

From our previous meditations on The Mark of the Beast (Parts 1 and 2), 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 and second considerations. So, we are taking: **“THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Part 3)”**.

We want to thank the Lord for giving us this opportunity to reach out to His people; may the Lord help each one of us and give us hearing ear. We shall be going straight to the burden at hand. One of the things the fall of man has created is that man sometimes calls good evil and evil good. When a choice is made or an individual takes a decision, it is because that choice or decision appears to him at the time that he was taking it to be a wise one. But if it turns out later to be foolish, then, it is only a reflection of the fact that man's faculties were damaged in the fall. In redemption, God recovers our faculties from the fallen state and begins to lift us up unto the estate that Adam had before the fall and far beyond. One of the telling characteristics of spiritual maturity is the ability to distinguish between good and evil. No matter how long the individual has given his life to Christ, Hebrews 5:12-14 read and considered together with Isaiah 7:15, tells us that the ability to distinguish between good and evil, to choose the good and reject the evil shows that the individual is mature spiritually.

Two contrasting views of the same unchanging object may be used to illustrate the things that we have just observed. The vision of Nebuchadnezer recorded in Daniel 2 is concerning the history of the kingdoms of this world. In that vision of his head upon his bed, he saw a mighty stature, with head of gold, breast of silver, thigh of brass and feet of iron and clay. We are told in Daniel 2:31 that this image was of an excellent brightness. That view of the kingdoms of this world is as seen from the standpoint of Nebuchadnezer. When we come to Daniel 7, the kingdoms of this world are again portrayed. But here, they are represented as four Beasts. So, to Nebuchadnezer who does not know God, these kingdoms represent an image of glory and brightness, but to Daniel and again to Apostle John (Revelation 13), these kingdoms are seen to be Beasts. Two different views of the same unchanging object. What was glorious in Nebuchadnezer's value system was actually despicable and beastly when viewed with the eyes of God.

So, whatsoever way an individual respond to God's word tells his inward disposition. Good men may make bad mistakes, and great men may make foul mistakes. But to go on in that which is revealed to be evil either because one lacks the ability to discern what is evil or because it suits one better to continue in one's own way, shows the individual as defiant, and as setting himself against the authority of God.

So, in coming to this meditation, the main goal is to make the word of God plain. We believe each and every one of us may choose to line up with obeying the call to repentance from certain things which the Lord does not approve or else settle for disobedience. The repercussions and reward of either of the two options are set forth in scriptures.

The Bible says in I Corinthians 14:8 that if the trumpet sound is not clear, then people cannot prepare themselves for the battle that the trumpet is calling for. To make the word of God plain is the approach, we seek to adopt in this meditation. For that, we will take faithful expositions of the passage of choice. Remember, we are considering “The Mark of the Beast (Part 3)”. But we will be doing so contextually, taking Revelation 13:11-18 verse by verse, so that those who have a witness in their hearts that this word is timely and sent of God to recover His people from certain tendencies might well rejoice in their spirits. Please turn with me to Revelation 13:11.

“...And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon...”

The original language in which this chapter and the whole of the New Testament was written is Greek. And it is far richer than the English language. For example, there are two Greek words, which the English language translates as ‘beast’ in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 4 for example, we read of the four beasts. And the word translated beast there is ‘Zoon’, and it emphasises life. So, those four beasts as translated by the King James Version could better be rendered “four living creatures”. Other translations have taken note of that and have so rendered it. But, the word translated beast here in Revelation 13 is ‘Therion’ and emphasises the bestial characteristics of these human kingdoms.

When we take something from a corporate angle (that is from the holistic viewpoint), we should remember that it is true also on the individual scale. That is when we think of this kingdom as emphasising in its operations brute force or bestial characteristics, we are saying that the same situation is true in the lives of individuals associated with that beast.

In Revelation 13, we saw a beast coming out of the earth. From our previous meditation, we have said that the earth stands for earth-mindedness. So, the picture is not that of a beast coming out from the land mass but a situation that is emerging from among believers who are carnally-minded, who gravitate towards earthly things. In contrast, heaven is used to refer to those of the Lord’s people who are heavenly-minded, submitting to the rule and lordship of the Holy Spirit in their lives and services. Hence in Revelation 13, you will find an interplay between these two words

(the earth and the heaven). For example, when in verse 6 we are told that the beast from the sea opened his mouth in blasphemy against them that dwell in heaven, the reference is not to departed saints. It is not saying, "...Paul, John you are crazy..." or any of such things. Rather this assault against persons dwelling in heaven is a reference to living saints who are being led and governed by the Spirit, whose operations are a threat to this beast out of the sea. And in verses 12 and 14, there is a continuous emphasis on certain things happening among them that dwell on the earth.

The beast coming out of the earth is the emergence of a system of things, an organisation, taking on a kingdom shape, a massive organisation but being so because the works of the flesh and the carnal mind have stripped the people of all restraint. Now, from II Thessalonians 2, you will notice that the man of sin emerges where there is a great falling away. So, these two pictures must be clear in your mind, and, the moral conditions of the Lord's people in their individual respect combine to make possible the emergence of these self-serving kingdoms. And as we recover our hearts and minds from the works of the flesh, you will find that in the spiritual environment in which you are fellowshiping, there can be no emergence of a system of things that is contrary to God. But when all are asleep in earthiness, then things emerge that are contrary to God and everybody just follow on. That is the first thought, and we have been talking in relation to Revelation 13:11.

Then, we are told this beast from the earth has two horns like a lamb. Horns in spiritual parlance speak of power. Thus, this beast seeks to execute its mission through the use of two distinct powers. Now, the horns are said to be of a lamb. Recall that the Lord Jesus Christ and others who are following Him in true submission and obedience are pictured as lambs in Revelation 14 (it implied each lamb have two horns). Thus we come to the understanding that the two horns of the lamb are the means by which the Lord Jesus Christ manifest His saving power in and through His church. These two horns are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. God manifests His power in the church by the use of these two means of grace.

Applying this to Revelation 13, we understand that this beast coming out of the earth operates and disseminates information and seek to bring about its desires by recourse to powers other than human. The two horns thus refer to the spiritual powers by which the beast operates. And, this links us straightaway to the next thing said in that same verse (verse 11). We are told the beast has two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

The question is to be asked: From whence is this supernatural power of the beast gotten? We answer by saying that the same dragon that is busy fighting to corrupt the testimony of Christ among them "that dwell in heaven" (Revelation 12) in his fall, comes to the earth sphere (among those who are living in disobedience, living defeated christian lives) and begins to work his nature

into them and to manipulate them. In Revelation 13, we are told that the dragon stood upon the sand of the sea. The original says the dragon stood still upon the sand of the sea, working upon them, concentrating all his attention and energy upon these moral fallen ones. And in the passage of time, a system of things was seen coming out of the sea. To this beast, the dragon gave his seat, his power and great authority (Revelation 13:2).

So, the same evil powers at work in raising up of the beast coming up out of the sea is actually at work (though not visible) in the beast coming out of the earth. It is the same dragon, that old serpent that is working through the two beasts. This beast from the earth is more deceptive than the beast from the sea, it is shaped as a lamb, gabbed in a religious (Christian) garment which subtly identifies it with the true Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) and portrays it as one with a saving mission. Additionally, it has the power to work miracles. But when it speaks, it speaks as a dragon. This beast has very strong social ties with Christendom. Christendom is an inoffensive name for Babylon, but more easily reminds the discerning of the religious confusion associated with the denominational/sectarian activities of our day.

Notice that in the word picture of these events, the thought is that this beast from the earth comes in all of this shape at once. But this is not actually so. It is something gradual. Now it is even speaking harmlessly like a lamb but in the passage of time its true character shall be revealed. It is crisis situation that reveals what is inside a man. We cannot by looking at things going on the outside know what is inside a man, but in a crisis situation, what comes out of a man reveals the actual inward disposition. So, as the time rolls on, you will find systems that can be identified as part of this beast begin to take on this beastly characteristic. And in the time of the manifestation of the sons of God, all things shall be manifested in their true colour, whether they be good or evil.

Now, we have already mentioned that God's requirements are never hidden from God's people. We saw that the ten commandments represent continually God's desire for His human creation. The lifestyle that is pleasing in the sight of God is set forth in those ten commandments. And we said there are certain characteristics that identify man as belonging more to the animal kingdom than to the human race. For example, in the animal kingdom, might is right, and, by brute force, things are conducted in that sphere. So, when a person has a domineering attitude, he is taking on a bestial nature. Again, in that world, there is no respect for individual rights. When a lion, for example, rushes for a goat or any other wild game, and chooses it for its own satisfaction, it does not consider whether the goat has a right to existence.

So, inconsideration is one thing that must be at work for the Lords law to be broken. That is why Jesus said the ten commandments is summed up in these words, "...thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, with all thy strength and love thy neighbour as

thymself...” When there is such a consideration for your fellowmen, you would not steal from them, you would not violate their marital rights, you would not covet your neighbour’s properties, you would not kill. It is the same lack of consideration that makes men give what legitimately belong to God to another. God alone is worthy of worship as He has said, “...my glory will I not share with another, for I the Lord I am a jealous God..” The worship of men and self rather than God is at the roots of all spiritual deviations from the path of truth.

In the 12th verse, we are told that this beast coming out of the earth exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. Here again, reference is made to those that dwell on the earth. In verse 8, we are told all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the beast from the sea). That would mean there would be none exempted. But, we know that the “all” here refers to all those who take on earthly characteristics. There are others who refuse to take on these marks and would not worship the dragon as verses 8 and 9 implies. In Colossians 3, we are told not to dwell upon the earth but rather in heaven. Verse 1 and 2 says:

“...If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth...”

In Colossians 3:5, we are told to mortify therefore our members which are upon the earth. And a blacklist of the works of the flesh is given: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness which is idolatry.

So, we are told to mortify, to put to death, to destroy all earthly tendencies in us as we aspire for an heavenly inheritance. Now, when it is said that this beast exerciseth all the powers of the first beast before it, it means the same way the political systems are run is gradually introduced and employed in executing the mission of this second beast. The importation of the ways and spirit of the world in carrying out God’s work creates a beast instead of a bride.

In verse 13, we are told that this beast from the earth doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men.

We know that the church is supernatural. By working in harmony with the will of God and listening and submitting to the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for any spirit-

filled believer to operate with great grace and bring blessings, healing and deliverance upon the distressed. But, the possession of what is extraordinary is not necessarily a confirmation that an individual is a child of God.

In Matthew 7, we are simply told that it is by the fruit of a tree that it is called. “...*By their fruits, you shall know them...*”. One telling characteristic of false prophets is that they are not morally upright. So, when there is a brazen display of miraculous power and the individuals are living in sin, then, we know that a power other than God is at work. We must note this very carefully. The beginning of an individual is not as important as how he carries on. We have to continually hold unto God for our lives to stand always approved in His sight.

Now, we know that the times are hard, and the many distributed effects of the fall have kept the world of mankind groaning under hard labour. So, when a ministry arises purporting to deal with this situation and minister to the material welfare of the people, there is usually a sigh of relief and people rush in and follow. Here, we are told that this beast out of the earth will seek to manifest extraordinary power with a view to winning the submission of the masses.

Matthew 7:14, 15 are sufficient verses to enable us to know the things we should align ourselves with. Verse 14 of Revelation 13 shows that those who are to be swept along with this deception are those that dwell on the earth. The carnally minded believers who genuinely know Christ in salvation but are not allowing the seed of Christ in them to triumph over those beastly tendencies that we all inherited from father Adam, are easy preys. *They fill the religious courts of Babylon, deceived.*

Revelation 13:14 says

“...and the beast that comes out of the earth deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast...”

We know that whoever wants the kingdoms of this world and the glories of them will always find Satan willing to give powers to achieve those ends. We must always be willing to seek the face of God and not only His hands in blessing. A life lived in continuous seeking after God can never be deceived and have the spiritual life violated by satanic incursion. May the Lord help us to remain true to Him.

In the remaining part of this meditation, we want to quickly rush through verses 15-18. We are told that this second beast, called the false prophet, a many-member body, has power to give life to the image of the beast. We have already touched on what image making is all about. It means operating in exact resemblance to something else that is generally known. When “churchian” set-ups take on more and more secularity, they are patterning their operations after the kingdoms of this world.

Now, you will recall that the beast stands not only for the general populace but for prominent persons within the set-up. This is clear from Daniel 7:22 and 23. Here, we are shown that some do not just have marks upon them that answers to the nature of the beast, but take on the name of the beast. That is, they identify straightaway with the beast. Then some are said to take on the number of his name. These are two divisions of those who stand in leadership positions among those who are identified with this beast system of things that have deviated from the purposes of God. They constitute those who carry and minister the mark of the beast unto the generality of people that dwell upon the earth.

It is said that they make possible an arrangement such that there can be no buying and selling except you take the mark of the beast. Now, the mark being not physical, we know that the buying and selling is also not physical. In spiritual parlance, to disseminate God’s word is to sell. Jesus in Revelation 3:18 says:

“...buy of me gold tried in fire...”.

In Isaiah 55, He says:

“...Come and buy without money and without price...”.

So, buying in relation to spiritual matters relate to receiving the ministry of God’s word and the blessings that accompanies the ministry. By the same token, selling means standing in the position to give out God’s word and blessing, administering the riches of the kingdom to those who are willing to receive it.

We know that the buying and selling shown here is taking place in the street of religion, the street of the great city. And this trade is something that will increasingly distinguish between those who take on the mark of the beast and those who do not. The time will come when the true servants of God are pushed to a corner because the witness they bear cannot be received in “churchian” environment. And, except they know what you are going to say will build up their system, they do not give you permission to stand before their pulpit.

We know that this is not something that is happening in a very pronounced way now, but here and there, we find these tendencies. In the Old Testament, we are told when there is a true restoration, the true teachers, God’s appointed teachers in the house of God, shall no longer be removed to a corner. (Isaiah 30:20). When there is apostasy, those who have the glory of God in view are never seen, they are never known. If they must witness, they do so outside the prevailing religious systems of their day. Remember John the Baptist. He had to carry his message to the wilderness, for he had no place in the religious courts of his day.

Brethren, I believe that from the things the Lord has witnessed to, there is going to be a great deliverance coming upon multitudes of persons. Faithful servants, faithful in hearts but wrong in operations, shall be delivered as the Lord confirms His word to their hearts, in Jesus’ name.

The Lord keep you, the Lord bless you. The Lord cause His face to shine upon you. The Lord make you to know that He is a jealous God who visits the iniquity of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who set Him aside and worship human gods. The LORD keep you in Jesus’ name – AMEN.

Beloved Brethren, it is upon this note we will draw the curtain on this series. We covet your earnest prayers. We must hear from Him – He must pass His word to us to pass it through us. So until the next time He brings us your way, stay blessed in Him.