

The 3rd Angel's Message:

The message of the third angel contains the most awesome warning in all of Scripture. "Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength 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. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.'" Revelation 14:9-12. Can anyone today take the risk of not knowing what this means?

The Beast of Revelation 14. A "beast" in symbolic prophecy represents a kingdom or power. "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth." Daniel 7:23. The scope of its activity and the length of its reign, as indicated by prophecy, make a single-person identification of this "beast" impossible. It cannot be one person; it must be a "kingdom," or a system, whose life extends over many centuries.

In this context, the angel is pointing back to the beast introduced in the first verses of chapter 13, the leopard-like beast that rose from the "sea" (a populated area), was given great authority by the "dragon" (Satan working through pagan Rome), spoke "blasphemies" (made improper claims to being equal with God), continued in an uninterrupted reign for 42 prophetic "months," or 1260 literal years (538 AD to 1798 AD), made war with the saints (persecuted God's people), received a mortal wound (when the pope was captured in 1798 and the future of the papacy was jeopardized) and experienced a remarkable resurgence resulting in all the world marveling, following and worshiping the beast. It has the code identity of "666" (the "number of his name," that is, the numerical equivalent of one of the pope's titles, Vicarious Filii Dei). The first beast of Revelation 13 can be no other entity on earth than the Roman Catholic Church. Take note again that this is speaking of the hierarchy, the system of the papacy, not its people. This is speaking of a system (Catholicism) and not individual people (Catholics). Please keep that distinction in mind!

The identification of the "beast" as being the papacy rests upon at least seven different Scriptural passages. (Daniel 7, 8, 11; II Thessalonians 2; I John 2; Revelation 13; 17.) This identification of the beast as representing the historical papacy was embraced and confessed by virtually all the Reformers, although their spiritual descendants have nearly all abandoned this platform. That Protestantism today, as a whole, no longer accepts this view is a part of her remarkable and mysterious "fall."

The Image of the Beast. What is meant by the "image of the beast"? An image is a likeness; a replica or copy. This image of the beast, or image to the beast, is given life by a second prophetic animal in chapter 13, rises from the "earth" (a non-populated area) about the time the first beast (the papacy) is receiving her deadly wound (1798) and has two "Lamb-like" horns (it has a Christian appearance; the two horns standing for the twin powers of civil and religious liberty). This second beast of Revelation 13 represents the United States, coming to power about the time of the first beast's "mortal wound," which at first exemplifies the principles of freedom, but which later "speaks like a dragon," or employs the tool of force, brought to bear by legislation to compel the conscience.

The use of state power to enforce religious dogma was the method of operation employed by the first beast described in that chapter. The papacy claimed the authority to dictate in

spiritual matters, on pain of persecution or death. In this respect the second beast, the United States, copies or replicates the behavior of the first beast. It makes an "image" or likeness of it (because it is copying what the first beast did), and to it, since by so doing it compels worship in the manner directed by the papacy. It is an act of homage to the papal see. This has not happened yet, but soon will, as unbelievable as it may seem.

The Mark of the Beast. What is meant by the "mark" of the beast? We know that the beast represents the papacy, not a computer in Belgium or a single dictator. What does she claim as being the mark of her authority? It is the change of the day of worship from the seventh to the first day of the week. That which God enjoined by placing in the very heart of the Ten Commandments, the seventh day Sabbath, the Commandment which begins with the word "remember," the papacy has claimed the authority to change without any Scriptural backing. This is her own testimony. The reading of any catechism will bear this out. She challenges modern Sunday-keeping Protestantism to find scriptural authority for worshiping on the first day of the week. (See www.romeschallenge.com and www.sabbathtruth.com.) She claims the change of the day of worship from the seventh day to the first is her "mark of authority." And why not, seeing that nearly all of Christianity obeys her, and not Scripture, in trampling on God's holy Commandment!

Since the word "worship" is repeated no less than 8 times in chapters 13 and 14 of Revelation; since we are invited to worship "Him Who made" as part of the first angel's message; since those described as being saints at His coming are those who "keep the commandments of God," does it not follow that the intentional disregard of God's commandment regarding the day of worship is a solemn and serious act of defiance?

Does anyone have the "mark of the beast" today? No. It is when the second beast "speaks" as a dragon, which it does through its legislative body, that this mark is implemented. When Sunday worship becomes law, then anyone who knowingly transgresses against the sacred Sabbath of Jehovah will be "marked" as being apostate.

On the other hand, those who express their appreciation of and loyalty for God by obeying all His commandments, including the fourth which identifies the Sabbath as being the seventh-day, will receive His mark, the "seal of God," written on their foreheads, indicating that their minds and characters are in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom. Revelation 7:3, 4. Having this "seal" is the same as having the "Father's name written on their foreheads." Revelation 14:1. Neither the "mark of the beast" nor the "seal of God" will be marks that can be seen by human eyes. As the "beast" is a symbol, so is his mark, as well as the "seal of God." Don't look for visible tattoos or barcodes. These are marks that heaven sees. Ezekiel 9:1-11.

The Patience of the Saints. Of all people, those who endure the trials and privations that will assault this planet before Christ comes back will need divine patience. They will exclaim when they see their King in the sky, "We have waited for Him, and He will save us." Isaiah 25:9. James encourages us, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." James 5:7, 8.

The Commandments of God. The messages of the Three Angels close with this encouraging announcement. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The "commandments of God" can be no other than the 10 Commandments, inscribed by God's own finger, representing His

character of love and the principles of His kingdom. Though attacked by Satan, they have never been removed nor altered by God. They are still binding on all humanity. Matthew 5:17-19. They point out sin, and are “holy, just and good.” Romans 7:7, 12. They will be the standard in the final judgment, and breaking one of them makes one guilty of all. James 2:10-12.

It is true that in our human nature, we are incapable of obeying God's law, but through the merciful provisions of the New Covenant and “better promises,” that is, God's promises, the sins of our past can be forgiven and the principles of His law can be written on our hearts through the ministry of the Spirit. Hebrews 8:8-10. Obedience to His commandments, through His indwelling power and grace, is the hallmark of our allegiance and loyalty to His government. Obedience is the litmus test of love and the highest form of worship. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15.

Someone observed that “life makes circles.” That statement rings true, in that the issues that surfaced in the Garden of Eden will come full circle as this earth nears its close. In Genesis 3 the issues were love, faith and obedience. These will be the issues again at the end. Will people love, believe and obey their Creator God?

The faith of Jesus. Through His Good News, God promises that He will plant in our hearts a new way of thinking, which will result in a new way of living. We can be “transformed” (experience “metamorphosis”) by the renewing of our minds. Romans 12:1, 2. The Christian is promised that Christ's “mind” can be implanted within us. Philippians 2:5. If we have His mind, His way of thinking, it stands to reason that we will also have “His faith.” We can not only have faith “in” Jesus, which is a very good thing, but we are promised also that we can have “His faith;” the “faith of Jesus.” It is this faith, the same type of victorious faith that Jesus exercised, received as a gift from God, that will result in God's people being able to overcome the beast and his image and the mark of his name, and will ultimately provide the answer to the question Jesus posed centuries ago, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8. Pray that God will give you this faith today! Pray that you will honour Him by obeying, through His grace, all of His commandments!