

20th Century Bible Course

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN

Dear Friend:

This lesson is based on Bible prophecy, mercifully given to us so that the things that are to take place may be anticipated and prepared for. So astounding is it, so contrary to what human nature would expect, that you may find yourself reacting as thousands have after unraveling and decoding what God is trying to say. So do not be surprised if your first thought is, "This can never happen! Not here in America!"

"It was July of 1776. The Continental Congress had met at Philadelphia to ponder a mighty issue-independence. A long, lanky Virginian-Thomas Jefferson by name-had been appointed, with others, to write the declaration-words that even today fire the patriotism of free men everywhere.

"The carriages with their trim footmen had delivered many notables for that historic gathering. John Hancock was there, and at the crucial moment led off with his signature, writing it so boldly that George II might be able to read it without 'putting on his specs.'

"Among the many legends of that day is one that tells of an old bell ringer who had been assigned to start ringing as soon as the word was out. Pessimistic, he waited with one hand on the rope in the old belfry and muttered, They'll never sign it! They'll never sign it ' ' " (George E. Vandeman, *A Day to Remember*, p. 68).

But sign it they did! And that day made history, for never before had a nation been established on the platform of individual freedom. Yes, religious freedom and civil liberties never before dreamed of, that day became a reality. No one thought it would really happen. How could 13 colonies, each with its own idea of how the New World should be run, ever come to a common agreement of such magnitude? But thank God, they did, for the world has never been the same since.

The prophecies of Revelation 13, too, will one day become a fact of history. They are just as sure as all those other prophecies that have already met precise and detailed fulfillment. A few years ago it was harder to see beyond the veil of freedom than it is today. Already forces are at work that are insidiously closing in on our liberties. It is a bit disconcerting-almost frightening-to see how little control we have over our own lives, even in this land of the free. Every year the arm of government reaches farther into our private lives. Computers spue out details of our personal lives that we had long forgotten, and we wonder, "Where is this all leading to?"

The answer is in this prophecy. And God's Word is sure. But, at the same time, isn't it reassuring to have advance warning? We need not be taken by surprise. We may be prepared. Wouldn't you be thankful if you were alerted ahead of time that a thief was planning to raid all the homes on your street on a certain night? Of course you would, for you would prepare yourself, and the thief--not you--would be surprised! His plans foiled! His efforts futile! Let us thank God for loving us so much that He gave us this advance peek at the enemy's future strategy.

I, for one, have made my decision. Will you join me?

Most sincerely,

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 27: WHEN NO MAN CAN BUY OR SELL

SCRIPTURE READING: REVELATION 13

In our Scripture reading today, an issue is sharply drawn between God and the leopard beast. Religion and government will cooperate in forcing the "mark" of the beast upon the world. As the second coming of Christ approaches, no one can escape the issue. Satan will war against God's people, who stand out in definite distinction from the world in general, but God will be with them and will come in glory to deliver them.

Part 1--THE LEOPARD BEAST OF REVELATION 13 (a review)

In the last lesson we learned that the leopard beast represents the same power as the little horn of Daniel 7--papal Rome. Let us review both.

It came up out of the sea (Revelation 13:11, or among multitudes (Revelation 17:15). The little horn came up *among* the ten kingdoms of Europe; the leopard came up out of the sea, which means it arose among many peoples. A perfect harmony is seen here.

Like the "great red dragon" it had seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1; 12:3). The leopard is *papal* Rome; the dragon is Satan, who works through *pagan* Rome. The terrible beast of Daniel 7 (pagan Rome) had ten horns. Then a little horn arose subduing three of the horns. In Revelation the dragon, or pagan Rome, is followed by the leopard, or papal Rome. It is crystal clear that the terrible beast of Daniel 7 is the same as the great red dragon of Revelation 12--pagan Rome, and that the little horn of Daniel 7 is the same as the leopard beast of Revelation 13--papal Rome.

It had feet as a bear and a lion's mouth (verse 2), thus combining the symbols of Daniel 7, in which the lion was Babylon, the bear, Medo-Persia, and the leopard, Greece. The leopard beast had seven heads and ten horns, connecting it also with Rome. Thus papal Rome is a composite of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and pagan Rome.

The dragon (pagan Rome) gave its "seat" to the leopard beast (verse 2). "Long ages ago, when Rome through the neglect of the Western emperors was left to the mercy of the barbarous hordes, the Romans turned to one figure for aid and protection, and asked him to rule over them; and thus . . . commenced the temporal sovereignty of the popes. And meekly stepping to the throne of Caesar, the vicar of Christ took up the scepter to which the emperors and kings of Europe were to bow in reverence through so many ages" (*American Catholic Quarterly Review*, April, 1911).

The word "seat" means the "seat of government." The word "see" used in the expression "Holy See" means the same. Pagan Rome gave papal Rome its seat, or see.

The world "wondered after" and "worshipped" the beast (verses 3, 4, 8), indicating the world-wide extent of its power.

The beast spoke "blasphemies" (verses 5, 6; Daniel 7:25). By claiming to be the vicar of Christ, by assuming prerogatives belonging only to God, he "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

It was to continue 42 months (1260 days, or years) (verse 5; Daniel 7:25).

It was "to make war with the saints" (verse 7; Daniel 7:25).

One head was to be wounded (verses 3,10). This took place in 1798 when the pope was taken prisoner. He died in the French fortress of Valence 18 months later. Hence, he who sent others into captivity went himself into captivity (verse 10).

But the deadly wound was to be healed. In 1929, the Italian government recognized Vatican City as an independent state. Once again the pope was king. On March 9, 1929, the pope said, "The peoples of the entire world are with us." Indeed, today the Papacy wields tremendous power. In *The Modern Papacy*, page 1, we read: "Since then (A.D. 1798) the Papacy has been lifted to a pinnacle of spiritual power unreachd, it may be, since earliest Christian history."

Part 2--THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

1. Describe the beast John saw coming up out of the earth (verse 11). _____

This beast, or nation, comes up out of the earth-not the sea as did the others. Therefore it must arise in a relatively unpopulated area. It appears about the time the pope is taken captive (verse 10). Its lamb-like, or gentle, appearance is deceptive-it speaks with the power of a dragon. Only one power meets these specifications-the United States of America. Cradled and nourished in the wilderness of the New World, it rose to world prominence in the latter part of the eighteenth century. (The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, after which official recognition was made by first one and then another of the world powers.) And the two horns-could they not well be the two great principles that have made this country so great-civil and religious liberty, both unheard of prior to this?

2. What does the lamb-like beast do to honor the leopard-like beast? (verses 11-14, especially the last part of verse 14) _____

Someone has said that the Papacy was a church dominating the state. An image to the Papacy would, then, be another religious power functioning after this same order.

3. What are all people forced to do? (verses 15-17) _____

4. What will those who worship the beast or its image receive? (verse 16) _____

5. What steps will be taken against those who do not receive the mark? (verse 17, last part of verse 15) _____

This image will not be fully formed until religious laws are enforced by state authority. These religious laws will bring persecution, perplexity, and hardship upon those who conscientiously follow the Scriptures.

After making this dreadful forecast, God adds one more fascinating declaration (verse 18), as a final confirmation of the beast's identity. Paraphrased, it might read, "This calls for wisdom. Those who are intelligent may figure out the interpretation of the beast, for **it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.**" What "man" (with emphasis on the word *man*), represents the Papacy? None other than the pope, who bears the Latin title ***Vicarius Filii Dei***, or, "Vicar of the Son of God." Following the ancient custom of a person's having both a number and a name, let us add the Roman numerals in this title: **V=5, I=1, C=100 (A and R, no value), I=1, V(U)=5 (S and F, no value), I=1, L=50, I=1, I=1, D=500 (E, no value), I=1. This totals 666.** One word of caution, however. The beast is not identified exclusively by this number. It simply constitutes one more point in favor of the identification already made.

6. What warning does God give against receiving the mark of the beast?

Revelation 14:9, 10 _____

Part 3--THE SEAL OF GOD

1. In contrast to the mark of the beast, what does God place on the foreheads of His servants? Revelation 7:1-3 _____

If we can establish what the seal of God is, it will help us identify the mark of the beast, for the two seem to be opposites. A seal represents authority. It always pertains to legal documents. It represents the authority behind a document or a law. Every law in this country must bear the seal of the president, and every seal, including the Presidential Seal, contains three essentials: (1) the name of the authority; (2) the title or office; and (3) the jurisdiction over which it is effective.

2. In what way does God's seal pertain to His law? Isaiah 8:16 "Bind up the testimony, _____ among my disciples."

God says, "Put the seal upon my disciples, my people. Seal my law on my people."

3. Where is the law to be written? Hebrews 10:16 _____

The law is sealed on God's people, or written on their minds. The forehead is the seat of the mind. We keep the law with our minds, symbolized by the forehead.

4. How does David express this? Proverbs 7:2, 3 "Bind them [my commandments] upon thy _____, write them upon the table of thine _____."

Just as the forehead symbolizes what we think, so our fingers symbolize what we do.

5. The president claims authority to sign the laws of our land by virtue of his position as president. Upon what does God base His claim to our worship and obedience? Isaiah 40:25; Jeremiah 10:10-12; Psalm 96:5 _____

6. What is the memorial of God's creative power? Genesis 2:1-3 _____

To summarize: God is going to seal His law among His disciples-on their minds. A seal represents authority. God claims authority because He is our Creator. God set up a memorial of creation in the seventh-day Sabbath. With this in mind, turn to the ten commandments in Exodus 20.

7. In which commandment is found God's name, His title, and His territory? Exodus 20:3-17 _____

God's name-"the Lord thy God"; His title-"the Lord made," (Creator); His territory-"heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." Right in the heart of God's law are found all three components of a seal.

8. What does God call the Sabbath? Exodus 31:16,17; cf. Ezekiel 20:12 _____

9. What word is interchangeable with "sign"? Romans 4:11 _____

When we see a man wearing a Mason pin on his lapel, we know he is a member of the Masonic lodge. God says when we see a person keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, it is a sign that he is a member of God's family-he belongs to Christ. The Sabbath is a seal, or a sign, between God and His people-a seal or sign that they recognize Him as their Creator and are worshipping Him as the true God.

Thought question: From what you have learned so far, would you say this seal is a literal, physical sign, or a figurative one? _____

10. How does God describe those who are true to Him in this difficult period?

Revelation 14:9-12 0` "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the _____ and the _____."

Two groups are pictured here. On one side are those who yield to pressure, worship the beast and his image and receive his mark. On the other are those who, in spite of the severe penalties involved, continue to keep God's commandments and maintain their faith in Jesus. No wonder God says of them, "Here is the *patience* of the saints."

Part 4-- THE MARK OF THE BEAST

1. What power would "think" to change times and laws? Daniel 7:24, 25

2. Which commandment deals with time? Exodus 20:3-17

In Lesson 15 we learned that the change from the seventh day to the first day was made very gradually during the third and fourth centuries, and that shortly after Constantine decreed a uniform rest day (Sunday), the church placed its seal of approval upon the change, thus turning a civil statute into a religious dogma or doctrine.

The seventh-day Sabbath, as God's sign, or seal, is an emblem of the very power which brought us into being and wrought our salvation. We owe to Him our worship and allegiance. No wonder Satan concentrates his forces against it! Through the "man of sin" who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, . . . so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," he makes his attack (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4). Note these words from the leaders of the church:

"What Bible authority is there for changing the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

"Who gave the Pope the authority to change a command of God?

"If the Bible is the only guide for the Christian, then the Seventh-day Adventist is right in observing the Saturday with the Jew. . . .

"Is it not strange that those who make the Bible their only teacher should inconsistently follow in this matter the tradition of the Church?" (Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question-Box Answers*, New York: The Columbus Press, 1903, pp. 254, 255.)

Here is one from the Chancellor for Cardinal Gibbons, November 11, 1895:

"Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath] was her act. It could not have been otherwise, as no one in those days would have dreamed of doing anything in matters spiritual, and ecclesiastica, and religious without her. And the act is a MARK of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things" (emphasis supplied).

Did you catch the significance? Sunday sacredness is her MARK! Claiming the right to act for God, she changes His very law. Then, holding up this new day of worship she proudly declares: "Here is our MARK, the proof that we are the vicar of God, that we sit in the place of God!

Turning to Protestants, she further taunts, "Since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? . . . That observance remains as a reminder of the Mother Church from which the non-Catholic sects broke away--like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair" (*Faith of Millions*, p. 473, a Catholic textbook).

"Practically everything that Protestants regard as essential or important they have received from the Catholic Church. They accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change. . . . But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that . . . in observing the Sunday, . . . they are *accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the pope*" (*Our Sunday Visitor*, February 5, 1950 (emphasis supplied). This is a Catholic periodical.

God said, "Remember the Sabbath, My memorial of creation."

The "man of sin" says, "Forget the seventh day. Worship on the day which the spokesman for the church has authorized as a mark of her authority."

Is not the real question, "To whom do we owe allegiance"?

Remember what Christ said about those who substitute man-made commandments for God's rules? "It is no use for them to worship Me" (Matthew 15:9, *TEV*)?

Yes, the word is "loyalty." After all, if you were God, how would you feel about someone changing your law?

To whom will you give your loyalty?