

More on the Mark of the Beast

We read about the mark of the beast in the book of Revelation in the Bible, starting at chapter thirteen. The mark will be very popular, and will be required for buying and selling. However, in the end, the consequences of having it will be very dire indeed. I find it a remarkable prophecy: it is unusually clear and forthright. When it was written, its fulfilment seemed unlikely for many centuries, but now, in our day, technology makes it possible if not likely.

This article looks at the relevant Bible passages. My aim is to help us be on our guard.

So what is this beast?

There seem to be two beasts in Revelation. The first beast rises up from the sea (13:1). The sea recalls Isaiah – “The wicked are like a heaving sea which cannot rest. There is no peace for the wicked (57:21).” There are delightful times when the sea of life is in a dead calm, with years of peace and prosperity, when wickedness is tamed, and other times when the sea is turbulent, when wickedness is widespread and life is hard. The beast rising from the sea also recalls Daniel’s vision – “I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea (7:2-3).”

Life just goes like that. You never know what’s coming next. Calm or turmoil. You and I are like corks floating on the water. But it seems to me that turbulence gives a greater chance for evil to assert itself. This can lead to fear. But Jesus said we are to hold our heads high at such a time. “On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea... At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:25-28).” We are on the winning team, no matter how bad things may look. See also Psalm 46:1-3, which was a help to me when I was so weak in intensive care.

What are the beasts of Daniel chapter seven, the lion with eagle’s feathers and claws, the bear gorging himself, and the leopard with four heads? These first three remind us of the rulers in chapters one to six. King Nebuchadnezzar was like a lion – the king of the jungle – but when he had his breakdown, his hair and nails grew long like an eagle’s (4:33). King Belshazzar was gorging at a great feast like a bear when the hand appeared and wrote on the wall, sealing his fate (5:1 & 5). King Darius appointed three administrators to rule over his kingdom, who with himself made four heads (6:2).

Let’s take it then that the beast of Revelation is going to be a ruler. It seems he will be hugely popular (13:3-4).

The second beast in Revelation rises up from the earth. He seems to be a kind of deputy of the first beast (13:12). He is the one who brings in this mark on the right hand or forehead for everyone (13:16-18). The mark is his name or the number of his name, and has a value which anyone can calculate, namely 666.

Well, there have been myriad theories about this passage. Personally, I try not to put any weight on any one particular theory, but I do note what people say, and I find I have front runners in my mind, as it were. But before sharing them, I want to stress that these are only indications of the kind of thing that might be appropriate, and I would hate anybody to use the ideas as a basis for action. I think it is better to be like Mary, the mother of Jesus. If anybody was at the centre of what God was doing, it was her. Her response to the remarkable events around the birth of Jesus was to “ponder all these things in her heart.” Let’s try not to get excited but rather to be observant and thoughtful.

So, here goes. There are people in Sweden receiving a microchip in their hands.

Chris Bright writes:

Regarding the mark of the beast, here is an ITN report about micro-chipping peoples' hands. Note the use of microchipping as a means of contactless payment, as an alternative to transport tickets, and as a replacement for security passes. For these reasons, micro-chipping is likely to prove popular and therein lies the deception.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWVQR99bXt8>

The history of technology shows that once a technology is demonstrated to work, within 20 years it is common. Examples include:

Radio waves generated by Hertz in 1886; first radio distress signal sent from the East Goodwin Sands lightship on behalf of the merchant vessel "Elbe" in 1899. 13 years.

Powered flight 1903; combat aircraft well developed by the end of WW1 in 1918. 15 years.

Uranium atom split in 1938; nuclear weapons used in 1945, USS Nautilus submarine underway on nuclear power in 1954: 16 years.

Mobile phone principles demonstrated in 1978; available in the shops in 1985. 7 years.

It is reasonable to suppose that micro-chipping of humans will be common by 2035, and be de-facto compulsory soon afterwards by the withdrawal of cash, cheques, and cards as these means of exchange are regarded as being less convenient. No-one will be able to buy or sell unless they are micro-chipped. An allergic or toxic shock reaction to the materials in the chip might explain why ugly and painful sores would break out on those who have the mark of the beast (Rev 16:2).

David continues:

This is the closest thing I have seen to the mark on the hand scenario in Revelation so far. Note the girl’s enthusiasm for becoming a cyborg. People are prepared to part with good money to take part. It could become fashionable, the latest thing. Much of our life is driven by fashion. I notice that the image of the beast has a big role in Revelation. Everyone seems to think about their image these days. I would rather be a person of integrity myself, not worrying how I look to others. Easier said than done. I find it a constant challenge.

Because of the dire warnings against receiving the mark in Revelation, my response is that I will happily carry a card or a passport, but I will not be branded with a mark. Branding is for animals and is a sign of ownership. I am not prepared to give anybody else rights over my body.

What about the number of the beast? My front runner here is as follows. In Hebrew, numbers are expressed by letters of the alphabet. The sixth letter is W. So 666 = WWW, also known as the worldwide web.

Once again, there is great enthusiasm and excitement over the internet in our day. That's one way of thinking about worship – what you are excited about is what you worship, be it a football club, a car, or Jesus.

Both my ideas may well turn out to be wrong, but my attitude is to be wary of the end of cash, which is being talked about, with the result that our money becomes numbers in a computer. It feels to me like a loss of control. I am also not going to let other people control me in other ways through the web. I use it as a tool. It's a bit like fire, I suppose – most useful when used in the right way, under my control, but not if it flares up and becomes in control of me. I feel the need to keep alert.

Returning to the leader who rises up and is followed with enthusiasm, but turns out to be evil in the end, we have a recent example to my mind. I grew up thinking that Adolph Hitler was evil through and through, and that the German nation must have been bewitched to have followed him with such enthusiasm. Then I met a lady in Canada who had discovered the diaries and journals of an ancestor of hers, and found he had been an enthusiastic Nazi. For twenty years, she was ashamed, and kept this fact secret, but in the end she decided that the documents were a matter of public interest, so she self-published them. I was able to buy a copy.*

From it, I learned how much good Hitler had done in his early years, bringing in full employment and prosperity after the great depression and hyper inflation in Germany. No wonder the people thought he was marvellous. In fact, right up to the final days of the war, there were many people in Germany who were convinced that the allied advance was a minor setback and that the coming glorious third Reich was assured. They could not understand it when it all ended in defeat. Then the discovery of the death camps was a horrifying revelation to them.

I see a hint of this particular atrocity in the Bible. In Revelation, there is a vision of a dragon in the sky, whose tail casts down a third of the stars in the sky (12:2-4). He has ten horns, like the fourth beast of Daniel 7:7. Another ruler, maybe. Regarding the stars, the promise to Abraham was that his descendants, the Jews, would be as the stars of the sky (Gen 22:17, Deuteronomy 10:22). It is a fact that world Jewry numbered 18 million, and Hitler's programme killed six million of them. One third. I interpret the words of Revelation as a prophecy of something that would happen to the Jews two thousand years later. Remarkable.

I believe the book of Revelation speaks to us in our time. So as part of my pondering, it won't surprise me the day comes when a charismatic leader embraces the idea of us all being marked with new technology of some kind, with dire consequences in the end. Watch this space!

This article could end in a number of different ways, but my chosen ending is to focus on what I can do. Precious little, frankly, but I can remind myself that Jesus has the victory. Revelation tells us that the forces of evil will combine in a final showdown and will “wage war upon the Lamb, but he will defeat them for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and his victory will be shared by his followers, called and chosen and faithful (17:14).” My part is to be faithful to Jesus, which is what I plan to do. Holding on will be a challenge. We can follow Paul’s advice in Ephesians 6:10-18 on how to live.

Thank you, David Pennant, Woking, UK

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*Gudrun Moore, A Duty of Remembrance: The Story of My German Family, iUniverse, 2010. ASIN B01K15O6J4, available at

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Duty-Remembrance-Story-German-Family/dp/142692061X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=a+Duty+of+Remembrance&qid=1608650776&sr=8-1

See www.pennantpublishing.co.uk/1335days.htm for thoughts on the current three and a half year period of time in the UK which led to this article, which itself sprang from my project www.turntojesus.co.uk – an attempt to help people discover Jesus.