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*THE*  
**MARK**  
OF THE **BEAST**

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**Herman Hoeksema**

**FIRST PRC EVANGELISM  
HERITAGE COLLECTION**



# About the Heritage Collection

The Heritage Collection consists of pamphlets on various subjects that were written by Protestant Reformed ministers from approximately the 1930s to the 1970s. At first they were printed and distributed as small plain covered pamphlets by the First Protestant Reformed Church Sunday School. Eventually, the printing was taken over by the church's evangelism society and their appearance was updated.

Background information on most of these pamphlets is sketchy. Some were written in response, occasionally fiery, to doctrinal struggles that took place at particular times. Often they were first delivered in lecture form and then printed to facilitate wider distribution. The earlier authors are in glory; the later ones are retired ministers.

Characteristics of the pamphlets are that they are solidly Reformed and Scripturally based – many abound in Scriptural proof texts – and, given the limited amount of space in pamphlets, provide a comprehensive overview and perspective on their topics. They are often not light reading, but taking the time to read them, study them, and savor the many insights they provide can be conducive to spiritual growth.

The writing of many of the pamphlets was sparked by debates decades ago, but the issues they address are still relevant for readers today. These issues always need to be clarified for those encountering the Christian faith for the first time and for each new generation of believers. Some of the more involved pamphlets may be of greatest benefit to believers who already have a background in the Scriptures.

It is our hope that these voices from a past era may continue to bless readers in the future as they have in many previous years.

# Introduction

This pamphlet was likely written in the early 1940s during World War II. Rev. Hoeksema lists occurrences at the time of his writing which are predicted in Scripture as reminders that the Lord's second coming is near. He cites such things as economic problems, a major war, a struggle between capital and labor, and religious apostasy. His description of these occurrences, with the exception of a major war, could also be a description of today. In fact, most would agree that today, with escalating natural catastrophes and rapid development in the fields of science and technology, there are more indications than ever before that Christ's coming is near.

The subject of the pamphlet is taken from John's vision in Revelation 13, a vision about what will occur in the last days. Two beasts come out of the sea; one beast represents the Antichrist and his kingdom and the second one is a false prophet who tries, by means of the media and other inventions, to persuade the people to worship the Antichrist. The false prophet has an image of the first beast made for everyone to worship and invents a 'mark of the beast' which must be exhibited on a person's forehead or right hand in order for him to be able to buy or sell. Anyone who refuses to worship the beast is put to death. The meaning of the mark and the puzzling symbolism of its number 666 is also explained.

This vision is a fascinating glimpse into what the future holds, a future which can seem frightening. The Bible predicts that the church must expect dark and difficult days at that time, but also gives a wonderful message of comfort to those who love the Lord. Grace will be given to God's people in those days. They can have peace through the knowledge that God is in control and that, through all of this, He is realizing His purpose of their salvation and working out His good counsel.

## **About the Author**

Herman Hoeksema (1886-1965) was a minister of the gospel and a theologian in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

This pamphlet is a 2013 reprint of his original work, with grammar and text slightly edited for readability.

# The Mark of the Beast

Herman Hoeksema

To say that we are living in serious times would be to express a mere platitude. The present time is, of course, always serious, for in it God is working out His counsel and realizing His purpose with regard to the salvation of His church and the coming of His kingdom. But there are periods in which the significance of the times is more obvious than at other periods of history, because they are so crowded with tremendous events that their importance is impressed upon the minds and hearts of men, and because they remind the people of God more than at other times that this is the last hour and that their redemption draws nigh. It is in such times that we are deemed worthy to live today. The red horse<sup>1</sup> is running over the earth in every direction, obviously beyond the control of any man or power in the world, and the world is in the throes of a war<sup>2</sup> as has never been witnessed before. The economic problem cries for a solution with ever greater emphasis, and its solution appears to be more remote than ever. We are told even now that we may expect a new world order, in which freedom of worship and of speech, freedom from fear and from want shall be maintained, a world of peace and prosperity for all. But in the meantime the struggle between capital and labor, between the “haves” and “have-nots” becomes more bitter and intense as the days go by. And it becomes increasingly difficult for the faithful believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to maintain himself in society and to earn his daily bread, unless he will make common cause with the world and put on an unequal yoke with the unbeliever. In the religious sphere our times are characterized by apostasy. Post Modernism<sup>3</sup> is rampant. By far the majority of churches in our land have long abandoned the truth as it is in Christ. They have become like the salt that has lost its savor and that is good for nothing but to be cast

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<sup>1</sup> The red horse symbolizes the power given to Jesus Christ to make war on the earth among mankind. (Revelation 6:3,4)

<sup>2</sup> This was written during World War II.

<sup>3</sup> Now, Modernism has been predominately replaced by Post-Modernism.

on the dunghill and to be trodden under feet by men. The masses have become alienated from the church, and those who still belong to her and attend divine worship on the Sabbath understand sound doctrine no longer. There is a mad pursuit of the things of this present world, rather than of those things that are above, and a hankering after the treasures and pleasures of this world that leaves room for little else in the hearts of men. Everything reminds us of the warning of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:1–5: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

Always, but especially in times such as the present, the Scriptures convey a twofold message to the believer who turns to them for instruction and consolation. First of all, the Bible comes with a message of comfort to all who love the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. For all these things have been foretold, in order that we might believe when they should come to pass, and believing might have peace. In the light of the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19) we feel assured that God holds the reins, that He is working out His good counsel and realizing His purpose, and that this purpose is the salvation of His eternal, heavenly covenant. And we are not amazed or perplexed, for we know that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Through all the turmoil and distress of the times we may lift up our head, assured that day of the Lord is near and that our redemption draws nigh. Without committing ourselves to a prediction of “the day and the hour,” we may safely say that our times impress upon our minds and hearts the nearness and fast approach of the clouds, and every eye shall see Him.

But, second, the Word of God also sounds a note of warning that before the final coming of the Lord the church must expect dark

and difficult days, a period of great tribulation for the people of God; and it exhorts us to be faithful even unto the end, that no one take our crown. For the man of sin must still be revealed, and the antichristian empire must be established for a time, and during that period there will be no room in the world for those who love the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **The Premillennial View**

There are, indeed, those who teach that the faithful church will escape this great tribulation. Just before the reign of Antichrist and the last days of distress and persecution, God's people shall be taken up in the "rapture" to be with the Lord in the air. But this is quite contrary to Scripture, and it is a dangerous doctrine because it fills the believers with a vain hope, which must needs end in utter disappointment and leave them wholly unprepared in the evil day. Everywhere the Word of God warns the church that the believers must expect tribulation even until the end. When nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places, we may see in them the "beginning of sorrows". But the time will come too when they shall deliver up the true believers and kill them, and when the church shall be hated of all nations for Christ's sake; the time when many shall be offended and shall betray one another and hate one another, many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many, and the love of many shall wax cold because iniquity abounds. And it is only they who endure unto the end who shall be saved. These shall be days of great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. If it were not that the days were shortened for the elect's sake, no flesh should then be saved (Matthew 24:7–13, 21, 22; confer Mark 13:7 and following; Luke 21:8 and following).

Not only does Scripture teach us that the faithful in Christ must expect tribulation and exhort us to be faithful even unto death, but it would consider such persecution for Christ's sake an honor and a blessing. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,

for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12). The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). And “unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). Not to secure tribulation but to suffer it gladly for Christ’s sake, to glorify God’s grace through it, and to enter into the great reward of the faithful—that is unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7).

The church, therefore, must expect the “great tribulation” of the last days. And even now she must watch and pray and put on the whole armor of God, and prepare herself, lest she defile her garments and be swallowed up of the world. For always the world hates the children of light, and always the latter must suffer persecution. The “great tribulation” will not come upon the church as a thing all by itself, without any connection with the preceding times. It will rather be the culmination of all the suffering the faithful have endured through the ages, a period in which the dragon will make a last and most furious attempt to destroy the seed of the woman and in which the hostile world will cast off the mask of outward friendship and tolerance toward the people of God. It will then become fully manifest that they still furiously hate the Christ and those who are His. It will, of course, be a time in which the line of distinction between the true church and the world will be clearly and distinctly drawn. There will be no room then for hypocrites and outward Christians. One shall be able to “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Malachi 3:18). And one of the chief means to bring that distinction to open manifestation in those days will be the mark of the beast.

## **The Beast**

Every Christian who is at all acquainted with Scripture is able to find immediately the reference to the mark of the beast in the Bible. It is found in the thirteenth chapter of the book of

Revelation. In that chapter we have a rather elaborate apocalyptic description of the Antichrist and his reign and fury. It is not now our purpose to enter into a detailed exposition of this description, but only to recall the general features of it as far as it is necessary for a correct understanding of the mark of the beast.

The chapter presents the vision of two monster beasts, the one rising out of the sea, the other out of the earth. The former represents the Antichrist and his final empire from its political aspect. It is presented as a world power that has universal sway. It is a kingdom or empire that embraces all the nations of the earth. This antichristian beast, which blasphemes against God, His name and tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven, is the embodiment of the dragon, that old serpent, the devil, from whom it receives its power. And it is admired and worshipped by all who dwell on the earth, except by those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. A universal, wicked, antichristian state, therefore, is represented by the beast out of the sea.

In the first beast's service stands the second beast, the one that rises out of the earth. It is this second beast that is interested in persuading all men to admire and to worship the antichristian political world power. This second beast is the "false prophet." It is the spiritual power of false science and false philosophy and false theology, using every means in its power—the spoken word, the press, the printed page, the radio, and all the wonders of science and invention<sup>4</sup>—to mold public opinion in favor of the first beast. It is very persistent in its efforts. It cannot rest until the Antichrist is openly and publicly worshipped and admired, and it cannot tolerate those who refuse to bow their knees before this Baal of the latter days. Therefore it persuades men to make an image of the beast, some visible representation of the antichristian almighty state, that all may make their obeisance to it openly. And for the same reason this false prophet takes care that no one's attitude toward the beast and its image can remain a matter of doubt. The

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<sup>4</sup> Today, of course, there are many more "wonders of science and invention" than Rev Hoeksema could have every imagined.

distinction between those who worship the beast and those who refuse to worship him must become manifest to all. There must be no half-heartedness. Those who are opposed to the antichristian beast and insist on being faithful to Christ must be exposed in order that they may be extinguished. For in the antichristian empire there will be room only for those who worship the beast!

To accomplish this purpose the false prophet invents two means: the spirit of life he gives to the image of the beast, causing it to speak; and the mark of the beast. It is well that we distinguish these. We read in Revelation 13:15: “And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast (or, according to the ASV, And it was given unto him to give breath unto it, even unto the image of the beast”), that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” The general idea of this is plain. Images, representations of the antichristian state, are installed all through the empire. To these images is now given breath, a spirit. This does not mean, of course, that the false prophet will have power to create living beings, but rather that somehow these images will assume the character of and function as living persons, which have eyes and ears. It is especially in this particular respect that the image of the beast will function as a being that has the breath of life: it will both hear and speak. Emphatically we are told that it is the purpose of the spirit of life given to the image to enable it to speak. And again, the purpose of its speech is “that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”

It is evident, then, that this speaking image serves the purpose of a spy. The device is a means to expose those who are opposed to the worship of the beast. The image of the beast both hears and speaks. It records the speech and conversation of those who refuse to worship the beast in order then to report to the false prophet what it has thus recorded. Just how this is to be realized in the day of Antichrist is a matter of minor importance. That we need not spiritualize or allegorize the text, but adhere to a literal interpretation and expect a literal realization of this speaking image, ought to be evident to anyone who contemplates the

wonders of modern invention and science. It is not at all difficult to conceive of the installation of mechanical ears and mouths that will record and make public even that which is spoken in secret.<sup>5</sup> Such devices will be installed everywhere in the antichristian empire and under the supervision of the false prophet, in churches and lecture halls, in homes and offices and public places, in order that the faithful may be exposed and killed by the power of the sword.

## **The Mark: 666**

The second means whereby the worshippers of the Lamb may be distinguished from the followers of the beast, the godly from the ungodly, is the mark of the beast. It is quite different from the first means, not only in its character but also in its effect. The first means of distinction is the speech of the image of the beast, the second is a mark that everyone must receive and exhibit on his forehead or right hand; the former leads to the exposure and death of those who refuse to worship the beast, the latter to their expulsion from society: they cannot buy or sell. The latter, the mark of the beast, is evidently designed to supplement the former, the speech of the image. For the false prophet is evidently determined that absolutely everyone without exception shall worship the antichristian beast, and that in all the dominion of Antichrist no follower of the Lamb shall be left. To accomplish this purpose the speech of the image is not sufficient. It is conceivable that some, that many, may elude its detection. It will accomplish chiefly that the leaders of the church, those who are called to preach the Gospel, to teach and to admonish the people of God, those who by virtue of their very position as leaders are called to confess the name of Christ and to denounce the name of Antichrist, are exposed and persecuted to the death.

But this does not satisfy the false prophet. All must be exposed. And so he devises the mark of the beast and “causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in

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<sup>5</sup> Though this technology was not attainable at the time of this writing, it is available today.

their right hand, or in their foreheads” (Revelation 13:16). From this cunning device no man can escape. For the false prophet so arranges matters “that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (verse 17). The mark of the beast is very effective. It will, indeed, divide men into two clearly distinct groups and opposing camps: the followers of the Lamb and the worshippers of the beast. In those days one will be able to discern clearly between him who serves the Lord and him who serves Him not.

## **The Sought-for Mark**

Let us notice, first of all, that this mark of the beast, although instituted by the state, must nevertheless be adopted voluntarily by every citizen, rich or poor, great or small. It is, indeed, an invention of the false prophet. In this cunning and wicked mind it had its origin. But let us not forget that the false prophet functions in the name of and on behalf of the first beast, the political power of the Antichrist. By his influence, therefore, it becomes a state law that all shall receive and openly exhibit (this is the meaning of “in their right hand, or in their foreheads”) the mark of the beast. On the other hand, the state law is of such a nature that each man must make his own choice with regard to that mark of the beast. He must adopt it voluntarily. He must go after it. It is not even improbable that he will have to apply for it and pay for it. Just as it is a state law that your car must exhibit a license when you drive it, and just as you have to apply for and purchase that license; so in the days of the antichristian empire it will be by decree of the almighty state that you must receive and exhibit the mark of the beast, but you will have to make your application in order to receive it.

But the matter that will then be presented to the choice of your will is extremely serious, much more so than your application for an automobile license. For if you fail to make your application for the mark of the beast, you will not be able to buy or sell; while if you do apply for this ensign you will have to swear that you call Christ

accursed and that you are and always intend to be a faithful worshipper of the beast. By the cunning device of the false prophet and the sword-power of the antichristian state you will be placed before the alternative: deny Christ and worship the beast or die! But however great the strain of trial and temptation upon your will may be, it will be you who chooses for or against the mark of the beast! The thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed. And only the gold of God's own grace will come through the trial "unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

It is always that way.

Persecution for Christ's sake always involves the choice between the things that are seen and the things that are not—between the present world and the world to come, between keeping or losing your life. And it is always grace only that is able to choose for Christ and suffering, rather than for Antichrist and the world and its pleasures. In the days of the early church it was the law of the empire that worship was to be rendered to Caesar. And Christians would sometimes be placed before the choice of making obeisance to Caesar's image or of being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil; it was invariably grace that chose the latter. At the time of the Reformation and the Spanish Inquisition men were stretched upon the rack, slowly torn apart, and caused the most excruciating pain and anguish. And on that rack they confronted the choice of Christ and continued agony to the end, or denial of Christ and immediate deliverance. It was grace alone that enabled the faithful to endure unto the end.

Today the situation is not different, even though the lines are not so severely drawn as in some past periods and as they will be drawn once more in the latter days. Many a time we are placed before the alternative of assuming an unequal yoke with the unbeliever, of subscribing to antichristian principles and denying the truth, or remaining faithful and losing a job or a dollar. And again, even now, it is only the marvelous power of the grace of God that will choose the latter. It is given us of grace to believe in Christ and to suffer with Him. And in such times of stress and

tribulation “the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12). It may be that they will attempt to cover up their apostasy by many excuses, but the fact is that whenever and wherever we choose the world rather than Christ, it is the sinful flesh that determines the choice, never the grace of God! That is the seriousness of the matter. In our choice we reveal the thoughts of the heart!

## **The Meaning of the Mark**

Let us consider too the mark of the beast as such and its meaning. From Revelation 13:17 it is evident that the mark is the same as the name of the beast, and that the name is also the number of the name. This is especially clear if we adopt the rendering of the Revised Version: “save he that had the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name.” It is clear, then, that the mark men are required to exhibit in their right hand or in their forehead consists of the name of the first beast, before whom and in whose name the second beast functions and exercises his authority; and it is equally evident that this name is represented by the number of the beast.

An important question in determining the significance of this mark of the beast is: how are we to understand the term “name” in this connection? A very common group of interpretations explains the term as referring to the proper name of the Antichrist. They interpret this chapter and a large part of the book of Revelation as having had its historical fulfillment in the Roman Empire of John’s day. The empire is the beast that rises up out of the sea in the vision. According to this interpretation, the name of the beast is some proper name, either of one of the emperors, such as Nero or Domitian, or of the empire itself. And the number of the name, according to this view, is the sum of the numerical value of the several letters of that name. A very commonly adopted interpretation belonging to this class is that which considers the “name of the beast” to refer to the name of the Roman empire, the name LATEINOS. The sum of the numerical value of the several

letters of this name in the Greek alphabet comes to 666, the number of the name!

Against this interpretation we have various objections. First of all, even though “the beast” as it historically appeared at the time of John might be the Roman world power, this empire certainly cannot have been the antichristian state in its final manifestation that is undoubtedly pictured in the chapter. To the antichristian world power in its consummation and ultimate development the name *Lateinos* could not possibly be applied. Even then, if the “name of the beast” might be explained as referring in the first instance to the proper name of an emperor of those days, or to the name of the empire in general, it must still have another, a symbolic significance.

Second, the term “name” in Scripture in connections such as the one in which it occurs here usually has a different meaning. It does not denote a proper noun, but is expressive of that which denotes the essence, the nature, the real character of something or of someone. This applies also to the use of “name” in the book of Revelation. Thus we read in chapter 3:1: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Still more clearly the term refers to personal identity and character rather than to a proper noun in verse 5 of the same chapter: “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life”. And without any doubt the term has this meaning in verse 12: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” It is in this same scriptural sense of the word that we prefer to interpret the term in the phrase “name of the beast.” It does not refer to any proper noun but expresses the nature, the real, spiritual character of the beast.

In the third place, the interpretation that finds the name of the beast to be *Lateinos* and then proceeds to discover the number six hundred sixty-six in the sum of its letters is both too mechanical

and too arbitrary. Besides, it smacks of the allegorism of the old Cabbalistic school of interpreters. If the number of the name of the beast is to be considered a sum in arithmetic, one can never be sure of having discovered the true meaning of the name: more than one name that deserves consideration here will yield the same result. It is true that the interpretation is ingenious, but the text informs us that wisdom and understanding rather than ingenuity are required to discover the significance of the number of the beast, (Revelation 13:18). And wisdom and understanding in the scriptural sense are spiritual insight in the things concerning the kingdom of God.

On the very face of it the number 666 with its emphatic repetition of the number six suggests that it is a schematic number, and that its meaning must be found in its symbolism. This is quite in accord with the use of numbers in other parts of the book of Revelation. The numbers three, four, six, seven, and ten in their various combinations and relations abound in this book, and constantly they have symbolic significance. They are symbols of some spiritual meaning. It would be very strange indeed if a number like 666 would be an exception to this general rule. And it is also evident that the symbolic meaning of this number expresses the name or character of the antichristian world power.

Now, the number six is the number of creation: in six days God created the heavens and the earth. It is the number of man's week of labor, for even as God created all things in six days, so man must labor six days and do all his work. Six days, once on each day, the children of Israel are ordered to march around the city of Jericho. The number six therefore denotes labor, toil, the fullness of human strife to produce the finished product, to reach the end, to attain to the goal of human existence. But labor and toil are not, cannot be, the end in themselves. The end, the crowning point, of God's work of creation is the Sabbath, the rest of God. And so man's toil can be considered successful only if he attains to the rest of the Sabbath, the true rest of God, the number seven. The scheme or groundwork of the book of Revelation is the number seven, but it occurs as six plus one. There are seven seals, but the seventh seal is revealed as seven trumpets; and again, the seventh trumpet

assumes the form of seven vials. On the seventh day the city of Jericho must be encompassed seven times, and on that seventh day, after the children of Israel marched around the stronghold the seventh time, the city is taken. Six therefore may be viewed as seven minus one, the week without the Sabbath, labor without rest, toil without attainment, vanity of vanities, the hope that never comes, the expectation that perishes.

This, then, expresses the real character of the mighty antichristian world power in its consummation. It represents man's complete effort in time. For the number is that of a man. Even the Antichrist is just a man, nothing more. His name is *Anthropos*, a man, powerful though he may appear to be. He is man standing in his full development, as he has spent his ingenuity and power and labor and toil upon the earthly creation and upon himself, cultural man standing at the peak of his development, in the zenith of his power. He has striven to make something of this world, to establish a kingdom of man. And now he has reached the number six. It is the end. Repeatedly he attempted to attain to the goal of the number seven, the rest, the world-Sabbath, as is indicated by the repetition of the number: 600...60...6. Each time, it would appear from the number, the efforts of man required a shorter time and were more apparently certain of reaching the goal. Yet he fails. Mere man, man without God, earthly man, lying in sin and in the midst of death, cannot attain to the rest. The expectation of the wicked perishes. It is only the hope of the righteous, of man in Christ, the Man of God, that is gladness. He reaches out for the number seven, the rest that remains for the people of God. And he attains. Hope makes not ashamed!

## **Further Explanation of the Mark**

Consider now the horrible meaning of the mark of the beast. For the mark is the name of the beast and the symbolism of the number 666. The false prophet of the antichristian empire will, therefore, so exert his power that by decree of the state all within the dominion of the Antichrist, that is, in the whole world, must adopt

and publicly exhibit that name of the beast! In this he reveals himself as Antichrist, as the one who is opposed to the Christ of God and who intends to usurp the place of the latter. For Christ too gives a name to those who are His, the name of his God, and the name of the city of God, and His own a new name (Revelation 2:17). And even in this world, through the efficacy of the name they receive of Christ, believers become manifest, in word and conversation, in confession and walk, in their worship and preaching of the Word, as belonging to Him with body and soul, for time and eternity. He purchased them with His own precious blood and redeemed them from sin and death; he delivered them from the power of darkness and renewed them through His Spirit, so that they became like Himself. They bear His name. And by faith they adopt that name, and they exhibit it in the midst of the world. But by the instigation of the false prophet the Antichrist in the latter days will make a deliberate attempt to obliterate the very memory of the name of Christ from the earth, and to have it replaced everywhere by his own name: the mark of the beast! All citizens in his dominion, that is, all men, must display his name! Voluntarily, as a matter of their own choice, they must adopt it. And by adopting it they openly declare that they belong to Antichrist body and soul, in life and death; that they admire and worship him and put all their confidence in him. Such is the dreadful significance of the mark of the beast!

But although in those days each one will be called upon to make a choice, and although whatever choice he makes is certainly voluntary and for that reason the expression of what lives in his inmost heart, refusal to receive and to display the mark of the beast can be made only at the price of suffering for Christ's sake. For it is the purpose of the mark of the beast to determine who shall have the privilege of buying and selling in the dominion of Antichrist. So we read in verse 17 of Revelation 13: "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Consider what this means. You are conducting a certain business, and some day a state official steps into your store, takes one look at your forehead and at your right hand, and orders your store closed

immediately until such a time as you shall have secured for yourself the mark of the beast. You try to make the purchase of your daily necessities, your food and clothing, and the man behind the counter looks at you, asks you to show your right hand, and coolly informs you: "I cannot sell you anything!" You are employed in a certain factory and are making a fair wage to provide for yourself and yours, and unexpectedly you are called to the office and are told that, unless you secure the mark of the beast, you need not return for work tomorrow. You are renting a home, and as you pay your monthly rent, the proprietor orders you to evacuate the house unless you immediately apply for the mark of the beast. If you refuse to deny Christ and to confess Antichrist, you will be a social outcast, worse than a pariah: there will be no place left for you in the world! Voluntarily, indeed, you make your choice, but your choice for Christ and against Antichrist will be put to a severe test, more severe, in fact, than if the choice were between Antichrist and immediate death!

Already we may read the approach of those awful days in the signs of the times. The place of the faithful Christian in the world fast becomes narrower. Labor and industry and business and even agriculture are becoming more and more organized, and even today one cannot always secure a job or conduct a certain business unless he subscribes to principles and condones practices that are contrary to the Word of God and to his Christian conscience. Yet today the matter is not compelling. It may sometimes be a question of a better position, of a higher wage, of a little more profit, but the faithful Christian may still have a place in the world. But in the days of Antichrist there will be no room left for him who refuses to receive the mark of the beast.

It is not difficult to conceive how in those days many will fall away who now appear to be of Christ. And it will not be difficult for them to find excuses that will apparently justify their unfaithfulness and even cause the stand of the faithful to appear foolish. Must they not live? And how shall they live, if they can neither buy nor sell? Besides, is it not a state law that one must receive the mark of the beast, and must we not be in submission to

authorities? Such arguments will, no doubt, appear very plausible in the days of Antichrist. In the meantime, let us remember that they are quite contrary to the Word, which plainly teaches us that “whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25). And “he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25). And let us not forget that only they “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” shall worship the beast and receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:8).

Dreadful days they will be, indeed, but only according to the flesh. Also glorious days they must be, days of much grace. For to His own God will surely give grace according to the way, in order that they may be faithful even unto the end. Significant is the picture that is held before us in the beginning of chapter 14 of the book of Revelation. No matter how Antichrist may rage, the Lamb is still standing on Mount Sion, and the one hundred forty and four thousand, all his elect, are still with Him, and no one shall be able to pluck them out of his hand! Be patient, therefore, even unto the coming of the day of the Lord. He that endureth unto the end shall be saved. The victory is ours!

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