

3 Lessons for These Last Days About the Mark of the Beast

Prominent personalities and powerful nations of the world are discussing plans to require so-called “vaccine passports” as a condition for travel and, possibly, to restrict entry to shopping and entertainment venues—even the Tokyo Summer Olympics.

China is actively lobbying the discredited World Health Organization (WHO) to develop COVID vaccine passports for all nations. The communist, hyperauthoritarian nation says it can adapt its dehumanizing “social credit scoring system,” which now covers 1.1 billion people, for such a worldwide effort in just a matter of weeks.

Slippery Slopes

This kind of medical authoritarianism by unelected bureaucrats or global cyber-monitors needs to be resisted in our nation before such unconstitutional ideas take root or spread. Once they get their foot in the door over medical records and “public safety,” what else could they control or influence? Online banking? Our ability to buy groceries to feed our families and gasoline or electricity to operate our cars? Even your ability to work or travel at all could be jeopardized.

You might recall the war on terror, following the 9/11 attacks, led to body scanners at airports and other indignities, including the NSA tracking your cell phone to learn and document your whereabouts and associates. What is to say your private health information would remain private and not used for nefarious purposes by crooks, governments or supposed health organizations?

Beware of Dictatorial Powers

Jesus predicted that many pseudo-christs and prophets will appear in the last days, when political mayhem, religious persecution and natural disasters (“famines, epidemics, and earthquakes”) become common (Matt. 24:4-14). Some of these false, religious characters will even manifest “great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (v. 24b).

John the Revelator tells of a pervasive satanic-initiated system that will control the economies and commerce of large sectors of the world during the Great Tribulation, at the end of human history (Rev. 13:16-17). I’m not suggesting the current COVID-19 crises, economic lockdowns and nearly mandated vaccines around the world are part of this final eschatological sequence, but I do suggest we can learn some contemporary lessons from the prophetic biblical narratives.

Two Beasts and a Devil

John describes two beastlike personalities who dominate during the last half of the seven-year, tribulation season of the last days, along with Satan, after he is cast out of heaven to earth. The first “beast” (Rev. 13:1-11) is later called the Antichrist and “lawless one” and is said to arise out of the “sea” of humanity, where he gains power as a persuasive political and military leader in the Mediterranean environments (Dan. 9-12). The second “beast” (13:11-18) is later called the false prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20 and 20:10). His authority and powers are not political but religious, as he points people to the first beast/Antichrist and deceives the masses to actually worship him as God, in those latter days.

John reveals these factoids about the false prophet in Revelation 13:13-15:

“He performs great signs, making fire come down: from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. He deceives those who dwell on the earth by the signs which he was granted to do in the

presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by a sword and lived. He was allowed to give breath to the image of the [first] 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.”

These “lying wonders” are not unlike the miracles of the Egyptian magicians (Ex. 7:11-12) or Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-12), both of whom used trickery to counterfeit examples of divine works. In scriptural context, Satan may empower the false prophet to imitate the miracles of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:1-13) who used fire from their mouths to devour their enemies in those same days of tribulation (v. 5).

This second beast will organize the world’s economy and commerce under the Antichrist’s control, according to the people’s social standing, substance or status. During this second half of the Tribulation, mere survival will almost be impossible without an identifying sign of political allegiance and religious submission:

“He causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one may buy or sell, except he who has the mark or the name of the [first] beast or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:16-17).

The Mark of the Beast

The Bible does not make clear just what the “mark” of the beast is like, which will be required on the recipient’s “right hand or on their foreheads.” Is it a logo-like image? Will it be visible to the naked eye or under a special light? Alternately, what about the “name of the beast or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:17b)?

Have you noticed that this much-discussed sign of the Antichrist is actually attributed to the false prophet (Rev.

13:11-18)? He was the other beast “from the earth” (v. 11) who performed deceptive signs and led the world into devil worship, according to Daniel (9:27; 11:31, 36-39); Jesus (Matt. 24:15) and Paul (2 Thess. 2:4).

The second beast (Rev. 13:11) was “allowed to give breath to the image of the [first] beast.” As a result, the second beast could wondrously speak, and he had the authority to cause “as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (v. 15).

Since neither the Hebrew nor Greek languages use a separate numerical system, the letters of their alphabets also carry numerical value. Verse 18 gives us some insight as to the “number” of the beast’s name: “It is the number of a man. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

Since verse 18 seems to indicate that the symbolic number of the beast is the sum of the numerical values of the letters of his actual name, this mysterious number—666—has led to wide and wild speculations. As commentator Warren Wiersbe has said, “If you work at it hard enough, almost any name will fit!”

Three Lessons for these Last Days

1. Discern and endure are keywords for these last days. Jesus warned in Matthew 24:4 to beware “that no one deceives you.” Then He proceeded to warn of religious deception, social and political upheavals, natural calamities, familial disloyalties along with religious hatred and lawlessness (Matt. 24:5-12). In the face of these great problems and deceptive personalities at the end of the age, we are to discern God’s will and ways as we endure to the end and persevere in spreading the gospel.

This word “endure” speaks of holding one’s ground in conflict, bearing up against adversity, while waiting calmly and courageously. Pastor Jack Hayford has said “enduring” is “not passive resignation to fate and mere patience, but the active,

energetic resistance to defeat that allows calm and brave endurance.”

2. Determine, in advance, your own devoted allegiance to God and the kingdom of His Son. Pray for wisdom to know how to “[make] the most of the time, because the days are evil.” We are to be wise and seek to understand what the will of the Lord is in each setting and circumstance. (See Ephesians 5:15-17.)

3. Decide to lead others in repentance for their sins and then devotion to our Lord and returning King, while we yet have time and opportunity, for “he who converts the sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

Soon, as we endure to the end, “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15b). {eo}

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