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8 – Ancient Business Model and Today's

In ancient times, this nebulous thing called a "name" was more of a reality and had greater impact in social and business interactions than it does today. Business depended a great deal on word-of-mouth transactions. Without much in the way of printing or paper or literacy, business was conducted more on the basis of trust and social pressure.

It was less easy to keep records to verify or legalize business transactions. Thus, there existed a system the Bible refers to that used such things as pledges, vows, tokens, etc. – something we don't understand too well. But these customs were part of the trading system of that time. And they served as guarantees that the different parties in trading deals would fulfill their obligations. However it worked, we may not fully understand now. But to be sure, our modern systems of trading and exchange have become a lot more effective and efficient than those customs of the past.

Related to this, we find the occasional mention in the Bible of people swearing with an "oath" or "curse"; these semi-superstitious customs were important features in older cultures, and it's difficult for us to grasp what this is all about. For in today's world, the viewpoint of science has

largely dispelled these ancient practices. To us it seems they took this sort of thing far too seriously – invoking curses on themselves and so on. What we do nowadays is draw up a printed legal contract, sign it, and it's done with.

Although far from perfect, our modern systems of verification, surveillance, and law enforcement work reasonably well to prevent fraud. And our secular society no longer has to rely on the semi-superstitious customs of old: pledges, curses, oaths, and the fear of divine retribution and the dreadful things that might happen if one were to break them. Nowadays, if someone reneges on a deal, then we resort to the written legal contract to enforce compliance through law enforcement. But if the contract was based only on an oath, from today's secular viewpoint, that would be insufficient grounds to legally insist that someone keep his end of the deal.

In olden days people in small communities could carry out business amongst themselves without having to worry too much about official receipts, contracts, etc. The concept of maintaining one's "honor" was a very real thing in those days. In their communities everyone knew each other, so it was harder to get away with fraud and misconduct in business. Everyone had a "name", or reputation, that was known in the community.

But outside of that community, because of the lack of means of verification or surveillance, it wouldn't matter how honest he was, a person would not have much of a "name". But travel was difficult then, so there was less need for individuals to have a widely known "name". The leader of a community might have an influential "name" in the outside world. So if anyone could go off with some kind of official letter or token from him in the "name" of that person, it would make travel easier and safer since he would be borrowing the "name" of someone of greater influence or power. The same practice goes on today for business representatives or ambassadors who must travel abroad in the name of their company or nation.

And we have a new version today; it's called a credit standing/rating. For example, let's say you obtain a VISA credit card. That's like getting the "name" of a higher, more powerful authority than yourself. That little credit card is the token (or mark) of VISA's powerful "name". And with

that "name", even if you don't have any money – that is, cash or money in your bank account – you can still buy from total strangers, something that would have been very difficult in olden times, and for which the Book of Proverbs warns, *"Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm, but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure."* (11:15, ESV)

But in our modern world, it's a little different – at least on the corporate level. The VISA corporation doesn't mind extending credit (that is, covering you with its influential *"name"*). It is powerful enough and its earnings through high interest rates are large enough and its reach into our bank accounts is extensive enough that it never has to worry about putting up *"security"* for the countless number of *"strangers"* under its umbrella. It doesn't have to worry about losing its money – at least not nearly as much as do its cardholders who often get into financial difficulty through buying too much on credit.

So that little card not only gives you a powerful "name" – VISA's name is added to your name – but also, it's a practical means in itself for carrying out your buying operations. This is a remarkable system; and one that is, of course, very useful in a populous world where travel is so quick and easy, and you're therefore dealing with total strangers all the time. It makes it a lot easier for you to get around, do business, etc.

Now, if we understand the *"mark of the beast"* correctly, it too will be similar to our present day credit cards. Having it will make it a lot easier to get around in this world. As in ancient times, it is like borrowing the "name" of someone important to make your life easier. For which reason, the world will go on a mad stampede to take on the *"name"* of the Antichrist via the *"mark"*. With his *"name"* (authority, power, reputation) people will be entitled to get whatever they want that they can afford wherever they're able to go.

To conclude, we actually do use this ancient concept of a *"name"* in our day and age, but perhaps we're not so serious about it. In our world, money has become the all-pervasive measure of wealth, status, and power. And we have debased the honorable term of *"name"* into something more related to money. Nowadays, a person's credit rating seems to have become the equivalent of the olden day concept of having a

"name".

In former days, adopting the "name" of someone implied a strong bond with that master or company or whatever it was. (And this was a useful cultural concept in those past eras when slave ownership was a major feature of the social order.) As already mentioned, those who take the *"mark"* are taking on the *"name"* of the Antichrist, which means they are not just money-borrowers, but slaves and religious devotees as well.

> **The Hebrew word for soul is *neshamah.* Central to that word, the middle two letters*, shin* and *mem,* make the word *shem,* Hebrew for 'name.' Your name is the key to your soul.**

And in the Revelation Book, that's how seriously his *"name"* is meant to be taken. Similar to how the practice of making oaths and vows, or taking pledges, was considered very serious business, so also was the importance attached to adopting a person's name. Whether you have the *"Father's Name"* in the *"seal"*, or the *"name of the beast"* in the *"mark"*, you belong to one of the other; you worship one of the other. And that is what the term *"name"* is meant to convey.

When a person adopts the Antichrist's *"name"* by taking the *"mark"*, he enters into bondage to the False Prophet's beast-like system. But this is a new type of slavery, the most seductive bondage of all – one where people may think they are free agents when in fact they're actually plugged into a system that keeps track of their every move.

In addition, they are bound to the quest for material fulfillment inside the Antichrist's barren utopia – which will turn out to be nothing but a dead-end as far as any spiritual satisfaction or reward is concerned. It can never compare to being a love-slave to the One Who rules in Heaven and one day will rule the Earth. This is where real freedom and true riches abound – happiness that lasts forever.

So, what's in a name? A lot more than we might have thought. As mentioned earlier, the *"name of the beast"* is equivalent to the Beast himself, and the *"mark"* is equivalent to having the *"name"* of the Antichrist. The *"mark"* enables the world's citizens to access his *"name"* with all the benefits and privileges that he and his system are able to

provide. These followers of the Beast are part of his earthly, temporary domain. And that distinguishes them from those who have the *"seal"*, which God marks on His loyal servants; and they belong to the eternal domain of God's Kingdom.

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Continue to Part 9 – Birth of the Barcode