

THE LAST DAY OF PROPHECY

DISCOVER THE REST OF THE STORY

GOD'S SEAL OR SATAN'S MARK?

Did you know there are very specific rules in professional sports governing uniform colors? Obviously, a game played by opposing teams wearing the same or similar colors would be very confusing to players and spectators alike. That's why most American football teams wear white on the road but wear uniforms with color when playing at home.

Likewise, in the cosmic battle between good and evil, the Creator of the universe has placed a distinguishing seal—a spiritual uniform—upon His people to indicate they are on His team. On the other hand, Satan's insignia is called the “mark of the beast.” This is how the world will know the difference between God's people and Satan's followers.

What are these spiritual uniforms? How can you know which team you are on?

IDENTIFYING THE BEAST

In order to identify the “mark of the beast,” we must first identify the beast. How does the Bible describe it? **REVELATION 13:1–8, 16–18** provides these **11 IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS**.

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| A. Rises from the sea (verse 1)
— “sea” represents people | G. Strong religious power (verses 3, 8) |
| B. Composite of the four beasts of Daniel 7 (verse 2) | H. Guilty of blasphemy (verses 1, 5, 6)
— attempts to change times and laws |
| C. Dragon gives it power and authority (verse 2) | I. Wars with and overcomes the saints (verse 7)
— persecutes God's people |
| D. Receives a deadly wound (verse 3)
— represents loss of political power | J. Rules for 42 months (verse 5)
— exercises power for 1,260 years |
| E. Deadly wound healed (verse 3) | K. Has a mysterious number 666 (verse 18) |
| F. Strong political power (verses 3, 7) | |

A “beast” in Bible prophecy is a nation or state. And through a careful study of **DANIEL 7** and the antichrist, many church historians, scholars, and even the major Reformers, such as Martin Luther and John Wesley, have identified this religious-political beast power as none other than the papacy.

What does the number 666 mean? This verse says, “It is the number of a man,” and **REVELATION 15:2** says it is “the number of his name.” What is the pope's official name? An official Catholic source says, “The title of the pope of Rome is ‘Vicarius Filii Dei’” (English: “Vicar of the Son of God”). In fact, in some versions of the Bible, a footnote for **REVELATION 13:18** says, “The numeral letters of his name shall make up this number.” Indeed, when you add up the numeral value of each individual letter in Vicarius Filii Dei, the sum is 666.

Now that we have identified the beast, we can discover its mark, or symbol of authority. But first, let's look at God's sign of authority.

GOD'S SYMBOL

What is the seal of God and His sign of authority? First and foremost, the Holy Spirit is the inner seal (**EPHESIANS 1:13; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:22**). But there is also something external in the life that can be observed. The Bible says, “I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them” (**EZEKIEL 20:12**).

God's sign—or mark—of authority is found in the fourth commandment. God gave us His Sabbath as the seal of His power to create and to sanctify. (In the Bible, the words seal, sign, mark, and token are used interchangeably.) **REVELATION 7:1–3** says His seal will be written upon the foreheads (minds, **HEBREWS 10:16**) of His people.

The seal of an ancient king always contained three things: the name, title, and territory of the ruling power. These three things are found in the Sabbath commandment. “For in six days the LORD **[HIS NAME]**, made **[HIS OFFICE, CREATOR]**, the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them **[HIS TERRITORY]** and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (**EXODUS 20:11**).

This seal signifies that God's people are, indeed, His and have His character. **HEBREWS 4:4–10** confirms this by saying that when we enter His rest (receive salvation), we should keep His seventh-day Sabbath holy as a symbol, or mark, of salvation.

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THE SYMBOL OF THE BEAST

If God's mark of salvation is the Sabbath, what does the papacy say is the Roman Church's symbol of authority? Notice the following section from the Catholic Catechism:

“QUESTION: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

ANSWER: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.”

And the *Catholic Record* of London, Ontario, in 1923, said, “Sunday is our mark of authority. . . . The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.” The papacy here admits that it attempted to change God's Sabbath to Sunday—and that virtually all Christian churches accepted this as a new holy day. Thus, the papacy claims that Sunday is the mark, or symbol, of her power and authority.

However, those who follow Jesus and obey His truth will keep His Sabbath day holy and receive His mark. Those who expect to refuse the beast's mark in the future must willingly step under Jesus' Sabbath banner when the light of this truth is made known to them.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Q. Isn't the mark of the beast a tattoo or a computer chip planted under the skin?

A. No. In the Bible, “in the hand” and “in the forehead” are often used as symbols for our thoughts and actions (**DEUTERONOMY 6:8; EXODUS 13:9**). It signifies a choice in our minds (foreheads) to worship the beast—and actions (hand) to obey the beast power and keep her day sacred instead of honoring God's Sabbath.

Q. Did God predict that the beast power would attempt to change His law?

A. Yes. “He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and *think to change times and laws*” (**DANIEL 7:25**, emphasis added).

Q. Has God given warnings regarding His law and sign?

A. Yes. “Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them” (**EZEKIEL 22:26**).

Q. What decisive message does God deliver to His people in the last days?

A. “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, ... then you shall delight yourself in the LORD” (**ISAIAH 58:1, 13, 14**).

Q. Do people who worship on Sunday (as a holy day) have the mark of the beast now?

A. No! No one will have the mark of the beast until Sunday worship becomes an issue forced by law. At that time, those who knowingly decide to follow the false teachings of the beast over the commandments of God will receive the mark of the beast.

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