

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVII

November 30, 2008

No. 48

The Mark Of The Beast

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Both “beasts” in the book of Revelation receive their great authority from, and speak as the “dragon”, which in the book is identified as “Satan” or the “Devil” (Revelation 13:3, 11, 12::9). The beast coming out of the sea speaks blasphemies against God and the beast coming out of the earth, through deceitful signs, causes men to worship the image of the first beast (Revelation 13:6, 14). In the later part of the first century, Caesar worship was practiced and even demanded of the subjects of Rome. Domitian, for example, demanded the recognition as “lord and god”. The second beast which is the “false prophet” in Revelation symbolizes the spiritual aspect of pagan idolatry demanding Caesar worship (Revelation 13:15, 20:10).

This demand caused conflict in the conscience of the Christian. Only God is to be worshipped, and here one was put in the place of worshipping Caesar as “God” or “be killed” (Revelation 13:15). Every person, both “the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond” were included. In order to iden-

tify them as worshippers of the first beast, the second beast demands “that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead” (Revelation 13:15). Not only was the threat of death upon those who did not worship the first beast, but one could not engage in commerce unless they had the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:17).

The Greek word “CHARAGMA”, translated “mark”, is defined as a “stamp, etching, engraving or impress.” It was used in describing work in stone, or a brand on a horse, or marking a slave as one’s property. In Revelation, it is used to distinguish the emperor worshippers from those who refused to compromise their honor of the one true God. The fact that it was placed upon the forehead and hand may symbolize that the one with the mark was devoted in thought (forehead) and action (hand) to serving Caesar as god.

Many ideas of what this mark is have been presented. Those who think the beast’s coming is imminent say this beast will use the “bar codes” that are in place

today and will demand that all have this code placed beneath the skin for identification. We need to remember that the mark was placed “upon ” the forehead and “on” the hand so that clear identification could be made as to whom one was devoted, not mysteriously beneath the skin only to be detected by scanners.

As the mark identifies the worshippers of Caesar, the Christian who is steadfast and not willing to compromise, has written on his or her forehead “the name of God” (Revelation 3:12, 22:4) To protect God’s servants from his wrath upon earth God says, “hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (Revelation 7:3). The Christian under the stress of not being able to “buy or sell” and the ultimate sentence of death, needed to know that the mark of the beast was only the “number of a man” (Revelation 13:18). He is not God, but merely a man. He will fall, and in the end this beast and the false prophet promoting him are both cast into the fires of torment (Revelation 20:10).