

What Is the Mark of the Beast? #3

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 13:15-17

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Rev. Greg L. Price

Although the primary focus in Revelation 13 is upon the three great satanic inspired enemies of Christ (the Civil Beast of the Revived Roman Empire of Europe and its Head, the Ecclesiastical Beast of the Harlot Church of Rome and its clergy, and the Image of the Beast, which is the Papal Antichrist), and although the Roman “world” of Europe (both great and small) receives the Mark of the Beast in submitting the conscience to the Civil Beast at the command of the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy), let us not forget that there is a remnant of faithful witnesses for Christ, who refuse to worship by an absolute obedience the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papal Antichrist) and who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast in submitting their consciences to the lordship of the Civil Beast. Those faithful witnesses of Christ, who refuse to give an absolute obedience to the Papal Antichrist and who refuse to submit their consciences to the lordship of the Beast, are those in Scripture and in history with whom I want to associate and with whom I want to identify myself. Dear ones, I want to walk in their footsteps (as they followed Christ). I want to stand with them (as they stood with Christ) in all their trials, afflictions, and tribulations that have come against them for refusing to submit their consciences to an Antichristian State, to an Antichristian Church, or to an Antichristian Pope or Clergy. I pray for a faithfulness to Christ in the face of death like that of the faithful Covenanter Minister, James Guthrie, who as he was about to be put to death left the following faithful testimony for all posterity to hear:

I do bear my witness to the National Covenant of Scotland, and Solemn League and Covenant betwixt the three kingdoms. These sacred, solemn, public oaths of God, I believe can be loosed or dispensed with by no person, or party, or power, upon earth, but are still binding upon these three kingdoms, and will be so for ever hereafter, and are ratified and sealed by the conversion of many thousand souls, since our entering thereinto. . . . I take God to record upon my soul, I would not exchange this scaffold with the palace or mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain. Blessed be God, who hath shown mercy to me such a wretch, and has revealed his Son in me, and made me a minister of the everlasting Gospel . . . Jesus Christ is my light and my life, my righteousness, my strength, and my salvation, and all my desire. Him! O Him! I do, with all the strength of my soul, commend to you.

When after he had ascended the scaffold, he lifted up the napkin off his face, just before he was turned over to the hangman, and cried out loudly for all to hear,

The Covenants, the Covenants, shall yet be Scotland’s reviving.

I pray, dear ones, with all my heart that you desire to have the Seal of God upon your forehead (to submit your consciences to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, regardless of what God brings into your life) like that faithful witness, James Guthrie, rather than to follow the crowd as they take the Mark of the Beast upon their forehead (and submit their consciences to the lordship of any man, whether Pope or Minister, whether King, President, Judge, or Congress).

This Lord’s Day, we will seek to bring together those places in the Book of Revelation that reveal track the remnant of Christ’s faithful witnesses who refuse to worship with an absolute obedience the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) and who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast by submitting their consciences to the

lordship of the Beast. The two main points of the sermon this Lord's Day are the following: (1) Snapshots of the Faithful Witnesses of Christ in the Book of Revelation; (2) Snapshots of the Faithful Witnesses of Christ in the Book of History.

I. Snapshots of the Faithful Witnesses of Christ in the Book of Revelation.

A. We left off in the previous sermon briefly noting from Revelation 13:15-17 that for those who refuse to worship the Papacy (i.e. the Image of the Beast) with an absolute obedience or who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast in submitting their consciences to lordship of the Beast at the command of the Papacy, there are grave and severe consequences: death (Revelation 13:15) and deprivation (Revelation 13:17). We have spent quite a lot of time in past sermons identifying the prophetic enemies of Christ, but let us spend some time today in identifying the prophetic witnesses of Christ, who do not bow the knee to the Civil Beast or to the Papacy and who do not take the Mark of the Beast.

B. There are four snapshots from the Book of Revelation of those who faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ and do not take the Mark of the Beast in submitting their consciences to the lordship of anyone or anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible Word (as revealed in Holy Scripture).

1. **The first snapshot** of those who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast is revealed in Revelation 7:3-4 and Revelation 14:1 as the **144,000**. I submit that the number is a symbolic number of completion—all of Christ's redeemed ones who go through the 1,260 year period battle with the Civil Beast, the Ecclesiastical Beast, and the Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) are sealed with the name of God on their foreheads (12 x 12 x 1,000). The New Jerusalem has 12 gates and 12 foundations (Revelation 21:12-14). Also the wall in the New Jerusalem is 144 cubits high (12 x 12). The number of elders (representing the Church Triumphant) in Revelation 4:8 is 24 (12 x 2—the Old Testament believers and the New Testament believers).

a. Note that these are called "the servants of God" and have the seal of God figuratively on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3) or the name of God figuratively written on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1). In other words, in contrast to the greater population of the Roman European Empire who figuratively take the Mark of the Beast on their foreheads (thereby acknowledging their conscientious submission to the lordship of the Beast), the 144,000 will not take the Mark of the Beast because they have the seal or name of God figuratively written on their foreheads and will only submit their consciences to the lordship of God and His inspired Scriptures (and to that which is agreeable to the Scriptures).

b. Next, observe that the 144,000 faithful servants of God are taken from out of the greater Israel: 12,000 from all the tribes of the children of Israel (according to Revelation 7:4). Thus, if the 144,000 represent the faithful and redeemed servants of Christ (who in conscience and in outward obedience follow Him even to the point of death, if necessary), then the larger Israel and 12 tribes from which they are taken must represent those who are unfaithful servants—who outwardly profess that they are members of Christ and His Church, but who actually take the Mark of the Beast and follow the Image of the Beast (the Papacy). In other words, the faithful 144,000 are taken from out of the midst of and distinguished from the unfaithful larger Israel.

c. But who do Israel and the 12 tribes represent from whom the 144,000 are taken? Is Israel to be interpreted literally or figuratively? Are we to understand Israel as being the literal Jewish tribes of Israel or are we to understand Israel as representing the Church of the New Testament in some sense?

(1) Dispensationalists identify Israel to be Israel after the flesh due to a literal principle of interpretation (which I submit is arbitrary—e.g. "the whore of Babylon" in Revelation 17 is interpreted symbolically for a false religious system, but "Israel" for some reason must always be understood literally). I submit that the infallible rule by which to interpret Scripture is Scripture itself, not some arbitrary

rule of literal interpretation, which is applied literally, even when Scripture would lead us to different conclusions.

(2) It should be evident from the text itself in Revelation 7:5-8 that the Holy Spirit does not intend us to interpret Israel literally, for one of the tribes of Israel is entirely omitted and not included under any other tribe in the list (the tribe of Dan). This list of the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:5-8 is not found any other place in all of Scripture. That is a significant clue. It's like a flashing neon light, pointing away from a literal use of Israel to a figurative use of Israel. I submit that the 12 tribes of Israel that are listed in Revelation 7:5-8 are not literally the 12 tribes of Israel after the flesh.

(3) But note that the 144,000 are redeemed by the Lamb from the earth (Revelation 14:3) and redeemed from among men (Revelation 14:4), i.e. redeemed from the world of men generally and not from the nation of Israel exclusively. Moreover, in Revelation 21:12, the names of the 12 tribes of Israel appear upon the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem (which is not the literal city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel, but which represents the glorified Church of Jesus Christ, composed of all God's redeemed ones from among Jews and Gentiles, Revelation 21:10). If the use of the term "Jerusalem" (in Revelation 21:10) is not to be taken literally, then neither should the use of the term "Israel" (in Revelation 21:12).

(4) The entire Book of Revelation takes names and symbols from the Old Testament and uses them figuratively for New Covenant realities (type and antitype, promise and fulfillment): temple, ark of the covenant, altar of incense, priests to God, Jerusalem, and Israel.

(5) When we look beyond the Book of Revelation, we find that Paul calls Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) and the children of Abraham (Romans 4:16); he calls a Christian (whether Jew or Gentile) a Jew (Romans 2:29), and the circumcision (Philippians 3:3). The New Testament Church is also called the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16) and the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15).

(6) I submit that when we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (rather than imposing some man-made standard of literal interpretation), we are led to interpret the larger Israel consisting of 12 tribes (in Revelation 7:3-8) as representing the corrupt Church in name only (the Harlot Church of Rome and her harlot daughters in Revelation 17); and the 144,000 taken from the 12 tribes of Israel as representing the pure Church in spiritual reality (the Church of God's redeemed ones), who have the name of God written on their foreheads in submitting their consciences to God alone as Lord of the conscience.

2. **A second snapshot** of those who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast is depicted in Revelation 11:1-2 as the temple of God (i.e. the pure and faithful Church, who worships the Lord in spirit and truth). Just as the Lord seals the 144,000 on their foreheads as representing the submission of their consciences to the lordship of Christ, so here the temple of God is measured as representing the submission of their consciences to the lordship of Christ in doctrine, worship, and church government. However, there is outside the temple the outer court, which is not to be measured as having a pure conscience submitted to the lordship of Christ in doctrine, worship, and church government. It is the corrupt Church (the Harlot Church of Rome and her harlot daughters that imitate her). This corrupt Church that professes to be Christ's Church does not actually belong to Christ, but belongs to the Gentiles (who introduce into the Church the doctrine and practice of the nations rather than the doctrine and practice of Christ). This is what is also depicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. It is the Papacy that sits upon his throne in some part of the temple (or church) of God—the Church of Rome.

3. **A third snapshot** of those who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast is depicted in Revelation 11:3 as **Two Witnesses** (the number 2 being figurative for the number or pairs of disciples that Christ sent out to bear testimony to Christ and His Kingdom, according to Mark 6:7).

a. The Book of Revelation speaks of Christ as being "the faithful and true Witness" (Revelation 3:14); for He is absolutely trustworthy in all His promises to His people and only bears testimony of

that which is true. Christ is, without exception at any time or in any situation, One upon whom you can rely to keep His word and to tell the truth.

b. And so those who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast are Christ's witnesses, because they faithfully and accurately testify for Christ against all heresy, abomination, and tyranny in Church and State. They faithfully prophesy (or bear witness and testify) for 1,260 prophetic days according to Revelation 11:3 (or using the inspired Day-Year Principle, 1,260 calendar years).

c. The Lord grants them His protection, so that though they are grievously persecuted, they are not entirely destroyed. The Lord uses them to declare God's judgments upon their enemies by their preaching, their prayers, and their censures (Revelation 11:5-6).

d. Finally, we note about the Two Witnesses that just before the 1,260 year period ends, the faithful witnesses of Christ are slain by the Civil Beast of the Roman Empire of Europe according to Revelation 11:7-11 (which indicates a time of intense persecution brought against Christ's faithful witnesses by the three enemies of Christ mentioned in Revelation 13). The faithful witnesses of Christ will be treated with contempt and hatred (their bodies lying unburied) for 3 ½ prophetic days (or 3 ½ calendar years using the Day-Year Principle). They are faithful witnesses because they bear a faithful testimony for Christ and His truth even to the point of death (Revelation 12:11—a justifying testimony, a verbal testimony, and a dying testimony).

e. After that 3 ½ year period in which the faithful testimony of Christ is greatly silenced, the faithful witnesses will come to life in a new generation of faithful witnesses of Christ (Revelation 11:12), which figurative resurrection is likewise called the first resurrection that leads to the millennial reign of Christ from heaven over the whole world (Revelation 20:4-5).

4. **A fourth and final snapshot** of those who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast is depicted in Revelation 12:14, where we find **a faithful woman (the faithful bride of Christ)** fleeing into the wilderness because of the persecution brought against her by the dragon (Satan). Satan seeks to destroy her in Revelation 12:15 by means of a flood of heresy (that proceeds from the False Prophet i.e. the Harlot Church of Rome and from the Image of the Beast i.e. the Papacy), and by a flood of tyranny in taking the Mark of the Beast (so as to avoid death and deprivation from the Civil Beast). But the Lord protects His pure and faithful Bride, so that Satan cannot destroy her even in the midst of great trial and persecution (Revelation 12:16). Christ will not allow His pure and faithful bride to be harmed by the deception of heresy or by the imposition of tyranny.

II. Snapshots of the Faithful Witnesses of Christ in the Book of History.

A. In this section of the sermon, I would like to briefly leave you with what the Civil Beast and the Image of the Beast have brought by way of persecution, death, and deprivation against those faithful witnesses of Christ, who refuse to worship by absolute obedience the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) and who refuse to take the Mark of the Beast in submitting their consciences to the lordship of the Civil Beast. I submit that we see in the Inquisition of the Harlot Church of Rome that was used against the faithful witnesses of Christ leading up to, during, and after the Protestant Reformation an example of how the Papacy (i.e. the Image of the Beast) was to be worshipped by way of an absolute obedience (otherwise death would follow) and how the Papacy (i.e. the Image of the Beast) turned the faithful witness of Christ over to the Civil Beast to submit the conscience to him (otherwise he would bring death and deprivation upon the faithful witnesses of Christ).

1. A Brief History of the Papal Inquisition.

The Fourth Lateran Council in Rome (1215) declared that unrepentant heretics should be excommunicated, and turned over to the Civil Beast for punishment. Confiscation of property was explicitly allowed. Thus, one

of the areas of greatest abuse in the coming Inquisition—the confiscation of property by Church and secular authorities—was officially codified by canon law (see Revelation 13:17).

The Albigenses were a proto-Reformation society of Christians (so named, because the French city of Albi was their stronghold). Persecution to stamp them out lasted for 20 years, from 1209 to 1229. While authorized by the Pope, the actual fighting was carried out primarily by royal forces (i.e. the Image of the Beast demanding the death of those who would not worship him by way of an absolute obedience, and the Civil Beast carrying out the death sentence of those who would not take his Mark of conscientious submission). Perhaps the most extreme example of bloodshed wrought by the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) and the Civil Beast was on July 22, 1209, when over 20,000 men, women and children were slaughtered in the city of Beziers, France, and those who survived suffered great economic deprivation as a result (see Revelation 13:15,17).

By 1233, the Dominicans (the order founded by Dominic in 1217) were given by the Papacy the primary charter to act as Inquisitors, joined shortly thereafter by the Franciscans (founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209).

The Waldenses were another proto-Reformation society of Christians, who the Papacy and the Civil Beast sought to destroy by slaughter and deprivation. William Farel, an associate of John Calvin, was instrumental in their formal integration into the Protestant Reformation. Few groups have suffered persecution as long and as terrible as the Waldenses, who were hunted down slaughtered, and deprived of all earthly sustenance by means of the Inquisition for hundreds of years. The most infamous incident of persecution against the Waldenses was the so called, "Piedmont Easter", when French forces massacred over 1,700 Waldensian men, women, and children.

By the 1540s, the Harlot Church of Rome was reeling from the affects of the Protestant Reformation all through Europe. Where once the Pope reigned supreme over all of Western Christendom, by 1540, whole countries had been lost to the Protestant Reformation, including England, Germany, and Switzerland. France, too, was starting to look shaky, as a community of Calvinists (the Huguenots) were rapidly growing in numbers. The Image of the Beast (i.e. the Papacy) determined that something must be done to stem the tide of the Reformation. So the strategy of the Counter Reformation was put into place.

The Counter Reformation used several methods to attempt to save the Harlot Church of Rome. First, the Pope called a Church Council—the Council of Trent met from 1545–1563, restating basic Catholic beliefs and anathematizing all Protestants who would not worship the Image of the Beast by giving an absolute obedience to an “infallible” Pope and Council. Second, the Papacy created a new militant religious order (the Jesuits, who soon systematized two prophetic systems, Preterism and Futurism, which took the focus of the Papacy being Antichrist, and rather placed the focus on a past Antichrist or a future Antichrist). Third, the Papacy promoted war in Protestant strongholds (The 30 Years War, in Germany). Fourth, the Papacy used one more tool with ruthless efficiency—the Inquisition.

In June 21, 1542, Pope Paul III reconstituted the Papal Inquisition (in the *Licet ab initio* Bull) and gave the Papal Inquisition a new title: the "Holy Office" (*Sanctum Officium*).

2. What the Faithful Witnesses of Christ Faced in the Trial of Inquisition.

Once a person had been accused, he or she was summoned to appear before the Inquisition. Such an appearance was not an absolute requirement, but failure to appear was taken as evidence of guilt. Manuals

with detailed steps to follow with those accused of heresy were written for the Inquisitors. As an illustration, the following quote comes from one of those manuals:

“The inquisitor should behave in a friendly manner and act as though he already knows the whole story. He should glance at his papers and say: ‘It’s quite clear you are not telling the truth’ or should pick up a document and look surprised, saying: ‘How can you lie to me like this when what I’ve got written down here contradicts everything you’ve told me?’ He should then continue: “Just confess—you can see that I know the whole story already.” Nicholas Eymeric, *Directorium inquisitorium* [Miroslav Hroch & Anna Skybova. *Ecclesia Militans: The Inquisition*. Dorset Press, 1988, p. 145].

Inquisition trials were held in secret. Suspects were not told the names of their accusers. The accused were not even able to call witnesses in their own defense. The fact that suspects found guilty of heresy often had to forfeit their property, meant that the Inquisition often targeted the wealthy rather than the poor.

The harshest sentences (burning at the stake and confiscation of property—Revelation 13:15,17) were reserved for two types of offenders—those who refused to recant of their heresy, and "relapsed" heretics. After faithful witnesses of Christ were burned, typically they had their property confiscated by the Civil Beast.

3. The Use of Torture in the Inquisition.

The use of torture was authorized in 1252 by Pope Innocent IV. The purpose of torture was to extract confessions. Since some people questioned whether confessions received under torture were valid, the accused would be asked to verify what they had admitted under torture several hours later. If they refused to validate their confession, they would be subject to more torture! Some of the more popular methods of torture included flogging, burning various parts of the body, the rack, and the roasting of feet over burning coals, and “water boarding” (just to name a few).

4. The Act of Faith in the Inquisition.

The final scene of the Inquisitorial process was the Act of Faith (*Auto De Fe*) at which time the “evidence” against the accused was read as well as the sentence. The Act of Faith was held in public with large crowds, typically in a town square or inside a local church. Often, the accused did not hear their sentence until the day of the Act of Faith.

Once the sentence had been read, those sentenced to death were led to the place of burning. Those that repented after being sentenced to death would be offered the courtesy of being strangled to death before being burned. Those that refused to recant were burned alive.

The Papal Inquisition was used against the faithful witnesses of Christ for over 600 years (1231-1834). But something of that nature would appear to be what will occur again according to Revelation 11:7 when the faithful witnesses of Christ are slain and are shown such contempt that their bodies lie unburied for 3 ½ years. Dear ones, it is easy to forget such cruel and inhumane atrocities ordered by the Image of the Beast (the Papacy) and the Civil Beast against the faithful witnesses of Christ when the Papacy no longer promotes publicly promotes such cruel persecution against the faithful witnesses of Christ, but rather has resorted publicly to deception and lies. But, dear ones, the Papal Inquisition against the faithful witnesses of Christ did happen. And we should never forget that it happened—and that it will happen again.

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B. Dear ones, a scriptural and historical overview of Christ’s faithful witnesses, who have faced the onslaught of these three enemies of Christ, and yet have refused to worship the Papacy by way of absolute obedience and have refused to take the Mark of the Beast by way of submitting the conscience to the lordship of the Civil Beast, should stir up the heart of every faithful witness of Christ who has the name of God written upon their foreheads to walk in their faithful footsteps (as they walked in the footsteps of Christ, the faithful and true witness). The Catholics worship the martyrs by praying to them and bowing down to their images. On the other hand, many professing Christians could care less about the faithful witnesses of Christ, who would not submit their consciences to Pope or Magistrate (it’s the present that counts, not the past). Then there are professing Christians who speak so well of the faithful witnesses and martyrs of Christ, but who deny them and bring shame upon them by teaching the very errors and heresies that they testified against (like the Pharisees at the time of Christ). But I submit that those who would be faithful witnesses for Christ in this day and age are those who walk in the faithfulness of doctrine, worship, government, and practice of the faithful witnesses of the past as they walked in the steps of the faithful and true Witness—Jesus Christ. Dear ones, we do not worship our Covenanter forefathers, nor do we forget them, nor do we speak highly of them while showing contempt for the truths for which they faithfully suffered. But we honor them as they honored Christ and His truth.

I close with one of those testimonies of a faithful witness of Christ against the Papal Antichrist and against the Civil Beast from the past that inspires me to persevere. When Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VIII, also called “Bloody Mary”, ascended to the throne of England, she waged a violent persecution against the Protestant Reformers in England with the Pope’s approval. The leader of the Protestant Reformation was Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (the Church of England was still in the process of reforming). Cranmer, when faced with the choice of recanting his Protestant faith or to be burned at the stake, signed under great duress and fear a recantation, in which the Papal Antichrist rejoiced greatly. His courage failed in that hour of trial. But he subsequently realized his great sin and by God’s grace repented of his grievous sin of denying the faith of Christ, and found abundant mercy with God. Cranmer’s great fall became the occasion of Cranmer’s great triumph. For when he was led to the stake to be burned, he stood boldly with unwavering courage as the flames rose around him, and from the midst of those flames, Thomas Cranmer, the faithful witness of Jesus Christ, put forth his hand (the very one that had at one time signed away his faith out of fear), and he testified to the Lord and all who witnessed, “This unworthy right hand”, and steadily lifted his hand toward heaven. None showed greater courage than Thomas Cranmer. Though his sin was great, God’s mercy and grace was greater. Dear ones, we, too, are weak, but God is great. Let us stand now and forevermore as faithful witnesses of Christ in the greatness and faithfulness of our faithful and true Witness, Jesus Christ.

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