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6 - Surveillance and Persecution

Prior to the passage about the “*mark*” in Revelation 13, we learn that the two Beasts will persecute those who refuse to worship the Antichrist:

(13:7) “He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.”

(13:15) The “image of the beast” will cause those who don’t worship it “to be killed”, referring probably to the Antichrist’s broadcasted image and propaganda war against God via the False Prophet’s media empire. (See post [“Destructive Power of the Image”](#) for more information.)

In the previous two posts, we learned that the “*mark*” has everything to do with worship of the Antichrist. But now what about the non-worshippers? How does their not having the “*mark*” affect them? The answer lies in that vital aspect of persecution known as surveillance. Besides being the kind of technological initiation ritual that will appeal to the people of modern times, the implementation of the “*mark*” will also make it easy to detect who is a “worshiper” and who isn’t.

To bow down, or to use a hand salute (as in Hitler Germany), can be avoided, or even faked if need be, and would be hard for the authorities to

observe effectively. But having the *“mark”* leaves an indelible record of one’s allegiance or *“worship”*. It can’t be faked. Once in forever in. And it cannot be erased - not easily at least. It resembles the religious practice common in various tribes and societies who use permanent-type marks and incisions for their initiation rituals.

In order to carry out organized persecution, the Antichrist and False Prophet and their forces will have to know who is not engaging in their version of religious worship. And the easy way to do this nowadays is through computer surveillance. In a way the world is being prepared for this already through the use of credit cards (a sort of forerunner to the *“mark”*). In commercial exchanges they are convenient, of course, but easy for computer networks to track; using cash, on the other hand, allows buyers and sellers to remain more free of the prying eyes of *“big brother”* computer networks.

In the future, these networks will have become so extensive and all-knowing that it will be a simple matter to observe who has failed to get registered with the *“mark”*. By refusing to get initiated into the False Prophet’s credit system of Mammon-worship, conscientious believers will also be expressing their refusal to *“worship the beast or his image”*.

It will be difficult then for a person’s non-participation in the Beast and False Prophet’s new secular religion to go unnoticed, to escape the watchful eye of those Beasts’ surveillance system. In this way then we can understand how the *“mark”* ties in with the persecution of God’s people which (mentioned in Revelation 13:7,15). It provides the means of surveillance to identify those who have refused to join the new worship system.



Modern computer surveillance is the much-superior equivalent to old methods of surveillance - such as Nebuchadnezzar's spies watching to see who would refuse to bow to the king's golden image



There are some other features about the modern system that will make things easier for the new regime. In previous times, if people didn't have any great love and devotion for their demagogue, their allegiance could be gained through simple fear of persecution. The advantage of the "mark" system is that those with divided loyalties can be coerced into joining the new religious system through fear of losing the privilege of buying and selling.

No doubt, the same type of persecution has happened before in history. But because the market system today is so much more controlled and extensive, that fear can be used more effectively and broadly as a means of coercion. People are not so self-sufficient as in days past but have become heavily dependent on the market system to take care of their needs for them, especially in the more developed, industrial nations of the world.

Another modern advantage that will facilitate worship of the Antichrist is the type of image he uses. The use of broadcasted images has far greater potential to inspire the world's allegiance to this modern demagogue than any of the lifeless images of the past (statues, paintings, crafted images of one kind or another). Instead of having to depend on superstition, the Devil now has the advantage of using a real live type of image.

So, in our modern secular world, the "*image*" to be worshiped will probably be in the form of the Antichrist's broadcasted image. (This is a big subject, by the way, and is covered more fully in another post series, [*Unraveling the Mystery of the Image*](#).) And the modern day initiation rite will be in the form of receiving the "*mark*".

The same old pagan idolatry returns, disguised in the garb of modern technology. . . with one major difference: the supernatural will be thrown out. There will be nothing left but a barren utopia of Materialism and its Antichrist leader.

Briefly then, here is the practical reality of the anti-Christ Beast's worship: It's not a matter of bowing, or some similar action. But it's an initiation rite, or at least the modern scientific version of it. In the religious realm, initiation rites provide a more inescapable commitment than the act of bowing or hand salute. Receiving the mark carries with it this act of commitment, and along with that, permission and access into the world's marketplaces; and of course, it brings the privilege of being spared from the Antichrist's persecution. These social benefits are not unlike those enjoyed by anyone who has been initiated into a certain tribe, religion, or club.

Regarding the concept of worship of a political hero, this naturally happens when people doubt or belittle the role of God as an object of worship; then they are easily driven to replace faith in God whom they cannot see with the worship of some man whom they can see and whom they admire. In the secular world of modern times, this kind of substitute worship has befallen the world with peculiar intensity; Hitler Germany and some Communist nations have experienced this, for example.

In a patriotic and more closed setting like Hitler Germany, it was easy

to insist on the repeated use of slogans and hand salutes. Citizens can more easily show allegiance in this way to the leader of their own country than to a distant conqueror with a more international scope - as will likely characterize the final empire of the Antichrist

But nowadays, a ruler has the technological advantage of electronic surveillance and media communication, which existed in rudimentary form in Hitler's generation. The world is too well aware of that old style of demagoguery which characterized Hitler's and other totalitarian regimes.

Instead, it has become accustomed to a different form of interaction with their leaders that is less direct but more pervasive. Modern media broadcasting technology and the computerized "*mark*" credit system will make a good fit as the "tools" to expedite the new worship system on a very wide scale.

In Germany of the 1930's and 40's, Hitler promoted, not only the worship of himself, but also promoted the glory of the Third Reich - a coming German utopia which he and his armies thought they were fighting for. Communist societies also looked forward to a coming utopia - a belief that was part of their atheist "religion".

In like manner, it will be advantageous for the dual government of "*earth*" and "*sea*" Beasts to place a good amount of emphasis on promoting their glorious new system (and to enforce a one time, once-and-for-all act of submission to it: the initiation rite of receiving the "*mark*" - rather than insisting on a perpetual show of worship by hand salutes, slogans, or whatever.)

The Beast symbolism reveals this kind of dual package, representing the two focuses of worship: empire and emperor. (See [Footnote](#).) Thus, when the phrase "*worship the beast*" appears, it can mean worship of the person who heads the system as well as worship of the system itself.

In most nations pledges of allegiance are made to the nation itself, not its leader. But when there is a strong leader, then worship of the state tends to combine with worship of its ruler. It is a counterfeit, actually, of a similar type of allegiance in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Regarding the citizens of the Kingdom, Revelation 3:12 states, *“I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God.”* The “name” written on a person identifies whom he or she belongs to, and according to the above Scripture, that includes, not only God Himself, but also the Kingdom that His followers will dwell in.

This coming worship of the Beast is not all adoration, it would seem, but comes with a strong element of fear: *“They worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”* (Revelation 13:4) And there is also the fear that if one doesn’t show worship by getting the Mark, he or she won’t be able to buy or sell.

Anyway, whether people give their allegiance out of fear or adoration, and whether they give it to the Antichrist or to the glorious new system, the form of worship - receiving the “mark” - will serve the purpose of showing allegiance to the “god of this age” instead of the true God of all ages. (2Corinthians 4:4)

We could suppose then that the Antichrist and False Prophet will promote their system as a glorious “new world order” of human society which will be opposed to the influence of “religion”. Receiving the “mark” is the “initiation ceremony” into this openly anti-God system headed by these two powerful figures. So whether it’s the Antichrist himself who is worshiped, or the system of which he is the head, in either case, it requires taking a stand against God.

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Footnote: Head = Beast? King = Kingdom?

The Scriptures in Daniel and Revelation use the terms “beast” and “kingdom”, “head” and “king” in several places. A point worth mentioning about these terms is that they are used interchangeably. That is, it’s hard to tell if “beast” also means “head”, or if “kingdom” also means “king” -

or vice-versa. For example, in the original Hebrew, Daniel 7:17 states, *“Those great beasts. . . are four kings;*” but then in verse 23 we read, *“The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom.”* Furthermore, those “beasts” of Daniel 7 are later referred to as “heads” in the Revelation Book; Revelation 13 speaks of one of the “heads” (the Antichrist) being “*mortally wounded*” in verse 3 but in verses 12 and 14 he is referred to as the “*first beast whose deadly wound was healed*”; also in Revelation 17, the seventh “head/king” is called the “*beast that was, and is not*”. (Daniel 7:3-7, Revelation 13:1,3,12,14, 17:9-11, NKJV) As for the other “*beast, coming up out of the earth*”, he is later called the “*false prophet*”, and this portrays the Earth-Beast as both a system and the person who is at the head of that system. (Revelation 13:11, 19:20, 20:10)

Perhaps using both terms to describe the same thing was the Lord’s way of showing that a “*beast*” (which we would normally think of as a system, a government, or empire) must include the “*head*” of that empire, the person. A body without a head isn’t going to get very far; an empire needs to have a dynamic and strong leader to unify and give it direction, plus be the head that people can look up to, or even worship. And vice-versa, a head without a body won’t get very far; an emperor cannot call himself that unless he has an empire behind him.

For example, Germany in the 1920’s was a weak and defeated empire after World War 1, as it struggled along under weak leadership. But then Adolph Hitler came along. In the early stages of his career, without any real power, Hitler was just a loudmouth against the system of his day. But once he managed to gain power over the German government, everything changed: Hitler became a demagogue, and Germany rose again to empire status.

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