

Marked • Rev. 13:16-18

INTRO • Read vs. • Today

1. What we find in these verses has been a *mystery* to students of the Bible for most of history.
2. John writes of something that until just recently were hard to understand.
3. Until this generation, there was no technology for what we find here.
4. But now the stage is set for a ***quite literal*** fulfillment of this.
5. The message today is a bit different from our usual fare.
  - a. The Sunday sermon is usually devoted to some aspect of the Christian life.
  - b. But today we're going to ***first***, drill down on what John says here.
  - c. ***Then***, take a closer look at some interesting developments that move us to the conclusion all this may happen sooner rather than later.

Set the Scene

1. First, let's get our bearings. // We looked at the previous 15 verses of ch13 Wednesday.
2. John has a vision of the rise of a ***fearsome beast*** from the ***sea***.
  - a. The way he describes it is similar to what the prophet Daniel describes in ch7.
  - b. The beast is an end times world dominating political, military, & economic power – ruled by the ***Antichrist***.
  - c. John says this guy is empowered by no one less than satan himself.
3. Then John sees ***another beast*** rise from the ***earth***.
  - a. The imagery conveys the idea of ***religious authority***.
  - b. This 2<sup>nd</sup> beast performs miraculous signs; but they're ***deceits*** used to fool people into following the 1<sup>st</sup> beast, the antichrist.
  - c. In ch16, this 2<sup>nd</sup> beast is called ***the false prophet***.
  - d. He serves & promotes the antichrist.
  - e. He sets forth a rule that all must worship the antichrist as god or die.

<sup>13</sup> He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

<sup>14</sup> And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. <sup>15</sup> He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

4. It seems a stretch to us that people would worship a man as god.
  - a. Maybe the superstitious people of the ancient world would,
  - b. But certainly not hip, sophisticated, science-minded moderns.
5. We laid out a scenario last Wednesday that makes the eventual worship of the antichrist not only plausible, but ***probable***.
  - a. There are trends ***already at work*** moving toward the time when people will worship this man as god.
  - b. But that's a study, a good one, for another time.
6. This morning we come now to that passage in Rev. most people think of when they think of this last book of the Bible.
  - a. People may not know anything else about Revelation,
  - b. But they know about the # 666, and the mark of the beast.
  - c. It's been a part of popular culture, movies & books for a while.

<sup>16</sup> He [the false prophet] causes all,

1. To make sure we understand by “all” he means “all” he clarifies . . .  
both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave,
  - a. The ruled & their rulers Commoners & Elite. Everyone.
  - b. Not a sector of society is excluded.
  - c. He's going for complete hegemony.

[He causes them all] to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark -- or the name of the beast, -- or the number of his name.

2. It's important we understand *why* the false prophet institutes this program.
  - a. While it establishes the antichrist's economic control,
  - b. There's a deeper reason ***behind*** that control.
3. This is where we link to last Sunday's message: It's ever been satan's desire to be **like** God.
  - a. In Isa 14 as we read about Lucifer's fall and the ambition that led to his demise.
  - b. It's summed up in his boast, "I will be like the Most High."
4. In this ch., John is given a vision of an end times ***satanic parody*** of the God.
  - a. Satan, the antichrist, & false prophet form an unholy trinity that parrots the Trinity of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.
  - b. And that ***image*** the false prophet ***animates*** in v15 is a counterfeit attempt at creation.
  - c. Here, the earth-dwellers are marked in imitation of God marking the 144,000 faithful we read about in ch7, & return to in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of ch14.

<sup>1</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

5. But center of satan's desire, is to imitate God's sovereignty.
  - a. He wants to be in control! Large & In Charge.
  - b. God is called, "the MOST High." That's what Lucifer said he wanted to be "like ***the Most High***."
  - c. Control, sovereignty, is what he most lusts for.
6. During the Tribulation, God will remove the restraints that have been placed on the devil's bid for power & his long plot will come together in the career of the antichrist & false prophet.
7. Under their leadership, empowered as it is by satan, they'll seek to unite the world under 1 system.
8. How they'll do so is described here.
  - a. They mark everyone with some kind of identification that allows them access to the system the antichrist controls.
  - b. Without that mark, people are locked out.
9. Look again at how John says this  
 [He causes them all] to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark -- or the name of the beast, -- or the number of his name.
  - a. It's not clear if this is 3 different things people can receive or 1, & this is 3 ways of saying it.
  - b. The grammar allows for both.
  - c. But it's best to take it as 1 thing & John adds to what it'll be by these 3 descriptors.
  - d. See: ***First***, in v16, he calls it a mark.
  - e. Then at the end of v17, he returns to it & ***qualifies*** it as the name & number of the antichrist.
  - f. What that number is we'll see later.
  - g. For now, just note that it's some kind of ***identification with the antichrist*** that permits them access to the marketplace.

#### The Technology

1. The word "mark" is the Greek word *charagma*.
  - a. It means to ***scratch*** or ***etch***, as when someone carves their initials into a bench.
  - b. The 'mark' is a scratch made by a sharp point, producing a recognizable feature.
  - c. it's the word used in ancient literature for the branding of slaves to show ownership.
- d. It was used of those tattooed to show membership in a religious cult.
- e. Bottom Line: It was a mark on the skin ***showing identity***.
2. What John describes here may simply be a tattoo earth-dwellers take to identify them as the followers of the antichrist.
  - a. Tattoos are made by a needle injecting dye into the skin.
  - b. They're something placed in the skin by scratching.
  - c. It's a perfect fit for the word 'mark' John uses here.
3. What compels people to take the mark is the law that ***without it***, they won't be able to buy or sell.
  - a. Just as now, your credit card often has to be backed up with ID like a driver's license
  - b. During the Tribulation, people will have to show their mark.
4. So, it's with interest we note the culture's ***acceptance*** of tattoos & body-piercing.
  - a. Ha! The last time I taught thru Rev. was in '02.

- b. **Then** I said it's w/interest we see our culture's **GROWING** acceptance of tattoos & B-P'g.
  - c. It's not growing anymore. It's full-grown.
  - d. Now tattoos are nearly ubiquitous. Those without them are under pressure to get them.
5. Now: Please hear me! I'm NOT saying tattoos are the mark of the beast.
6. The point is, they've become a part of popular culture.
7. Which is a huge turn around from just a generation ago when tattoos were hardcore.
  - a. Tats & piercings were for biker gangs & people who wanted to be edgy & tough.
  - b. Now Grandmothers & fashion models sport them.
8. The upshot of it all is that when the antichrist comes along with the mark, there's not going to be much push-back on it.
9. But there's an even more interesting possibility for what John saw in his vision of the mark than a tattoo. It leans more to the piercing side of things.
10. And it fits better with what he says about the mark's integration w/the marketplace.
11. It comes as a surprise to no one the world is rapidly moving toward a cashless system.
  - a. Think about it. How many of your transactions are cashless?
  - b. We use credit & debit cards; increasingly by just **touching** the card to a scanner.
  - c. There's Paypal, Apple Pay, Amazon Payments, Google Wallet.
  - d. We pay bills online. Shop online.
  - e. Not a few retailers like Borders have closed down their storefronts because people shop online & no longer use their retail stores.
  - f. Even fast-food takes debit cards. You can buy a Spicy-Jack Chicken quesadilla at Del Taco with your ATM.
12. National governments are pushing for a cashless society.
  - a. They want to keep tabs on earnings so they can make sure people are paying taxes.
  - b. Most criminal activity is conducted by cash so it can't be tracked.
  - c. Drug dealers & terrorist would have a hard time without cash.
13. But the biggest concern in going completely electronic is that cards that can be stolen or lost.
  - a. Having a PIN; personal ID #, add security.
  - b. But people can be careless guarding their PIN. They choose easy to hack passwords.
  - c. Some people write their PIN on the back of the card!
  - d. Their password is "Password"
14. The simple & easy solution is to attach your account info to your body.
  - a. It can't be lost or stolen that way. And you wouldn't need ID.
  - b. The mark may be a **microchip**, injected into the skin of the hand or head.
  - c. The technology for this is already in place & used in several settings to monitor people's whereabouts.
  - d. Chipping is used extensively in **pets** & farm animals.
  - e. Motorola has developed the **e-tattoo**, a small square that adheres to the skin.
    - 1) It carries account numbers and oodles of personal information & connects wirelessly to you phone.
    - 2) **Google's** been working with it, integrating it in its Android OS.
  - f. In '02 when I taught Rev. a company called ADS had recently come out w/the VeriChip.
    - 1) The size of a small piece of rice, it was injected by a hypodermic needle into the upper arm or back of the hand.
    - 2) It connected wirelessly with scanners & carried lots of information.
    - 3) Many prophecy students got all excited about it because it looked like something that could qualify for the mark.
    - 4) They stopped making the VeriChip in '09 – because it was too big!
  - g. Hitachi has produced an RFID circuit called the mu-chip.
    - 1) At under a half mm square, it's so small it can be imbedded in a piece of paper.
15. Please understand; I'm not saying the mark of the beast is a chip or e-tattoo.
  - a. Just that for the first time in history, what John wrote about can be fulfilled **literally**.
  - b. And lest you think all this is just lunatic ramblings of a wild-eyed prophecy nut, I quote an ABC News report by Paul Eng.

c. After talking about how microchips and implantable forms of ID can help find lost children, he writes

**To some, this may sound far-fetched. But the technology for such chips is no longer the stuff of science fiction. And it may soon offer many other benefits besides locating lost children or elderly Alzheimer patients.**

**Chris Hables Gray, professor of cultural studies of science and technology at the University of Great Falls, Montana says, “Down the line, it could be used [as] credit cards and such. A lot of people won’t have to carry wallets anymore. In the long run, the implications for this technology are profound.” // The interest in testing embedded chips has been steadily increasing, especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Dr. Richard Seelig, a former surgeon but now a medical consultant for ADS, became the first to embed a VeriChip in his arm and hip. His decision to become a willing guinea pig came when he saw WTC rescue workers scrawl information on their skin as an identifying marker should they get hurt in the wreckage. He said, “There’s a clear need for a more secure form of identification. This was another useful application for the VeriChip and to move the process along, I had the chips inserted.”**

16. It’s not at all hard to imagine the day when you’ll go to the store, but instead of paying for your items with a credit or ATM card,

- a. You’ll just wave your hand over a scanner.
- b. They’re already scanning the bar codes on your items & your cards!

17. A growing number patrons of nightclubs in Europe are getting chipped so they don’t have to carry wallets or purses when they go clubbing.

Don’t Worry: Be Ready!

1. Now, don’t worry. Your ATM & debit card are NOT the mark of the beast.
2. What we find here is yet future.
  - a. The mark of the beast is something people will take to **identify with** the antichrist.
  - b. It’s a mark of **loyalty** to him & his rebellious system.
  - c. It’s received in full awareness they’re allying with someone who **defies** God.
3. In 14:9-11, God sends an angelic messenger to make it clear to people **if** they receive the mark they’re eternally doomed. There’s no hope of salvation for them.
4. So no 1 will take it without full knowledge of what they’re doing & the consequences.
5. But the point is; the tech & plans for its implementation for all this are already in the works.
6. Indicating the lateness of the hour.
7. So I ask: When Jesus comes for His Church in the Rapture, will you be going or staying?

It might seem crazy what I'm about to say

Jesus is here, Gonna’ take us away

We’re -- not baffoons, We be flyin’ thru space

Thru the air, wanna’ share? Baby go our way Because we’re happy

8. That reminds me of a bit older song: *Don’t Worry, Be Happy*. Better yet, **Don’t Worry, Be Ready!**

More Here

1. Now Listen: We take a closer look at last part of v17 & the whole ^^ thing in v18 Wed.
2. Wed, left the cliffhanger of these vs so come today. No, do the same for Wed.
3. But we need to end at this point & with this challenge.
4. When we talk about the **immanency** or nearness of Christ’s Return, critics fire back that people have said this for years but it hasn’t happened yet.
  - a. That’s true. >>
  - b. So the implication they suggest is that because Jesus HASN’T come back yet, He’s **not** coming back.
5. Here’s where that thinking breaks down.
  - a. Previous generations came up with all kinds of wild interpretations for what the Bible says will happen in these vs.
  - b. They had to because **politically, militarily, & economically**, the world was nowhere near this.

- c. There was certainly no **technology** for it.
  - d. So what John writes about here was spun up into extravagant interpretations & elaborate scenarios that spiritualized & allegorized these vs.
  - e. Reading those commentaries & sermons can give you a headache as you try to follow the most esoteric explanations.
6. We don't have to do ANY of that today because the world stage is set for all this to go down just as John describes. The technology is already in place.
7. We can interpret this **literally**.
- a. "Oh, so does the mean a literal beast w/7 heads will rise from the sea?"
  - b. No, of course not – and John never intended us to understand it that way.
  - c. What it DOES mean is that what he saw DOES speak of something **literal; real** & not just an idea.
  - d. Look at v18 =
- <sup>18</sup> Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.
8. All signs indicate these are the last days and the only event we wait for, indeed, the NEXT event on the prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church.