

The Mark of the Beast!

Joe Slater

What is the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16, 17)? For many decades, ominous-sounding “prophecies” have identified it as everything from your Social Security number, to the magnetic strip on your credit card, to the UPC bar code on a can of green beans! Maybe the fact that these “prophets” (?) keep changing their minds ought to tell us something . . .

In Revelation, the mark of the beast stands in direct contrast to the “*seal of the living God*” stamped upon the foreheads of 144,000 of His faithful servants (7:2-4). Those with the mark of the beast are condemned and punished severely; those with the seal of God are protected and blessed. In neither case is the mark or seal a literal, physical stamp.

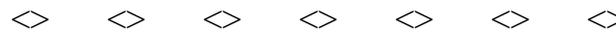
To be consistent, those who insist that the mark of the beast is a literal, physical mark must also explain about the seal of God – what it is, and can they show that they have it? Also, since they insist the mark is literal, then the number 144,000 must also be literal (exactly 12,000 from each of the Israelite tribes listed; Revelation 14:1-4 identifies them all as male virgins, which would also have to be taken liberally)! Since nearly all of these prophecy-mongers are married Gentiles, their theory loses credibility, to say the least!

Under the Old Covenant, circumcision was the literal, physical sign (seal, Romans 4:11) of the chosen people. No such physical sign exists under the New Covenant. Rather, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). Paul wrote, “*Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His’*” (2 Timothy 2:19).

The seal or mark, then, is simply a symbol of identification. Those with the seal of God are those who belong to Him. The mark of the beast, on the other hand, symbolizes the fact that those people are servants of that awful power that was persecuting God’s people unmercifully. (In context, the “beast” is the government of the Roman Empire.)

Should you be worried about having the mark of the beast? If you mean a literal, physical mark, then no, you need not be concerned. If, however, you understand the truth – that the mark or seal symbolizes your allegiance, then yes, you should be deeply concerned. Nothing is more important than your allegiance, for it determines your eternal destiny.

Do you wear the mark of the beast? Or is the seal of the living God upon your forehead?



FAILURE

Failure is a bruise, not a tattoo.

Get the help you need to heal,
and come back stronger than ever.

Your mistakes
don’t define you.

How you respond does.

Fight on today.

For a righteous man

**may fall seven times
and rise again,**

But the wicked

shall fall by calamity

Proverbs 24:16

Affirmative Consent

Recently, California passed a law called "affirmative consent." It helps convict rapists whose defense is, "she didn't say 'no.'" In some cases, a victim cannot say 'no' because she is intoxicated, drugged, gagged, unconscious, or a man's hand is placed over her mouth.

This is a better law than "no means no." It's rape if a woman does not give consent.

Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli were prominent figures in the Reformation Movement during the 16th century. These men disagreed on this same principle of affirmative consent. Luther said basically, "Anything that is not explicitly condemned in Scripture is allowed." Zwingli, on the other hand, basically said, "Unless it is authorized by God it is not to be allowed." Although Zwingli was not consistent, and allowed sprinkling babies, his was the more biblical principle.

For example, where in scripture is eating the Lord's Supper on a day other than the Lord's Day condemned? Or, where in Scripture is instrumental music in worship condemned? If the Bible specifically condemned everything God does not approve, it would fill a law library!

Just as the "affirmative consent law" will protect more women and catch more rapists, Zwingli's biblical principle of demanding God's authorization protects the church against innovations that will lead to a total apostasy. Once the camel's nose is in the tent, his whole body is next. Church history proves this to be true. Let one man's unauthorized innovation enter, and the precedent is set for others to follow.

Today, many people choose churches based upon what they like rather than on what God wants. We are pleasure-driven, even in religion. "It can't be wrong if it feels so right" unfortunately applies in our worship as well as in worldly things.

Can we really say we are glorifying God when we choose to do those things based upon our own interests rather than on God's?

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)