



## **The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast**

*<sup>14</sup>And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. <sup>15</sup>And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup>And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, <sup>17</sup>and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. <sup>18</sup>Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.*

— Revelation 13:14-18

There are precious few “new” things introduced in the book of Revelation which do not have obvious, previous parallels in other Scripture, but in Revelation 13 we are introduced to two: the False Prophet and the mark of the beast. Now that we’re plainly aware of their existence, things previously concealed in God’s Word teaching about them become apparent in a backward-compatible fashion. But there is probably no feature of the End Times more theorized, speculated nor taken out of its original context than the mark. In point of fact, whereas 100% of the more than 300 prophesies fulfilled in Christ’s First Coming literally came true, throughout Church history and feverishly continuing to the present hour, all manner of fulfillment of the mark has been assigned anything **but** a literal fulfillment. Recent revelations of a Bill Gates suggested biometric tattoo is but the latest candidate for the mark. The following is offered as a refresher of what Scripture dictates where the mark is concerned and must be present in the final fulfillment of the mark to come.

### **1. The mark comes through the False Prophet**

Although we commonly call it the mark of the beast, that is really only the content of the mark; the mark itself is an activity assigned exclusively to the False Prophet, which is the “he” referred to in Revelation 13:11-18. If we carefully exegete this primary scriptural source for the final figure to come, it easily becomes apparent that the False Prophet has two main purposes: to deceive the world and to focus worship of the Antichrist.

“The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast”, Page 1 of 6

- “...he **deceives** those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast...” (Rev. 13:14)
- “...he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship** the first beast...” (Rev. 13:12)

At first blush I realize this is going to seem picky, but it’s actually a crucial point for properly understanding the role and timing of the mark in the scheme of the End Times. More than 99% of the time, commentators (amateur and professional alike) speak of the mark as something which is the work of the first beast of the sea— the main figure of the Antichrist. But he does not initiate it nor require it; that is the exclusive work of the False Prophet.

*And he [False Prophet] **causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.** (Rev. 13:16-17)*

We keep talking about the mark and its associated economic restriction as a primary feature of Antichrist when it is actually assigned to the False Prophet. So many of the proposals of what might materialize as the mark, such as computer chips, are offered in a complete vacuum apart from the False Prophet and must therefore be warily considered. (In fact, the primary theme of Revelation 13 is to distinguish the roles and personal characteristics of the first beast of the sea—Antichrist, and the second beast of the land—the False Prophet.)

For instance, Bill and Melinda Gates subscribe to an unconventional personal agenda that the world’s overall problems will primarily be solved through population control, and even more specifically that by means of vaccination. Their logic is that the more children that can be kept alive, the less that the Third World in particular will engage in human reproduction. An idea they are promoting is a biometric tattoo which can be imprinted with vaccination and medical information so that when children in the Third World must flee to another country or away from war or pestilence (and their families), First World responders will have the necessary health record physically available to place the children into new homes. Unless Bill has a forthcoming gig as the False Prophet, this hardly qualifies as the work of this final figure to come. And as it will be shortly evident, this proposal fails nearly every test of the authentic mark to come.

But the key qualification of the mark is that its appearance coincides with the arrival and working of the False Prophet and never actually draws the involvement of Antichrist. This is because it is integral to the overriding “ministry” of the False Prophet to not just deceive the world, but to promote direct worship of Antichrist, even extorting the world economically to achieve those ends.

## **2. The mark is associated with worship**

*He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down***

“The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast”, Page 2 of 6

*out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. (Rev. 13:12-13)*

When we understand the role and working of the Holy Spirit, we can see several key characteristics which the False Prophet imitates. While the Holy Spirit never testifies of Himself and always points to Christ, likewise the False Prophet so functions in relation to Antichrist. The Holy Spirit is never worshiped individually but always in the context of the Trinity, and neither is the False Prophet worshiped in and of himself but is always an agent fostering exclusive worship of the Beast. Even more to the point, Scripture provides the unambiguous and plain explanation that both the image of the beast and the mark, which are the exclusive purview of the False Prophet, cannot be separated from worship of the Beast:

*Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, **"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. (Rev. 14:9-10)***

There is sort of a package deal described here, a kind of "trifecta" of worship. The image and the mark are designed as part of the number one goal of the satanically possessed Antichrist, to be worshipped, but effected and administered by the False Prophet.

In the original text, chapters 12-14 are one continual text which must all be studied together, not taking any individual item out of context. In chapter 14, Satan and company are ejected from heaven so that we can see Satan as the dragon as the source for the first beast from the sea (Antichrist) and the second beast from the land (False Prophet). They therefore take on all the qualities and agenda of Satan who is well-documented in Scripture as obsessed with subsuming God's role in man's heart in order to be worshiped in God's place.

Therefore, when considering a viable fulfillment for the mark, ask the rhetorical question, "Can something be worshiped by accident?" Of course not. There must be a direct and unambiguous connection between the mark and a willful desire to worship Antichrist; it cannot be secretly or accidentally administered. Whereas believers are sealed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as an affirmation of Whom they worship, the False Prophet physically marks, or seals, those who are willing and voluntary worshipers of the Beast.

### **3. The mark is EITHER a number OR a name**

*And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, **either the name of the beast or the number of his name. (Rev. 13:16-17)***

Now repeat after me five times:

"The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast", Page 3 of 6

1. "...**EITHER** the name of the beast **OR** the number of his name."
2. "...**EITHER** the name of the beast **OR** the number of his name."
3. "...**EITHER** the name of the beast **OR** the number of his name."
4. "...**EITHER** the name of the beast **OR** the number of his name."
5. "...**EITHER** the name of the beast **OR** the number of his name."

The very first thing mentioned is the plain, unencrypted name of this final figure, and yet this is almost universally ignored in exchange for speculating endlessly about nothing but solving the puzzle of "666".

Back in the 90s, when the most propagated solution was that the mark was the bar code found on all goods and inventory, I just happened to be working for a very large, worldwide corporation where we were beginning to implement bar codes. This fanciful notion began with the mistaken belief that the middle section of every bar code contained a "666". It does not, and there are many Internet sources which now explain this error. But even if it were true, this is only half the equation. Where is the Beast's plainly provided name?

One would think that it would be reassuring to know that the riddle of "666" in a certain sense will present its own solution because it is an either/or situation wherein the explicitly revealed plain text of the man's name is one of the options. So much overemphasis on cracking the code has led to some weird form of spiritual myopia overlooking what is plainly stated in Scripture and to instead embrace all manner of speculation in solutions which only involve half of the equation.

Personally, I believe this is what us computer geeks might call a biblical form of "two-factor authentication". In other words, **BOTH** parts must be present so as to authenticate the other. The plain name will verify the encryption and the encryption will authenticate his name. This just might be a safety net to prevent us from misidentifying this final figure.

#### **4. There is no "number" without the man**

There is a very important scriptural detail which is quickly passed over which documents the timing of the appearance of the mark.

*He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, **whose fatal wound was healed**...And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast **who had the wound of the sword and has come to life**. (Rev. 13:12, 14)*

What is described not just as a "fatal wound" but further clarified as "the wound of the sword and has come to life" is referring to what is specified earlier as a key characteristic of Antichrist:

*I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; **they worshiped the dragon** because he gave his authority to the beast; and **they worshiped the beast**, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" (Rev. 13:3-4)*

"The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast", Page 4 of 6

This is a turning point when this future world leader, who effects a counterfeit of the Messiah's resurrection, is not just worshiped for himself, but Satan his animator.

When discussing the mark, it is often assumed that as soon as Antichrist appears and begins working in public that the mark simultaneously debuts. But as previously discussed, not only is the mark an exclusive work of the False Prophet, but the mark will not make its public appearance until further into the timeline of the final working of Antichrist. In the course of his role as a military leader he will distinguish himself from all previous leaders in history by miraculously recovering from what the text describes as "*the wound of the sword*". That this is something incurred in the course of military conflict is affirmed by the accompanying reaction, "...*who is able to wage war with him?*" In other words, the False Prophet is going to leverage this seminal event to escalate the groundswell of worship developing around Antichrist at this latter point rather than attempt it from the outset.

So many of the theories about the mark seem to be presented in a vacuum without the presence of the Antichrist himself much less allow for its proper appearance after this seminal milestone. This may also go a long way toward explaining why the mark can be **either** his name **or** his number as he will already be a revered, known figure whose exploits are transforming him into a living legend and icon. But in order to leverage this milestone as part of the mark, the miraculous event (whether authentic or faked) needs to have already taken place.

### **Well, Yeah...But...**

There will be many who are quick to assert that just because something does not qualify today as a prophetic fulfillment of the mark does not mean it cannot be leveraged in the future. This is absolutely true, but aside from the fact that it will have to meet **all** biblical requirements, there are additional considerations.

First of all is how often these proposed solutions, particularly those involving 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, are presented with the tacit implication (and at times even overt assertion) that if Christians don't watch out, the acceptance of the technological proposal du jour will result in being tricked into taking the mark or into taking it by accident. In our brief review of the scriptural requirements, can you be tricked into or accidentally find yourself worshiping something? Can the False Prophet remain as yet undetected and his mark be executed before the End Times timeline has commenced? How is it that the Beast's name and number is so often hidden from view in these theories? Such proposals in modern times bring to the table an agenda born out of fear that is often doing anything but properly preparing us for the final events to come. And, by the way, it testifies to non-believers that Christians don't actually believe in the plain text of God's Word. Revelation 13 is actually an elongated promise that believers will absolutely identify him.

Second, proponents seem to be seeing the whole world as being exactly the same as the developed West. How do you implement a microchip solution in that third of the geographical world who does not have access to technology, a computer or even smart phone, and often still lacks electricity? The only way a mark prevents someone in that slice of the world's population, where currency (digital or otherwise) has yet to replace the barter system, is to implement a **literal** mark on the forehead or back of the hand.

This is further complicated even in the West where in the next breath after asserting such solutions, there are those who go on to discuss the possibility of sunspot activity which would kill off electrical supplies or the need to use the Internet as its primary vehicle

["The Facts Concerning the Mark of the Beast", Page 5 of 6](#)

which can so easily be switched off or restricted. In other words, this path to biblical interpretation often leads to self-cancellation and even scenarios in which it is impossible to sustain them.

Third, every primary example of marking recorded in Scripture is a **literal** marking, whether it be the blood of the Passover lamb in the Exodus, the marking of the faithful remnant in Ezekiel, or that of the 144,000 in Revelation. Such fits best in the scriptural model of something accepted as a conscious, willful choice. It is interesting to study the rules for marking presented in the Torah and the various types found throughout the canon of God's Word.

As with most theories which offer an interpretation which is not obvious and requires some degree of extrapolation, it is far easier to believe in a literal fulfillment of the plain text. As mentioned previously, such worked successfully for every prophecy fulfilled in the First Coming, and it is going to work again for the Second Coming. These simple basics are more than enough for us to navigate their role in the Last Days so that we do not have to unnecessarily complicate our understanding of what to expect, nor to introduce incompatible fear into our faith and testimony.

In Him,

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