

COVID-19 VACCINE:

Mark of the Beast?



Dr Andrew Aucamp

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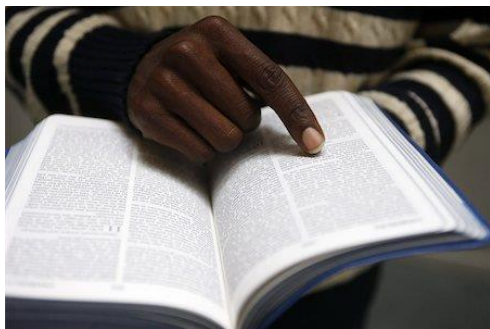
I am really worried about this issue!

The mark of the beast is a source of concern for many people, even for those who generally would not classify themselves as Christians.

The key text is Revelation 13:16-17, speaking of the beast:

And he causes all, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, and he decrees 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.

The consequence of NOT receiving the mark is persecution. In the text, the people who do not have the mark cannot buy or sell. In other words, they come under persecution from the beast.



However, the consequences of receiving the mark are far more severe. These people come under God's anger and eternal damnation (Rev. 14:9-

11). So, the stakes are high, and it is correct to be concerned about the mark of the beast. Generally, this concern is expressed by a number of questions in people's minds, including:

- What exactly is the mark?
- How can I avoid the mark?
- What can I do if I get the mark?
- Is my fate sealed forever by the mark?

More recently, Christians have become concerned about the COVID-19 vaccine. There is speculation and fear that the vaccine could be the mark of beast, especially as governments are grappling with the issue of whether it should be mandatory or not.

This booklet seeks to address these anxieties and concerns by setting out a biblical understanding of the mark of the beast as found in the Book of Revelation. The first step in the process is to know how to approach and interpret the Book of Revelation.

How to approach the Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation is a very distinct type of literature with special rules of interpretation. There are three rules that need to be understood:

- (i) *Revelation uses non-literal, vivid images to teach truth*

This first rule can be demonstrated using portions of Revelation where we know how they were fulfilled in history. For example, Revelation 12:1-6 describes the attempted assassination of Christ just after His birth. The description in Revelation is that of a red dragon (Satan) standing in front of a woman who is clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet. She is giving birth to the promised Messiah.



These images were not literally seen on earth. No one saw a woman clothed with the sun. No one saw a red dragon. The actual events they represent were, at least in part, the attempted assassination of Christ by Herod as described in Matthew 2:3-15.

This clearly shows that the images in the Book of Revelation are non-literal pictures that represent real events on earth. One cannot draw the images in the vision as described in Revelation and look for their literal fulfilment on earth. The images in the vision truly represent real events on earth, but they are non-literal images. There was no red dragon to be seen on earth. Instead, the red dragon represents Satan, who was working through the wicked King Herod (see Matt. 2:1-12).

(ii) The images in Revelation describe inner realities as opposed to actual, physical appearances

This second rule is easily demonstrated using the same portion of Revelation 12. The red dragon is explicitly identified as Satan (Rev. 12:9). Satan is not actually a red dragon. He is in fact a mighty angel (2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Cor. 10:20) who became corrupt, and now opposes God and His people. The point is that the image of a red dragon should not be taken literally. Rather, a dragon was known for ferocity and deceit, which represents Satan's inner character and qualities (see Jn. 8:44).

(iii) *Revelation uses Old Testament images*

The third rule is to note that the Book of Revelation derives many of its images from the Old Testament. The beast from the sea is drawn from Daniel (Dan. 2:3-7). The horses in Revelation 6 closely resemble the chariots in Zechariah 1:8 and 6:1-3. Many of the judgements in Revelation resemble the plagues against Egypt in the Book of Exodus. Further images that are used include Jerusalem and the Temple.



This means that we need to be familiar with some of the Old Testament images to understand the Book of Revelation.

Using the above three rules, we are now in a position to consider the mark of the beast.

How to understand the mark of the beast

A description of the mark of the beast is found in Revelation 13:16-17, as referenced previously:

And he causes all, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, and he decrees 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.

The following three considerations are critical to understand the mark of the beast:

(i) The concept of a mark on people is derived from the Old Testament

Revelation 13:16-17 borrows from the Old Testament. Zechariah 9:1-7 contains a vision where the faithful in Israel are marked on their foreheads. In this Old Testament passage, the mark is a spiritual mark in the sense that never in the history of Israel was a literal mark placed on the foreheads of those who were truly saved. It was a mark in a vision that represented a godly, inner state of heart.

This already must make us cautious about thinking of a physical or visible mark when it comes to the mark of the beast.

(ii) Everyone has a mark in the Book of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, everyone has a mark on them. The truly saved people of God have a mark or seal on their foreheads (Rev. 7:3-4; Rev. 14:1). They are then persecuted by the beast and the Dragon. Some are even put to death.

The beast imitates God's practice and places a mark on his followers. These followers, however, then come under the wrath of God, and His eternal condemnation (Rev. 14:9-11).

This means that it is incorrect to think of either God's mark or the mark of the beast as a future event that some people can escape or avoid. Everyone has a mark! The question in the Book of Revelation is **which** mark people have, not whether they have a mark or not.

(iii) The mark is linked to worship

It is important to note that the placing of the mark on people is directly linked to whom they follow and worship. In other words, the mark of the beast represents the inner, spiritual reality of those who bear it. They do not worship God, but something else. In other words, they are idolaters.

Those who have God's mark are described as servants of God, the redeemed and the first fruits to God (Rev. 14:1-5). Those who receive the mark of the beast are described as worshippers of the beast (Rev. 14:9).

This means that we should not see either God's mark or the mark of the beast as merely a type of physical object or process that places a person in a category irrespective of their heart condition.

Unbelievers cannot escape God's wrath by being astute enough to avoid receiving some form of physical mark from the beast.

Conversely, believers cannot suddenly come under the control of the beast and be condemned because someone places a physical mark on or in them. Such an understanding of God's mark or the mark of the beast is superstitious and completely contradicts the teachings of the entire Bible.

The spiritual state and destiny of people is based on the state of their heart and whom they are worshipping. No physical, external "mark" can suddenly change a person's destiny. Neither mark

should be viewed as a magical, physical object that changes a person's spiritual standing once received.

So, what is the mark of the beast and who has it?

The above considerations allow us to draw a number of conclusions.

The mark of the beast in the Book of Revelation is NOT:

- A microchip
- A barcode
- The COVID-19 vaccine



The concept of the mark of the beast in Revelation is a non-literal image, teaching the fact that all unbelievers, whether they profess to be atheists or to believe in some form of god other than the God of the Bible, are under the control of the beast and worship him:

- They belong to the world that is opposed to God (1 Jn. 2:15-16)
- They are dead in their sins, and under the control of the Devil (Eph. 2:1-3)
- They belong to the kingdom of darkness (Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13)

All unbelievers in the world today, in God's sight, have the mark of the beast on them. Their hearts are in rebellion to God, and they are under the control of the Devil.

So why can Christians still buy and sell things?

This is a good question. Revelation 13:16-17 indicates that those who refuse the mark of the beast (i.e. Christians) cannot buy or sell. Yet, believers in many countries today are able to buy and sell. Why is that?

It must be remembered that the Book of Revelation depicts spiritual truth through non-literal images. The image of not being able to buy or sell thus represents persecution. The persecution promised in the Bible is very evident, yet it manifests differently according to societies and situations. Whilst some Christians really are unable to buy food because they are ostracised for their faith, others may simply be passed up for a promotion at work because they refuse to do shady deals. In other countries and ages, the persecution has been very direct and severe, including being tortured and put to death.

The point is that those who do not have the mark of the beast, but are children of the living God, have refused to conform to the system and thinking of the world around them. They are then ostracised in different ways. This is why Scripture encourages believers to live as strangers and pilgrims here on earth:

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country which they left, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not

[I]ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Heb. 11:13-16)

The comfort for the believer, however, is that they have an eternal hope which no earthly persecution or deprivation can shake. The glories and rewards of heaven far outweigh the relatively light, and certainly temporary affliction of this world:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

The bad news: you may have the mark of the beast already!

So, the bad news is that if you are an unbeliever, and not worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ, you already have the mark of the beast and are in danger of eternal damnation. God's anger is upon you (see Rom. 1:18), and a fearful judgement awaits you at the end of the age:

...and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thess. 1:7-8)

You may feel that you are a good person, and could not possibly be a follower of the beast or Satan in any way. God sees your spiritual condition differently. From God's point of view, your mind is darkened by Satan, and you are under his evil control in a very real sense (Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:26).

Spiritually speaking, you are walking around bearing the mark of the beast.

There is good news: Jesus can remove the mark of the beast

The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to undo the spiritual destruction caused by Satan and Adam's sin (1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12, 15, 17-18). On the cross, Jesus defeated Satan (Col. 2:15).

Those who repent of their sin and put their trust in Christ are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). They are set free from their sin (Rom. 6:17-18) and from Satan's control (2 Tim. 2:26).

Importantly, all believers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and are sealed (or marked) by God for all eternity (Eph. 2:13-14). Believers have the spiritual mark of God on them. No physical process can remove God's mark. Injecting believers with a vaccination (whether it is effective or not) or placing a barcode on them cannot remove or undo the gift of the Holy Spirit in them, nor change their eternal, glorious destiny.

Believers may refuse physical marks placed on them for numerous reasons, including not wanting to give governments undue control over them that could be used for evil purposes. Believers may refuse certain vaccines if they deem them to be untested or unsafe.

But these marks and vaccines should not be misunderstood as, or identified with the mark of the beast in Revelation.

The final victory

For those who refuse the mark of the beast, The Lord Jesus hold out wonderful promises in the Book of Revelation. Believers, although persecuted in this world, have a wonderful hope ahead of them. This life is short, and the troubles and difficulties in the world are temporary. The new heavens and new earth are the final destination of the believer, and are the rewards of enduring to the end:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Rev. 21:1-4)