in disobedience to the revealed word of God, when he sets aside his duties towards God or goes about it in the way his carnal mind tells him, when he imports the spirit of the world and patterns his life after the world, such a one is actually setting aside God and taking on the image of the Beast.

Recall that the desire of the children of Israel to become like other nations informed the installation of Saul as king. And Saul was made king on the day of Pentecost. There is so much packed into that situation that it is not just a passing incidence. He was said to be head and shoulder above all the other Israelites, and his natural mind ruled for him in God's kingdom. God said destroy the Amalekites (and every one with spiritual exposure knows that Amalekites stand for the works of the flesh), this nation upon whom my rejection stands. And Saul said, ".I don't know why God is so old-fashioned. He keeps telling us to sacrifice animals and here he is saying we should destroy man and beast." . So, he saved some alive, even the king of the Amalekites. And God said, because you have rejected me from being Lord over you and have set up your own rule in my own kingdom; I have rejected you from being king over Israel. Now, think deep and think much over that situation. Such things that allow the works of the flesh prominence in our lives is as the taking on of the mark of the Beast. When the mark is upon our hands, or the forehead, the reference is to our understanding, the principles that govern our actions, being more and more drawn from the world rather than from the scriptures.

Please turn with me to Exodus 13:9, Deuteronomy 6:18, we will do a bit of reading to strengthen our understanding. A sign on the hand, spiritually speaking, may be seen without any physical imprint. Just as the positive is set forth, the negative is understood. Recall that in Exodus 13:9, the children of Israel had just been delivered from the Egyptian captivity, and certain instructions were given to them. Here it was the celebration of Passover, a type of that which the Lord accomplished for us in His death and resurrection (I Corinthians 5:7). Now, let us go to Exodus 13:7-9.

".Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

And thou shall shew thy son in that day, saying this is done because of that which the LORD unto me when I came forth out of Egypt."

We shall be considering verse 9 as the verse of choice. It says:

".And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand. That is, when you thus celebrate the Passover, you have taken a sign upon your hand. Your actions will be increasingly governed by the power that flowed from the work of Christ upon the cross. and for a memorial between thine eyes (that is, upon the forehead), that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt."

So, you see the close connection between receiving the law, and allowing it to crystallise the nature of Christ in us. God sees this as taking on a sign upon our right hands and upon our forehead. In Songs of Solomon 8:6, we see the church coming out of a desolate condition (the wilderness), leaning upon her beloved, and Christ saying unto her as it were ".set me as a seal upon thine heart, and upon thine hand.". In Revelation 7:1-4, we are shown that this seal is also required upon the forehead. So, the sealing process begin with the heart. It is concluded in the sealing of the forehead, which in practical terms is the crystallisation of the mind of Christ. We are beheaded of our natural mind, which is one of the requirements for sitting upon the throne (Revelation 20:4) ".all who sit upon the throne are beheaded people.". It includes martyrdom but the thought goes beyond that. It is a life sold out in the service and support of truth allowing the Lord to be the Lord indeed in all aspects of one's life and service, even in the face of fierce opposition and persecution. Throughout the church age, all true saints who have dared to become servants of truth striving against error, sin and wickedness have had to suffer persecution not merely from the world but from Christendom. Isaiah 59:14-15 says,

".and judgement is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street (of religion), and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey."

No wonder John says in Revelation 17:6,

".and I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

So, we are talking about beheading, and what we have said is that

whoever gives up his own head and receives the headship of Christ over him is truly beheaded. But whoever lives by his carnal understanding, does his own thinking and imposes his thoughts upon his spiritual life or upon the assembly which he is privileged to take oversight of, such a one has lost Christ as head and has substituted, in His place, his own head.

Now, come with me to Deuteronomy 6, we are talking of receiving a sign upon our hands and foreheads. It is important we have a very clear understanding of this and stop submitting to conjectures that only sends us to sleep. We must allow our eyes to behold Him who is Jehovah Mecheldeshkeh and in beholding Him, His sanctifying power delivers us from the works of the flesh. That is how to be freed from the mark of the Beast. Entrenched in our old nature is the very beast itself. We come into this world carrying its marks in our hearts ever before it becomes visible in our hands or in our foreheads. Christ comes into our lives to take these marks away. But, when we do not allow Christ to do so, the beast expressions begin to reflect in our services and in our thinking. To be carnally minded is death, but to allow the indwelling Christ to govern all our thinking and actions, is to be spiritually minded, to be minded by the things the Holy Spirit says and does, is life and peace.

Deuteronomy 6:4-8 says:

"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be frontlets between thine eyes."

Here, again, observance of the word of the Lord which consist in loving the Lord with all our being and resisting anything that may want to come between us and God, is regarded as taking on progressively the mark of the nature of Christ. One more reference before we take another thought.

Deuteronomy 11:18

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes."

You can write the ten commandments in a paper and tie it to your hand and head. But, if it is not a life lived expressing Christ, it will all be vain religion.

One of the things that makes many of the Lord's people to go on drowsily as though they are blind, is because they did not take out time to look closely at the things the lord Jesus Christ is saying to the churches through the seven letters that He caused John to address to the seven representative churches. When the same set of people give so much attention to other things, it will not be because they cannot employ their leisure hours for their spiritual betterment, but because they neither see the great prospects of the kingdom of God nor appreciate how spiritual pursuit is relevant to their lives. May the Lord help us. For example, there is a car called 'the Beast', a luxury car with the state of the art incorporated. And some suppose to drive that car is to take on the mark of the Beast. Whereas vanities and illicit pleasure do not reveal a life submitting itself to God, nevertheless just lying or sitting or driving in a pleasure car does not give you the mark. Otherwise, Revelation 13 would not say both the rich and the poor receive the mark.

Now, we close this meditation by drawing attention to two great divisions in the use of the word "Beast". We have observed when discussing 'the language of prophecy' that the word "Beast", can stand for the general populace, a kingdom or represent prominent persons in the kingdom. And knowing that this Beast is a religious kingdom, and represent Christendom, we know that it is symbolising those who in Christendom bear the rule over the people that those who look to these ones for spiritual guidance. Now, we will concentrate upon this in our next consideration. But suffice to say that those that carry the number of His name are persons in the leadership over such religious set up. The ones having the name of the Beast are their immediate lieutenants. While the rest thronging on, supporting beastly things in their lives, their homes, their offices and in the assemblies they belong to are receiving the mark upon their foreheads and hands. These are merely allowing the depravity, the works of the flesh that has gained ascendance in their lives to blind their eyes to what God requires. The LORD bless you.

Beloved Brethren, we will stop here for now and by His grace pick up this burden again in "THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Part 3)" some other day when the LORD in His mercies brings us your way. Once again, may we say here at this juncture that we earnestly covet your prayers as you stay blessed in Him.