

Big Picture Bible Study

Lesson 10: The Tools of the Enemy

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

The end of times will have an ultimatum for every human being. In churches, governments, nature, and all society there will be chaos, and all will hear the message of the Loud Cry as they have never heard it before. All will make their own decision. The popular choice will be to follow the new world government in receiving the mark of authority from the beast power of Revelation 13.

- **Revelation 13:15-17** ¹⁵He 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. ¹⁶He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷and 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.”

In studying the Mark of the Beast, we must keep in mind that it is not the “*markofthebeast*,” it is the *Mark... of THE Beast*. If you know who the beast is, all you need to do is ask what his mark is and you voilà: there you have the *Mark of the Beast!* We have already discussed the identity of the Beast from the Sea as being the **Roman Church State**. But let’s see the evidence from the text itself. We MUST know for sure who the beast is, so that we in turn can find out what is the mark.

1. Arises from the sea (Revelation 13:1)

This beast (political power) arises amid a highly populated area of the planet where nations warred and the gospel was preached. Therefore, this beast must arrive among the populated world of the modern European nations in the Mediterranean.

2. Is a composite of the four beasts of Daniel 7 (Revelation 13:1-2)

This political power resembles the four pagan empires that preceded it. It has ten horns (terrible beast: Rome), body of a leopard (Greece), feet of a bear (Persia), and mouth of a lion (Babylon). There will be visible signs, practices and remnants of the Pagan tradition found in this power, and it must come upon the scene AFTER at least 476 A.D. with the collapse of Western Rome.

- “In a certain respect, she [the papacy] has copied her organization from that of the Roman Empire, has preserved and made fruitful the philosophical intuitions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, borrowed from both Barbarians and the Byzantine Roman Empire, but always remains herself, thoroughly digesting all elements drawn from external sources.” Retif A. (1959). *The Catholic Spirit*. Trans. by Dom Aldhelm Dean. From *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 88. New York, Hawthorne Books, p. 85.

3. Receives power and authority from the dragon (Revelation 13:2)

Whoever this power is, whoever is identified as the Beast—no matter how innocent it may appear or how positive might be their teachings—this power receives its power from the devil. It claims to be the “woman,” the bride of Christ, setting up a pretend image; but it truly is worshipping Satan.

- “The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire baptized. Rome was transformed as well as converted. The very capital of the old Empire became the capital of the Christian Empire. The office of Pontifex Maximus was continued in that of Pope.” Flick A. C. (1909). *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church*. G. P. Putnam’s Sons: New York, pp. 148-149.

4. Receives a deadly wound (Revelation 13:3)

A deadly wound was inflicted on this power, taking its power away. It will seem for a moment that this power will be dead, just as happened to the Papacy when general Berthier of Napoleon's army entered Rome and took Pope Pius VI captive in February of 1798.

5. Has deadly wound healed (Revelation 13:3)

In 1870, Italy declared war on the Papal States and put Rome under siege. For 59 years the Pope was a virtual prisoner in the Vatican. Then came *the Lateran Treaty* of February 11, 1929, and the Vatican was restored to autonomous, political power.

Photo: Cardinal Gasparri (representing Pope Pius XI) and Benito Mussolini (representing King Victor Emmanuel III) sign the Lateran Concordat which brought into being the Vatican City State.

- "Their meeting was to have been a secret guarded for the inner circle, but the story, like so many of its kind, leaked, and a crowd, tense with excitement, is here to witness the passage of these two men whose pens will heal a wound of 59 years." **Historic Scene in the Lateran Palace (1929, April 18).** *The Catholic Advocate*, 16.
- "The Pope is again an independent sovereign ruler, as he was throughout the Middle Ages, though his temporal realm, established today, is the most microscopic independent State in the world, and probably the smallest in all history." **Vatican and Italy Sign Pact Recreating a Papal State; 60 Years of Enmity Ended. (1929, February 12).** *The New York Times*.
- "In affixing the autographs to the memorable document, healing the wound which has festered since 1870... extreme cordiality was displayed on both sides." **Vatican Again at Peace with Italy after Long Quarrel. (1929, February 12).** *San Francisco Chronicle*.



Vatican City is a sovereign state. It receives ambassadors, produces its own currency, maintains its own army and even sends a delegate to speak at the United Nations (although the delegate cannot vote).

- "The American ambassador says the Vatican is unmatched as a 'listening post' (120). The Vatican knows by Saturday what will happen on Monday anywhere in the world (439). Papal structure is prepared for worldwide rule now (143)." **Quotes from: Martin, M. (1990).** *The Keys of This Blood.* Simon & Schuster: New York.

6. Is honored by whole world and restored to political influence (Revelation 13:7)

Since 1929, the Papacy has steadily grown in power and influence to the point where it is now starting to make sense (where at one point it did not) how this power could rule the world.

7. Receives worship and redirects it to Satan (Revelation 13:8)

No other religious figure comes close when comparing the audience and scope of influence held by this power. The push for unity under the false image of Christ's church will be led by this power.

8. Speaks great things (blasphemies) against God (Revelation 13:1)

This power will claim to stand in the place of God on Earth. This power will claim to be Jesus' representative on Earth. This power will claim the rights that belong to God only: to forgive sins, to offer absolution, to be infallible, to worship the dead, the change the Sabbath, and many others.

9. Makes war with and overcomes the saints of God (Revelation 13:7)

This will be the power that persecuted God's true church while it was clothed in sackcloth during the dark ages of this world's history. This power lost its influence, but once it has returned, it will once again persecute God's true church during the time of trouble.

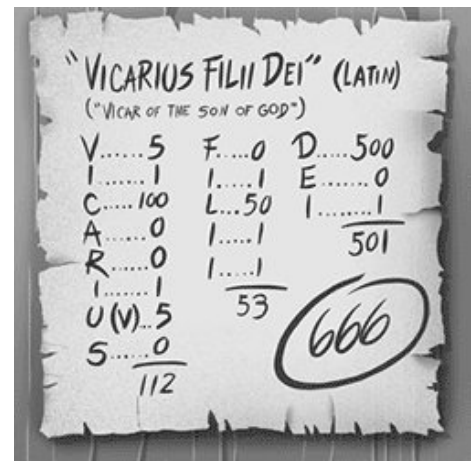
10. Is given power to rule for 42 months, or for 3½ years, or for 1260 days (Revelation 13:5)

This is one of the clearest identifiers. The 1,260 days prophecy is the golden thread that connects many of the most important chapters that allow us to have such an accurate understanding of this world's future. This is the time of 42 prophetic months, which equals 1,260 years, when the Papacy ruled over the nations of Europe from 538 A.D. – 1798 A.D.

11. Has the number 666 (Revelation 13:18)

This power will be led by a man claiming power that belongs only to God. He will also have a number connected to that name, and somehow that name will be the number 666.

- "The title of the pope of Rome is 'Vicarius Filii Dei'" **Martin, M. (1990). *The Keys of This Blood*. Simon & Schuster: New York.**
- "The most plausible name we have ever seen suggested as containing the number of the beast, is the blasphemous title which the pope applies to himself and wears in jeweled letters upon his miter or pontifical crown. That title is this: "Vicarius Filii Dei – Vicegerent of the Son of God." Taking the letters out of this title which, the Latins used as numerals, and giving them their numerical value. ...Adding these numbers together, we have just 666." **Smith, U. (November 11, 1866). *The Two-horned Beast*. *Review and Herald*, 28 (25), 196.**



All of the attributes given to the Beast from the Sea make it very clear who this is: it is the **Roman Church State**. This is the identity of the Beast. So the "**Mark of the Beast**" will be whatever is the mark of authority of the Roman church.

The Seal of God

The Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God are mutually exclusive; you cannot get one if you have the other. Notice how the servants of God are sealed first.

- **Revelation 7:1-4** "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. ²Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.' ⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:"
- **Revelation 14:1, 4-5** "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads... ⁴These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

The loyal of God during the time of trouble (those who will become the 144,000) are sealed at some point with the protection of God. Later on, they are described very specifically:

- **Revelation 14:12** “¹²Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”
- **Revelation 12:17** “¹⁷And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
- **Revelation 19:10** “¹⁰And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy. God has always used His prophets to give His word to His people. Since 1844 (when the Time of the End began) the church has received the same testimony of prophetic messages and can be prepared for the coming crisis. To receive this precious Seal, the Holy Spirit is the key: it is He who writes the law in our minds and hearts:

- **Ephesians 4:30** “³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
- **Hebrews 8:10** “¹⁰For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (*remember **Jeremiah 31:31-34***).

The Seal of God is His law; it is His character written upon us.

The Seal of God and the Sabbath

The Seal of God is placed in forehead, symbolizing that it is an inner seal: the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is He who puts the Royal Law (LOVE or 10C) into our hearts. So what is the deception? It must be that the counterfeit law is the popular law of society that goes against God’s law.

- **Exodus 31:13** “¹³Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’ ”
- **Ezekiel 20:19-20** “¹⁹I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; ²⁰And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.”

Clearly, God has a very specific sign between Him and His people: the Sabbath, part of the commandments of God that the 144,000 will keep (*remember **Revelation 14:12***).

- **The Great Controversy, p. 605** “The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.”

The Sabbath is the public sign to the world of being sealed by God. It is the visible and habitual sign that you follow Yahweh and His law.

The Sign (Mark) of the Papacy's (the Beast) Authority

There are two major changes in God's law of Self-Sacrificing Love: the 2ndC and the 4thC. The Roman Church State has intentionally changed the law on paper, redirecting worship away from God to go to men, which is then redirected to go to the dragon (the devil). Let's see if we can look and find, *What is the mark of the Roman Church's (the beast) authority? What is their mark?*

- "Q. *Which is the Sabbath day?* A. Saturday is the Sabbath day. Q. *Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?* A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." Geiermann, P. (1957). *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*. Ed. 3, p. 50.
- "Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act... And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters." C.F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons, (1895, October 28) Letter.
- "Sunday is our mark of authority... The church is above the Bible, and this transference of the Sabbath observance is proof of that fact." Catholic Record. (1923, September 1).
- "I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can furnish any proof from the Bible that Sunday is the day we are bound to keep... The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," but the Catholic Church says, "No, keep the first day of the week," and the whole world bows in obedience." Catholic Priest Enright, T. (1884, February 18). CSSR, lecture at Hartford, KS.

This is a personal attack on Jesus Christ, the Creator. Satan has continued this attack ever since being expelled from Heaven.

This is a question of whose law will you follow: God's or man's?

When Christ comes upon a similar situation with the Pharisees, their traditional laws, and the unchanging standard of the Ten Commandments, Jesus asks the same question that He will likely ask of each person who rejects His law and receives instead the Mark of the Beast:

- **Matthew 15:3** "He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

Knowledge will not get us saved; knowing what the Mark of the Beast is will not save anyone. It is surrender to God's will, accepting grace in faith, and walking in obedience that will make the difference.

The Few Verses of Solemn Warning

- **Ezekiel 22:8** "You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths."
- **Ezekiel 22:26** "Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them."
- **Hosea 4:6** "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."
- **Hosea 8:12** "I have written for him the great things of My law, But they were considered a strange thing."
- **Malachi 2:8-9** "But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law." "

THE GREAT DECEPTION IN THE END: IMMORTALITY AND DEATH

The struggle of the time of trouble will be characterized by **God—His people—His law** and all the messages that come with it; it will also have **Satan—His people—His law**, all of which have been designed to look AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE to the original and thus deceive many to receive the Mark of the Beast. A major way for this to happen is the deception of consciousness after death.

- **The Great Controversy, p. 551-552** “The doctrine of man’s consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. If the dead are admitted to the presence of God and holy angels, and privileged with knowledge far exceeding what they before possessed, why should they not return to the earth to enlighten and instruct the living? If, as taught by popular theologians, spirits of the dead are hovering about their friends on earth, why should they not be permitted to communicate with them, to warn them against evil, or to comfort them in sorrow? How can those who believe in man’s consciousness in death reject what comes to them as divine light communicated by glorified spirits? Here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.”
- **The Great Controversy, p. 604** “A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches.”

We must know what the Bible teaches on this topic well enough that even the most convincing evidence of our senses will not be enough to set aside the truth we know from the Bible.

Is Man Immortal?

The First Lie

- **Genesis 3:4** “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:”
 - Satan’s first deception given to mankind will be repeated in his last: the lie is set forth to the people of God that death is not the end – that we will not really die.

Man Is Mortal – Only God Is Immortal

- **Job 4:17** “¹⁷Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?”
- **Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV)** “²⁰The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”
 - There is nothing immortal within human beings. The “soul” does not continue on after the death of the body – otherwise we would have immortality.
- **I Timothy 6:15-16** “¹⁵Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

Immortality is a gift that we will receive from God; it is not inherently in us nor was it given to us at the death of Jesus. It will be given to us at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and not before.

Does Man Have A Soul?

- **Genesis 2:7** “⁷And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”
 - At creation, the dust was given breath. This union resulted in a living soul.
- **Ecclesiastes 12:7** “⁷Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”
 - At death, this process is reversed: dust goes back to dust, breath goes back to God, and the soul of the man or woman is no longer.
 - The creation story is clear: breath + dust = soul.
- **Job 27:3** “³All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;”
 - Our breath is the very Spirit of Life! There is no soul apart from breath and body.

How Is Death Referred To In The Bible?

- **John 11:11-14** “¹¹These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. ¹²Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. ¹³Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. ¹⁴Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

Jesus' words are clear: Lazarus being asleep is the same as being dead – we are not conscious of the passing of time.

- **Psalms 13:3** “³Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;”
- **Daniel 12:1-2** “¹And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. ²And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”
 - This is the Second Coming of Jesus. It is only here, at this grand event, that the dead come alive, literally “come awake,” and are given their reward.
 - How could this verse be true if all souls are either in Heaven or in Hell? If that were true then the judgment would have been made and the reward already given!

Are The Dead Conscious?

- **Psalms 6:4-5** “⁴Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. ⁵For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”
- **Psalms 146:3-4** “³Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. ⁴His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”
- **Ecclesiastes 9:5-6** “⁵For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”

Do We Go To Heaven, Hell, Or Nowhere?

- **Job 7:9-10** “⁹As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. ¹⁰He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”

- **Job 21:32** “³²Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.”
- **John 5:24-30** “²⁴Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. ²⁵Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. ²⁶For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; ²⁷And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. ²⁸Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. ³⁰I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”
- **John 3:13** “¹³And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”
- **John 20:17** “¹⁵Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. ¹⁶Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. ¹⁷Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”
 - Clearly, Jesus did not go to Heaven while He was dead. He did not go to Hell, either. He was simply asleep, “on pause” so to speak, awaiting the resurrection.

When Do We Get Immortality?

- **I Corinthians 15:51-53** “⁵¹Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”
 - The soul cannot be immortal when it is a gift that is given only at “*the last trump.*”
- **II Timothy 4:1** “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;”
- **I Thessalonians 4:13-18** “¹³But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸***Wherefore comfort one another with these words.***”

So many people seem to find comfort in the idea that our loved ones are in Heaven. How is that comforting? I would hate to think that my loved ones are seeing the pain and hurt that we must endure here on Earth! It is so much more comforting to know that they are at peace, resting in the sleep of death, awaiting the coming of our Lord and Savior. The course of their thoughts will continue right where it ended as they behold the Second Coming along with those who are still alive! This is the most comforting thought of all.

- **II Timothy 4:6-8** “⁶For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

A Few Often-Misunderstood Verses

- **John 11:23-27** “²³Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. ²⁴Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? ²⁷She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”
 - The direct context is sufficient enough to see how this verse does not point to an immediate Heaven – Jesus says “*in the resurrection at the last day!*”
- **Luke 23:42-43** “⁴²And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. ⁴³And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”
 - This is a poor translation of a very common saying “I say to you today.” There are no commas in the Greek manuscript; the translators placed in before the “today” when it should be placed after. This totally changes the verse!
- **Philippians 1:23** “²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”
 - First and foremost, Paul will never disagree with Paul – always read in context!
 - To him death was a sleep with no passage of time. He knew that the next event after closing his eyes in the sleep of death was “*to depart and be with Christ.*” In writing to his friend, Timothy, he is indicating that (since there is no conscious passage of time from death to the Second Coming) when he closes his eyes in sleep he is looking forward to waking up to be with the Lord, just like he wrote in **II Thessalonians 4**
- **Luke 16:19-31** – Parable number 5 of 5 in a row: a man named Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom.
 - It is a metaphor for not being able to do after death that which we can do during life: take care of the poor, feed the hungry, spread the gospel. It is an allegory that has nothing to do with the state of life after death. When you start taking any part of it as literal it creates lots of problems, just like with His other parables: lost sheep, lost coin, lost boy, unfaithful steward (*are we made of metal? are we literal sheep? could those in Heaven see those in hell – what kind of Heaven would that be... it would be torture and very sadening!*).
- **II Corinthians 5:1-11** – Comparison between this earthly body and our Heavenly bodies.
 - The key verse is **II Corinthians 5:4** when it says “*so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life*” which is a reference to what Paul wrote in his previous letter, in **I Corinthians 15:52**, that “*this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.*”

Who Will Witness The Second Coming?

- **Revelation 1:7** “⁷Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”
- **Revelation 22:11-12** “¹¹He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. ¹²And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

THE RIGHT HAND AND THE FOREHEAD

The Mark of the Beast is given out as every person has his or her conscience impressed with the message of the Latter Rain and the Loud Cry. Everyone will have sufficient light to be able to make their own decision intelligently. Those who receive the Mark of the Beast get it somewhere specific:

- **Revelation 13:16** “¹⁶He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,”

But what does it mean? Is this a tattoo? Is this a physical mark in the hand and the face? Remember from **Revelation 1:1**, everything in this book is symbolic. So let’s look in the Bible for what could be the symbol of our hands, what could be the symbol of our foreheads?

- **Isaiah 59:6-7** “⁶Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works; *their works are works of iniquity*, and the act of violence is in their hands. ⁷Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; *their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity*; wasting and destruction are in their paths.”

It is all about thoughts and actions: character.

Clearly, according to Isaiah, the symbol of hand is the works that hand does; the symbol of the head is the thoughts that it thinks and the things it believes. As the Israelites approached the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses stands up to remind them of what had happened before. All through Deuteronomy chapter 5, he begins his discourse with a repetition of the Ten Commandments and the story. Then in chapter 6, referencing the 10C, he says:

- **Deuteronomy 6:6-8** “⁶And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.”

Keeping God’s Law in our hands and foreheads simply means in our actions and in our thoughts: **in our characters**. In the last days the mark will be in our actions (**hand**) and in our thoughts (**forehead**).

When will the Mark (or the Seal) be given?

We MUST understand this issue because **worship** will be the distinguishing factor. We need to be able to distinguish between counterfeit and genuine worship. Also, since we have been entrusted with these truths (as the Remnant of God’s people), we will be the first to go through the judgment that determines if you get the Mark or the Seal. This makes sense, as we must first receive power to preach so that everyone else can make their decision. But we need biblical evidence, not just logic.

Ezekiel sees a vision about the disloyalty of Israel (just like our world today). Just like will happen for us, Israel was divided by the loyal and those who claimed to be loyal but did not follow the Scripture. This is a prefigure of the time of the end. In the vision, Ezekiel is shown progressively worse abominations that are secretly being done in Israel, ultimately turning their backs to the Temple and instead worshiping the sun in the East (turning from God’s directive, to worship the sun). Then six men in white linen with battleaxes come to the Temple, and one has an inkhorn:

- **Ezekiel 9:4** “⁴and the Lord said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” ”

The process starts in Jerusalem, symbolizing God's people. Those who received the Seal are they who are repenting and confessing before the societal struggle, searching for victory over self.

- **Ezekiel 9:5-6** “⁵To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and **begin at My sanctuary.**” So they began with the elders who were before the temple.”

In 1844, the antitypical Day of Atonement began within the Heavenly Sanctuary when Jesus Christ, our High Priest, entered into the Most Holy Place before the throne of God on our behalf to atone for the confessed sins of all mankind, offering up His own perfect life and innocent death as substitute for the wages of sin (death) that we each deserve for breaking the Law of Self-Sacrificing Love. Since that date, the case of every single human being is being brought up one by one before the throne of Heaven. Those who asked for Jesus to stand in their place (faith) and lived up to the light that they were given (obedience) will have their names written in the book of life; those who did not confess their sins and ask for forgiveness and did not seek to find victory over sin and self must pay the penalty for their own sin: eternal separation from God which is death and total destruction.

The signs of the times are telling us that this could begin at any moment now, when the cases of the dead will be completed and the judgment will turn to the cases of the living. When He does, Jesus will start with those who have been entrusted with His truth. Adventists will be foremost in this first giving of the Seal of God. Remember, dear reader, this process is happening right now!

Impact of the Mark of the Beast

- **Revelation 13:17** “¹⁷and 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.”

Buying and selling is clearly a symbol for economic participation: buying food, gas, shelter, etc. So when the Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God are finally given out, it will be connected to the societal struggle. Every man, woman and child will individually receive one or the other based on their choices. We will not know when this transition has taken place, so we must prepare our hearts and minds to follow the will, the way, and the Law of God.

The Mark of the Beast is not given today. Only when we must decide between God's law and man's, when a Sunday Law is mandatory—that is when we are choosing to receive the mark of God or of Satan.

- **Isaiah 58:13-14** “¹³If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, ¹⁴Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”
- **The Great Controversy, p. 605** “But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently.”

SECRET BEHIND SECRET SOCIETIES

The Church of Babylon

- **Revelation 17:4** “4The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”



There is only one church that uses the symbol of a woman with a cup, and that is the Roman Church State. Notice on the coin to the right that she is called “FIDES”.

Fides was a very important concept to the Roman Empire. It is mistranslated as “faith;” it really meant “good faith,” or the reciprocal and mutual loyalty required of relationships between two parties. The Latin Diction describes it as, “*the absence of fraud or deceit; the state of being exactly as claims or appearances indicate.*” How ironic that it stands on a Vatican coin. More importantly, Fides was also a pagan goddess of oaths, honesty and relationships of good faith.

- “Numa was the first who erected an altar to FIDES under which name the GODDESS OF OATHS and honesty was worshiped. Obligations taken in her name were considered as more inviolable than any others.” Mackey, Albert G. (1870). *A Manual of the Lodge*. New York: Charles E. Merrill Company, p. 40-41.
- “It must be always clear that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic universal church is not the sister, but the mother of all the churches.” Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later known as Pope Benedict XVI), Head of the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith (formerly known as the Inquisition). (2000). Letter from Pope John Paul II to Bishops worldwide.

The Church of Babylon will be forever on this earth and will not lose any of the children by controlling the world in a spiritual sense.

Secret Societies

Satan, once known as Lucifer—the fallen angel—is he who gave power to build Babel, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Papal Rome. He gave his power, seat, and authority to his frontman so that all the worship is redirected back to him.

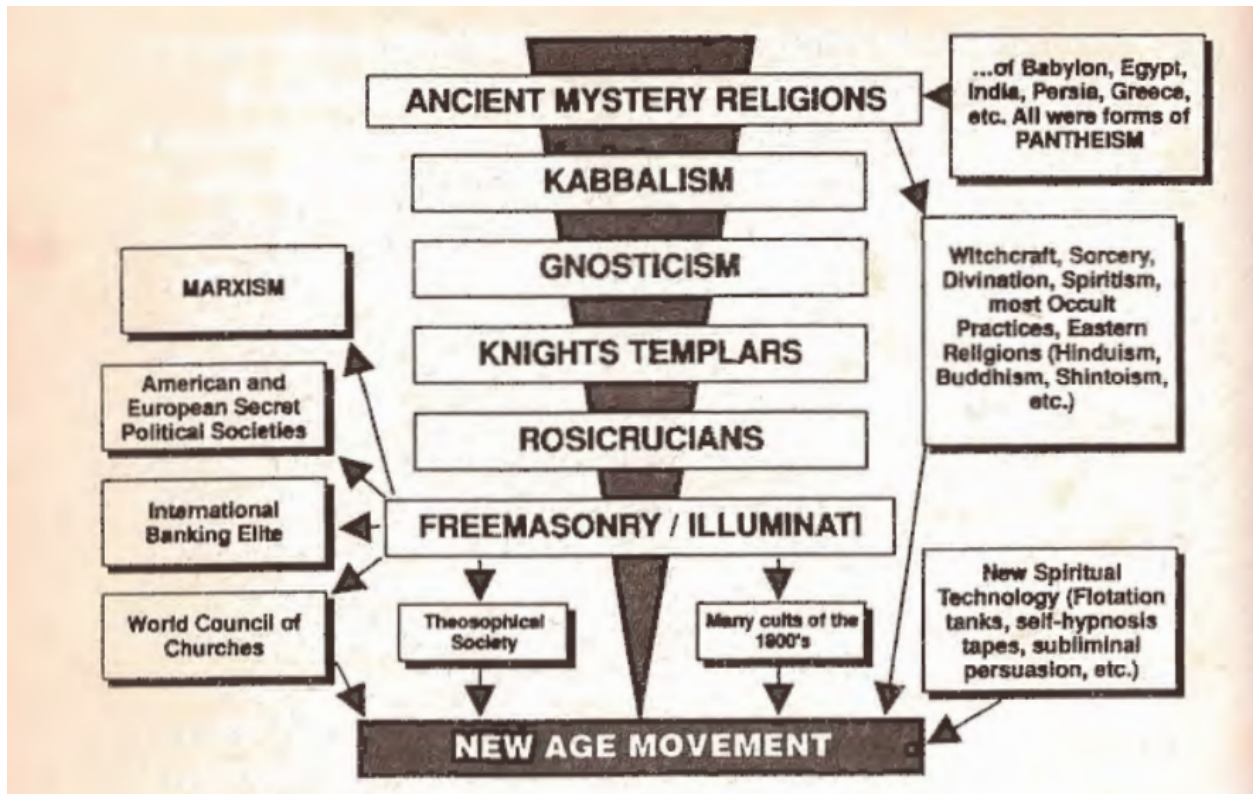
- **Revelation 13:2** “2And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”

In secret societies, there are always 2 doctrines: 1 for the initiated and 1 for the un-initiated: the inside, esoteric (secret), occult (hidden) doctrine for the initiated; and the outside, exoteric (public), doctrine for the outside world. Amongst occult insiders, Lucifer is the true son of God; Jesus is a second son who was defeated by Lucifer who had been unjustly thrown out. Lucifer is the true luminary and victor in the battle and will be the one who will be worshipped at the end of time. All Christianity is (to Luciferians) is the counterfeit system of a usurper. Ironic, isn't it?

This is the same system of doctrine used by the Roman Church.

This is, of course, not what the Bible teaches. And although they claim to do so, the Roman Catholic religion does not teach what the Bible teaches, either. The counterfeit will appear to be the genuine in the end, so we must know the genuine well enough to not be deceived.

The Babylonian Religion Heritage



Kah, Gary H. (1992). *En Route to Global Occupation*. Lafayette: Huntington House Publishers, p. 94.

The beliefs and practices of the Ancient Babylonian Mystery Religion was inculcated in Kabbalism by the Jews, taken over into the Christian era by Gnosticism, kept alive by the Knights Templars during the Middle Ages, carried further through Europe with Rosicrucianism, and continued on to the New World through Freemasonry and the Illuminati. In the modern world, we see evidence of control in Marxism, international revolutions, American and European Secret Societies, political societies, international banking and governing, and the World Council of Churches.

This is the final battle, the culmination of all the years since Lucifer was cast out of Heaven. He has used many different groups throughout history, but the goal has always been the same.

The Counterfeit Trinity

- **Colossians 2:9** "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;"
- **I John 5:7** "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one."

The true Trinity (or we can use the Biblical word 'Godhead' if you like) and the Roman Catholic trinity are two different things entirely.

The RCS exoteric (outer) teaching it is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, but when you look at who they worship, it is clear that the esoteric (inner) teaching it is Father, Mother, Child—just like Paganism.

Roman Catholicism has continued the tradition of the ancient mystics, having one doctrine that is public, distributed to the masses, which claims Christianity but is actually a cover for the esoteric doctrine for the initiated. The Father, Son, and Mother of their teachings is really Osiris, Isis, Horus in disguise – paganism hidden in plain sight.

Civilization	Almighty God	Mother	Child
Babel	Nimrod	Semiramis	Tammuz
Egypt	Osiris	Isis	Horus
Assyria/Phoenicia	Ninus	Ashtoreth	Baal
Babylon	Belus	Ishtar	Tammuz
Persia	Ahura-Mazda	Anahita	Mithras
Greek	Zues	Aphrodite	Eres
Pagan Rome	Jupiter	Venus	Aeneas
Papal Rome	Father God	Virgin Mary	Baby Jesus

Horus was the divine son of Isis and Osiris (mythology) in the ancient Egyptian religion, which is nothing more than Baal, Tammuz, and Semiramis (real people in history) from Babylon.

Ancient Egyptian and Babylonian Gods

Set usurped the power of Osiris, killing and mutilating his own brother, throwing his body parts to different areas of the earth. But Isis reassembled Osiris' corpse and embalmed him. Using her magical skills, she restored his body to life after having gathered the body parts (except for his phallus, which is forever represented by the obelisk). In his resurrection, Osiris was forever known to be the god of the dead or "the living ones" as the dead were called.



Is it not then surprising that New York City, London, and Paris all have three obelisks taken from Egypt in the center of their cities? Think about the Washington Monument in the heart of the U.S.A. Think about the obelisk in the heart of the Vatican City. Behind the scenes, these cities and their societies, banking, politics, military and strategy, all take orders from Rome—the seat of the dragon.

Just like all of the pagan gods, Horus represented Lucifer, who has been stealing the worship deserved only by the Great I AM, our Yahweh Jehovah, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the only true God in Heaven. Horus worship and sun worship are simply masked practices of the ancient and original Lucifer worship.



It is sad to think that this is possible, but what reason could there be for all the pagan symbols, structures, holidays, and directions of modern societies to share so many characteristics and concepts with such odd, pagan history? The world that we see on the news, read about in the paper, listen about from politicians, it is a façade. It is the world that has been pulled over our eyes to shield us from the truth: Satan has made this earth his kingdom and he is very close to controlling every single aspect and person.

It is time to open our eyes, friends. This world is not our home; it is a battlefield and the war is spiritual. Your first enemy: self. Your next enemy: evil angels. Your ally: the ALMIGHTY.

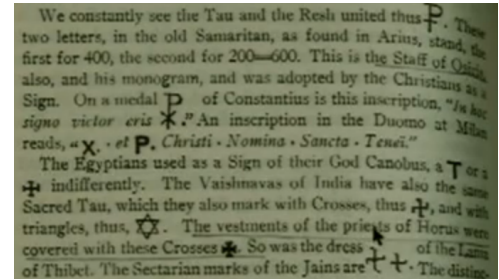
Who are the modern-day inheritors of the ancient occult religions?

- To the outside world, it seems like Christianity, but to the inner circle, to the initiated, it is pure occultism.

The Maltese Cross



- The Maltese cross was once used as a symbol for the priests of the god Horus, one of the oldest and most significant deities in ancient Egypt.
- “The vestments of the priest of Horus were covered with these crosses [Maltese Cross].” Pike, A. (1871). *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Freemasonry*. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, p. 292.
- Where do we see this symbol now? On the vestments of the Pope. Although different attributes or syncretic relationships exist between them, many of the ancient religions, Egyptian, Babylonian, Grecian, Assyrian, worshipped Horus.



Mitre



- The Mitre was once used by the priests of Dagon, the Assyro-Babylonian fertility god of grain and reproduction of the earth. Also worshipped by the Philistines in the Old Testament, Dagon was pictured as a fish-man.

• **Judges 16:23-30** “²³Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. ²⁴And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

- We see this same symbol clearly on the head of the all the Popes. This is the continuation of an ancient priesthood.



The Papal Tiara



- The triple-tiered crown has long been a symbol used by the Papacy. Medieval tarot cards included a card showing a woman wearing a papal tiara and known as the *Popess* or the *High Priestess*.

• This is Semiramis (Babylon), Isis (Egypt), Venus (Rome), Diana (Greece), all repeated. The holy feminine has long been worshipped and Catholicism used Mary the mother Christ as the figure to continue this worship.

- The triple-tiered crown of the Pope also represents power in Heaven, Earth and Hell.



As history unfolded and power begat power, Lucifer continued his deception of mankind through a variety of well-developed “mysteries” designed to ensnare with the intricacies found in modern-day new age movements and secret societies.

The Knights Templars (1100 - 1307)

- Excommunicated because it was discovered that their ceremony of initiation included gross obscenities, insults to the cross, adoration of the idol Baphomet (said to be the image to the true God), and other sacrilegious practices like cursing the cross and trampling on Jesus.

The Jesuit Order (1534 – 1773)

- “They [the Jesuits] have so constantly mixed themselves up in court and state intrigues that they must, in justice, be reproached with striving after universal dominion.” **Archduke Francis, Maximillian (1815).** **Macpherson, H. (1900).** *The Jesuits in History.* Springfield, Missouri: Ozark Book Publishers, p. 126-127.
- “And who are these agents? They are for the most part, Jesuits, an ecclesiastical order proverbial through the world for cunning, duplicity, and the total want of moral principle; an order so skilled in all the arts of deception that even in Catholic countries, in Italy itself, it became intolerable, and the people required its suppression.” **Morse, Samuel (1835).** *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States, Vol 1.* Boston, Massachusetts, Crocker & Brewster, p. 55.
- “those are the worst of the Catholics, the Inquisitors, the Jesuits! ...They are simply the Romish army for the earthly sovereignty of the world in the future with the Pontiff of Rome for Emperor... that’s their ideal, but there’s no sort of mystery or lofty melancholy about it... its simple lust of power, of filthy earthly gain, of domination – something like a universal serfdom with them as master – that’s all they stand for. They don’t even believe in God perhaps.” **Dostoyevsky, Fyodor (1880).** *The Brothers Karamazov.* p. 309.
- “It is my opinion that if the liberties of this country – the United States of America – are destroyed, it will be by the subtlety of the Roman Catholic Jesuit priests, for they are the most crafty, dangerous enemies of civil and religious liberty. They have instigated most the wars of Europe.” **The Roman Catholic, Lafayette. Crowley, J. J. (1912).** *Romanism: A Menace to the Nation.* Aurora, Missouri,: The Menace Publishing Co., p. 140.
- “Never before in the course of the world’s history had such a Society appeared. The old Roman Senate itself did not lay schemes for world domination with greater certainty of success.” **Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1800, Alias “Novalis.” Fulop-Miller, Rene (1930).** *The Power and Secret of the Jesuits.* Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., p. vi.
- “The SS [Hitler’s Secret Service] had been organized by Himmler according to the principles of the Jesuit Order. The rules of service and spiritual exercises prescribed by Ignatius de Loyola constituted a model with Himmler strove carefully to copy. Absolute obedience was the supreme rule; every order had to be executed without comment.” **Paris, Edmond (1964).** *The Vatican Against Europe.* London: The Wickliffe Press, p. 253.
- “See, my lord, from this room – from this room I govern not only Paris, but China. Not only China, but the whole world, without any one knowing how ‘tis managed.” **Michael Angelo Tamburini, 1730, General of the Jesuits, Speaking to the Duke of Brancas. Steinmetz, A. (1848).** *History of the Jesuits, Vol I.* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Lea and Blanchard, p. 107.

The Jesuit Suppression and Revolution

- “And to this end a member of the regular clergy, recommendable for his prudence and sound morals, shall be chosen to preside over and govern the said houses; so that the name of the Company shall be, and is, for ever extinguished and suppressed.” **Papal Bull.**
- “During the Order’s Suppression from 1773 to 1814 by Pope Clement XIV, General Ricci created the Illuminati with his soldier, Adam Weishaupt, the Father of modern Communism, who, with his Jacobins, conducted the French Revolution. Years later Jesuit General Ledochowski, with his Bolsheviks, conducted the Russian Revolution in 1917, it being identical to the upheaval of 1789.” **Nicolini G. H. (1854).** *History of the Jesuits: Their Origin, Progress, Doctrines, and Dogmas.* London: Henry G. Bohn, p. 356-357.

This secret society is hierarchical and deceptive to even its own members. They seek to infiltrate and spread falsehood, and rebellion while they slowly bring the entire world under papal control.

The Way of God

- **II Corinthians 4:2** “²But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”
 - Let us take after Paul and renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, seeing them for what they truly are: the wiles of the Devil.

Wisdom Comes from God

- **Exodus 31:3** “³And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,”
 - True wisdom is a gift from the Lord; not a secret derived in vice.
- **I Kings 4:29-30** “²⁹And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. ³⁰And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.”
 - The mysteries of Babylon that were culminated in Egypt do not compare with the open Truth of God's wisdom. Lucifer must conceal his fallacies with intricate levels of deception; but God's wisdom is plain to the beholder.



The Wisdom of Men and the Wisdom of God

- **Psalms 111:10** “¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.”
- **I Corinthians 1:20-21, 25-27** “²⁰Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe... ²⁵Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”
 - The wisdom of this world is nothing in comparison to our God.
- **I Corinthians 3:18-20** “¹⁸Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. ²⁰And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”
- **Ephesians 3:8-13** “⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

The Bottom Line

- I could have been born on another planet that would be perfect and in harmony with God and His Law of Love. I would be looking down upon Earth right now and saying, *"Oh my goodness, how can they be so blind?!"* **BUT I WAS BORN ON EARTH!**
- I could have been born at any point in the course of this world's history, just another human subjected to the horrible affects that sin has had on this Earth. I would be reading the prophecies of the Bible and looking down to the future of the end of time saying, *"Oh my goodness, how can the people at the end of time be so lukewarm?!"*
BUT I WAS BORN RIGHT AT THE END OF ALL TIME!
- I could have been born into any nation on this planet other than here in the United States. I would be looking over at the USA and saying, *"Oh my goodness, how can they be so selfish?!"*
BUT I WAS BORN IN USA WHICH WILL BE THE FORERUNNER IN THE TIME OF THE LATTER RAIN!
- I could have been born into any religion or denomination other than Seventh-day Adventist. I would have to discover the existence of all these truths for myself without any previous knowledge. I would then be saying, in the end of time, *"Oh my goodness, do you mean to tell me that you SDAs have known about this all along and didn't say anything?!"*
BUT I HAVE THESE TRUTHS AND THIS LIGHT TO STUDY NOW, IN THE TIME OF PEACE!

Without a doubt, we are in the most privileged position in the Universe. Even the angels in Heaven do not get the chance to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Gabriel, the new covering cherub himself, does not get to stand up to Lucifer, the ex covering cherub, in the face of temptation and say *"I will stand on the Word of God and uphold the Law of Love."* No one from any other world has the opportunity to tell another soul about the love of Jesus for the first time; they will never have the indescribable joy of being able to raise up a child to follow Christ or to see the look on someone's face when they finally understand that Jesus died for them. No other generation on Earth will be able to say in Heaven, *"I was one of the 144,000. I stood firmly on the Rock during the time of the world's darkest hour."* Not Moses, nor Elijah, nor John the Baptist, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor any other superstar Bible character will be able to say that they helped finish the work that began the moment Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. None of the many unknown faces of the multitudes of redeemed in Heaven, when we are asked, *"When did you live on Earth?"* will have so beautiful of an answer as ours: *"I lived in the last moments of Earth's history."* Their eyes will grow wide (as I imagine mine will when I meet King David and Daniel and John the Revelator) and they will say, *Wow, you are one of THEM?!"* What indescribable and holy pride will be ours, what humility will be ours, what tearful joy will be ours, what thankfulness will be ours to know that we were given the greatest privilege that any human being has ever had?

Imagine this: as much as we are looking forward to meeting Adam and Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Matthew, Jeremiah, Rahab, Isaiah, Mary, Gideon, Nehemiah, Ruth, Timothy and everyone else that we have studied and read about in the Bible since we were kids – when they were alive, they were just as much looking forward to meeting those who would finish the work that they started, who withstood the trials of the time of trouble that was even greater than their own, as we are looking forward to meet them and probably more so! How sad they would be if they got to Heaven and there were pitifully few who had made it through in the last days. It is up to us to get as many people there as possible!

I guess the question really comes down to, *What are you going to do with the opportunities that you have been given? Will you choose to stand by Christ, pick up your cross, and face death on Earth so that you will have life in Heaven? Or will you choose popularity for maybe 80 years of hardship and sinfulness on Earth and miss out on eternity with God?* The choice is yours. **(Deuteronomy 30:19)**

"Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live!"