

Religious Liberty



Lesson 12

Sunday Laws

The Mark of the Beast vs. the Seal of God

Revelation 13

The Mark of the Beast

First Beast—Revelation 13:1–10

- ❖ Rose out of the sea
- ❖ 7 heads, 10 horns having 10 crowns
- ❖ 7 heads had the name of blasphemy
- ❖ Like a leopard, feet of a bear, mouth of a lion
- ❖ Dragon gave it its power, its seat, and great authority
- ❖ One of its heads was wounded but deadly wound healed
- ❖ All the world wondered after the beast and worshiped the beast
- ❖ Spoke great blasphemies and it continued 42 months
- ❖ Blasphemed God and made war with the saints

Second Beast—Revelation 13:11–17

- ❖ Came up out of the earth
- ❖ 2 horns like a lamb; spake as a dragon
- ❖ All the power of the first beast
- ❖ Causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship first beast
- ❖ Doeth great wonders, makes fires to come down from heaven
- ❖ Deceiveth them that dwell on earth by the miracles and saith that they should make an image to the first beast

The Image to the First Beast— Revelation 13:14–17

- ❖ Life was given to the image by the 2nd beast
- ❖ The image both speaks and causes those who would not worship the image should be killed
- ❖ The image causes all to receive a mark in the right hand or in the forehead
- ❖ No man can buy or sell unless he has the mark, or the name of the beast or the number of his name
- ❖ The number of the first beast is 666

The Mark of God

Ezekiel 9:4

- ❖ Men who sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in Jerusalem
- ❖ Mark—Tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet

The Seal of God

Revelation 7:2–4; 9:4

- ❖ An **angel** ascending from the east had the **seal** of the living God.
- ❖ The servants of God are **sealed** in their foreheads.
- ❖ The number of them that are sealed is 144,000
- ❖ Those who are not sealed are tormented 5 months by locusts from the bottomless pit and those tormented shall desire death.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels
round about the throne and the beasts and the
elders: and the number of them was ten thousand
times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
(Revelation 5:11)

John writes, “I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne.” Angels were united in the work of Him who had broken the seals and taken the book. Four mighty angels hold back the powers of this earth till the servants of God are **sealed** in their foreheads. The nations of the world are eager for conflict; but they are held in check by the angels. When this restraining power is removed, there will come a time of trouble and anguish. Deadly instruments of warfare will be invented. Vessels, with their living cargo, will be entombed in the great deep. **All who have not the spirit of truth** will unite under the leadership of satanic agencies. But they are to be kept under control till the time shall come for the great battle of Armageddon. (*7BC 967.8*)

Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay **till the sealing of God's people** shall be accomplished. (*7BC* 967.9)

The ministers of Jehovah, angels have skill and power and great strength, being commissioned to go forth from heaven to earth to minister to His people. They are given the work of keeping back the raging power of him who has come down like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The Lord is a refuge for all who put their trust in Him. He bids them hide in Him for a little moment, until the indignation shall be overpast. He is soon to come out of His place to punish the world for its iniquity. Then the earth shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain (Letter 79, 1900). (*7BC* 967.10)

All these heavenly beings have one object above all others, in which they are intensely interested—His church in a world of corruption. All these armies are in the service of the Prince of heaven, exalting the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. **They are working for Christ under His commission, to save to the uttermost all who look to Him and believe in Him.** These heavenly intelligences are speeding on their mission, doing for Christ that which Herod and Pilate did against Him. They confederate together to uphold the honor and glory of God. They are united in a holy alliance, in a grand and sublime unity of purpose, to show forth the power and compassion and love and glory of the crucified and risen Saviour. (*7BC 968.1*)

❖ A. J. Jones—*The Great Empires of Prophecy*,
chapters on Constantine



The Decian persecution of Christians occurred in 250 AD under the Roman Emperor Decius. He had issued an edict ordering everyone in the Empire to perform a sacrifice to the Roman gods and the well-being of the emperor. The sacrifices had to be performed in the presence of a Roman magistrate, and be confirmed by a signed and witnessed certificate from the magistrate.

Decius' edict was intended to act as an Empire-wide loyalty oath to the new emperor (who had come to power in 249 AD), sanctified through the Roman religion. Christian monotheistic beliefs did not allow them to worship any other gods, so they were forced to choose between their religious beliefs and following the decree.

An unknown number of Christians were executed or died in prison for refusing to perform the sacrifices. Others went into hiding, and many apostatized and performed the ceremonies. (Wikipedia, slight edits)

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God . . . (Exodus 20:3, 4, 5)

BY whom and when was the first Sunday law on record made? Ans.

—By Constantine, A. D. 321

LET all the judges and townspeople, and the occupation of all trades, rest on the venerable day of the sun; but let those who are situated in the country, freely, and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture; because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted of heaven.—Schaff's

Church History, vol. 2, chap. 3, P. 105.

It must be borne in mind that sun-worship was the principal form of worship in the Roman Empire and of the Romans. The sun, as represented in Apollo, was the chief and patron divinity recognized by Augustus. (A. T. Jones, *The Great Empires of Prophecy*, p. 424.2)

To Sol Deus Invictus—the sun, the unconquerable god—were attributed the world-wide conquests of the Roman power. The greatest and most magnificent temple that ever was on earth, except only that built by Solomon, was erected by Antoninus Pius, emperor of Rome, at Baalbec, in honor of the visible shining sun. . . (Ibid.)

Thus the worship of the sun itself was the principal worship of the Romans in the time of Constantine. (Ibid. 425)

The next year (A. D. 325) Constantine convened at Nice the first general council of the Catholic Church, presided over its deliberations, and enforced its decrees. (Ibid. 430)

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a **mark** in their **right hand**, or in their **foreheads**: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the **mark**, or the **name** of the **beast**, or the **number** of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is **Six hundred threescore and six**. (Revelation 13:16–18)

Mark. Gr. *charagma*, “an impress,” “a stamp,” “a mark.” This is evidently some badge of loyalty to the beast, some special feature that denotes that the one displaying such a mark worships the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (v. 8). Adventist interpreters understand this mark to be not a literal brand but some sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast. (*SDA BC*)

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth **sanctify** you. (Exodus 31:13)

The controversy at that time will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth command. Hence Sunday observance will constitute such a sign, but not until the time when the beast's power will be revived and Sunday observance in place of Sabbath observance becomes law. When the issues are thus clearly before them, and men nevertheless choose to support an institution of the beast, observing it and disobeying God's Sabbath command, they thereby show their allegiance to the beast power and receive the mark. (*SDA BC*)

The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . .

The mark of the beast is the opposite of this—the observance of the first day of the week. This mark distinguishes those who acknowledge the supremacy of the papal authority from those who acknowledge the authority of God. (*8T* 117.3,4)

When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. (*COL* 69.1)

We hear now of earthquakes in divers places, of fires, of tempests, of disasters by sea and land, of pestilence, of famine. What weight do these signs have upon you? This is only the beginning of what shall be. The description of the day of God is given through John by the Revelator. The cry of the terror-stricken myriads has fallen upon the ear of John. “The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” The apostle himself was awed and overwhelmed.

(PH077 23.2)

If such scenes as this are to come, such tremendous judgments on a guilty world, **where will be the refuge for God's people?** How will they be sheltered until the indignation be overpast? John sees the elements of nature—earthquake, tempest, and political strife—represented as being held by four angels. **These winds are under control until God gives the word to let them go.** There is the safety of God's church.

The angels of God do his bidding, holding back the winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be **sealed** in their foreheads. (*PH077 23.2*)

My dear brethren and sisters, let the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually and let them crowd out worldly thoughts and cares. When you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation. Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man. **The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over.** Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure. (*EW* 58.2)

Those that **overcome** the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will be the favored ones who shall receive the **seal** of the living God. . . . Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of **those who are repenting and confessing their sins** in the great antitypical day of atonement, will be recognized and marked as worthy of God's protection. The names of **those who are steadfastly looking and waiting and watching for the appearing of their Saviour,—more earnestly and wishfully than they who wait for the morning,—will be numbered with those who are sealed.** Those who, while having all the light of truth flashing upon their souls, should have works corresponding to their avowed faith, but are allured by sin, setting up idols in their hearts, corrupting their souls before God, and polluting those who unite with them in sin, will have their names blotted out of the Book of Life, and be left in midnight darkness, having no oil in their vessels with their lamps. “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” (*PH077 24.1*)

This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision. John also had been a witness of this most startling revelation. He saw the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear. He beheld the earth moved, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea (which is literally transpiring), the water thereof roaring and troubled, and the mountains shaking with the swelling thereof. He was shown plagues, pestilence, famine, and death performing their terrible mission. (*PH077 25.1*)

The same angel who visited Sodom is sounding the note of warning, “Escape for thy life.” The bottles of God’s wrath cannot be poured out to destroy the wicked and their works, until all the people of God have been judged, and the cases of the living as well as the dead are decided. And even after the saints are sealed with the seal of the living God, his elect will have trials individually. Personal afflictions will come; but the furnace is closely watched by an eye that will not suffer the gold to be consumed. The indelible **mark of God** is upon them. God can plead that his own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed—“GOD, NEW JERUSALEM.” They are God’s property, his possession.

(PH077 25.2)

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. (Isaiah 8:16)

The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given. **When the Sabbath was changed by the papal power, the seal was taken from the law.** The disciples of Jesus are called upon to restore it by exalting the Sabbath of the fourth commandment to its rightful position as the Creator's memorial and the sign of His authority. (*GC* 452.1)

About four months since, I had a vision of events, all in the future. And I saw the time of trouble, such as never was,— Jesus told me it was the time of Jacob's trouble, and that we should be delivered out of it by the voice of God. Just before we entered it, we all received the **seal** of the living God.

(1LM 99.1)

Every soul in our world is the Lord's property, by creation and by redemption. **Each individual soul is on trial for his life.** Has he given to God that which belongs to Him? Has he surrendered to God all that is His as His purchased possession? **All who cherish the Lord as their portion in this life will be under His control, and will receive the sign, the mark of God, which shows them to be God's special possession.** Christ's righteousness will go before them, and the glory of the Lord will be their rereward. **The Lord protects every human being who bears His sign.** (*14LtMs*, Lt 77, 1899, par. 6)

What is the **seal** of the living God, which is placed in the foreheads of His people? It is a mark which angels, but not human eyes, can read; for the destroying angel must see this **mark** of redemption. (*13LtMs*, Lt 126, 1898, par. 4)

The angel with the writer's inkhorn is to place a mark upon the foreheads of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel follows this angel. (*4LtMs*, Lt 12, 1886, par. 3)

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads
—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling
into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they
cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed
and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has
begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land
to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.

(17LtMs, Ms 173, 1902, par. 25)

The great mass of professing Christians will meet with bitter disappointment in the day of God. They have not upon their foreheads the seal of the living God. **Lukewarm and half-hearted**, they dishonor God far more than the avowed unbeliever. (*18LtMs*, Lt 121, 1903, par. 12)



