

WSE-JB 149-12 Prophecy Revisited # 12 The Hallmark of the Beast; May 24, 2014

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Well, today we are going to continue on this series that I have entitled, "Prophecy Revisited." It's the twelfth message—if I have kept my count correctly—in this series which I started last fall. There are probably not a whole lot of sermons left in the series but there are a few, and this is one of them. And this is actually not new material. Some of you have heard this material because I first gave it over a year ago in Vancouver, Washington and it was recorded then and is in our sermon archive. And I've given this message two or three other times during some of my travels in the last twelve months, including, I think, in Maryville, Tennessee and a couple of times overseas. But the rest of you have not yet heard the material. In fact, when I look back on it, I can say that my writing of this particular message served as a forerunner to this whole series on prophecy. This message is one particular sub-series, and even it comes from some comments that I think I first made at the Feast of Tabernacles in 2012 in one of my messages when I covered this principle in brief. And it has just kind of expanded since then. So what is it? We are actually going to talk today about the mark of the Beast. We are going to talk about the mark of the Beast because it is one of those most beloved long-range prophecies that the people of God in the church of God at large over many, many decades have been absolutely mesmerized by and enamored with.

Alright? Now, I've already given you the bulk of the information which I think is important in this series to try and explain to you the distinction in how Church of God, The Eternal—i.e. Raymond Cole—handled, approached, taught, long-range prophecy as opposed to the mistakes that were made by the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God in speculating without authority concerning details of the future which God did not want any of us, including the ministry, to know. So you've received the bulk of that and I hope you've taken it to heart and that you now have the tools that you can use to help avoid falling into those same pitfalls in the future. But as I told you from the beginning of this series, my intent is not to say, "No, don't do this—don't study prophecy. Don't do this, don't do that." But I want to

give you something positive and constructive—a way to look at those long-range prophecies of the Bible and to be able to use them constructively to actually help you in your spiritual walk with God. And that is what we are going to do with this topic of the mark of the Beast today.

Simultaneously, I am going to try and dispel old interpretations which I am going to tell you do not hold water, but I am going to give you a constructive way to think about it and to actually derive, hopefully, useful information for your edification.

Last time, if you remember, we completed our analysis of Matthew chapter twenty-four. So that was one of the first ones I gave you as a specific example of what is a good and profitable way to use long-range prophecies today—which Jesus Christ spoke or had recorded—in thinking about your relationship with God and the judgement which is surely coming. So hopefully you have gleaned that from this approach to Matthew 24.

Alright? The mark of the Beast. Let's start in Revelation thirteen. First I want to go through a couple of basic texts which refer to this mark—this mark of the Beast. And I could go into great detail over multiple sermons on this topic, and I'm not going to do that. I'm going to keep this to one summary message today. But in Revelation 13 and beginning in verse 11, we read:

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Alright, my very first point is to ask, "What can we know about this beast?" And the first important lesson is that whatever it involves, it is steeped in deception. Okay? Deception is integral to whatever it is that is going on. And this is what is lost because the people of God in the church of God have had the presumption that they can see it as clearly as the nose on their faces—that the world is going to be deceived but they are not subject to being deceived. And nothing is further from the truth. The point is that the deception *IS* pointed at the church of God. Alright? So don't be cavalier—don't be dismissive—in thinking that there is no way that you won't recognize the identity of the Beast or whatever this mark is, as if the world is going to be deceived but you are surely going to recognize it, because my point is that it is steeped in deception and the deception

is orchestrated *FOR* the true people of God. The world is already deceived. It's not for them. It is for you. And that is why in this description "he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon"—meaning the outward appearance is that of a lamb. And who is the Lamb? Jesus Christ. The outward manifestation of whatever this Beast represents is that it appears to be of God—the True God. Alright? But outward appearances are deceiving because the voice—the words that are being spoken, the message which is being transmitted—comes not from the Lamb but from the dragon. And you understand that it is the enemy of man who is compared to a dragon, don't you? So, do you see that the very first description here is one of great deception—someone masquerading, pretending, to be one thing when he is really something else? So that is the first important lesson.

Now drop down to verse sixteen—but some of you are thinking, "But I don't want to drop down to verse sixteen because verses twelve through fifteen are my favorite part—"he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him," da da da da da; verse fourteen, "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles" and the power of the Beast; verse fifteen, "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image," da da da da da. Why aren't we going to go through that? Because I don't know how to tell you about that, and that is not the point of my message. These things are going to happen and I have no clue how they are going to be manifested. I'm trying to keep it to the basic summary of the identity—the characteristics, if you will—of this power, which is why we are skipping down to verse 16:

And he [this same Beast] 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. [Verse 18:] 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 [meaning 666, which is where this big thing about "666" comes from—a score being equal, for those who don't know, to twenty. So if you have threescore you have twenty times three—sixty—plus six more. Okay? So this is from where you get 666].

Now, we will come back to that in a moment, but what I want to emphasize right now is that too many people are asking the wrong question. They want to know *who* is the Beast—who is this Beast power? And they want to know, what is this physical mark? And so you have all kinds of people who can answer that because they certainly have their writings and their lectures and their conclusions—and this isn't just confined to the church of God, what we consider to be the church of God. It includes Protestant Christianity—which is not real Christianity—and they read these prophecies and they think they understand.

So, how many of you have heard that this is about microchips being implanted under your skin? Alright? Isn't that what you think of? Well, certainly you've read it. So, what is the natural conclusion? "Oh, well, as long as I never let anybody implant a microchip under my skin—either in the back of my hand or my forehead—then I am safe from ever being associated with the mark of the Beast." Am I wrong in thinking that is a common conclusion in the minds of many? And I get this question—have gotten this question—and Raymond Cole got this question over many years. This happens every time a new article comes out that talks about micro-technology—including little batteries that can actually do this, and they talk about IDs and the fact that they are doing it to animals, especially in Europe. But they are doing it more and more in North America as well. And they talk about its potential for identification, and information for health purposes, and they cite all of these altruistic reasons for actually having an implant—to prevent identity theft, and to have all of your medical data in case you are in an accident, da da da da da da. So every time a new article comes out, the people in the church of God go, "Oooh, oooh, oooh, oooh, oooh, the mark of the Beast." It's not so. I'm not saying that ultimately it is not going to include some of these physical manifestations, but I'm telling you, that this is not the essence of what God is talking about. And if that is what you are hung up on, and that is what you think it is, *YOU ARE DECEIVED*. You are actually buying into the very deception that the Dragon is promulgating for the purpose of deceiving the true people of God, because he has you distracted and looking at the wrong thing. I want to talk to you instead about what *really* is a threat to your salvation. Because that is the next point: The result of accepting the mark of this Beast—whatever it is—*IS* the loss of eternal salvation. Turn to Revelation nineteen and verse twenty and I'll prove it. We are trying to analyze what can we really know, confidently, about this long-range prophecy. Forget the speculations; forget the things that don't matter; and focus on what does matter. What's the end result of accepting this mark? It's the loss of salvation. Revelation 19, verse 20, says:

And the beast was taken [and this is the final judgement of this system and those who are a part of it], and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he *deceived them that had received the mark of the beast*, and them that worshipped his image.

Okay, so first you find out that we are talking about individuals who have been deceived—which means they have accepted a mark, whatever it is, willingly, knowingly. They haven't thought that they were being rebellious against the one True God because they are *DECEIVED*. Do you understand that point?

Alright, ". . . them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image . . ." So it includes the *worship* of this entity called the Beast, whatever it is. "These both [not only the perpetrators but also the followers, the deceived followers] were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." What does that mean? The lake of fire burning with brimstone is the final punishment of the incorrigible. Isn't that part of our doctrine? But according to our doctrine—what we believe is true about the plan of salvation—who gets thrown into the lake of fire? The deceived masses of the world? No. The people of the world are deceived and God is not even working with them yet, let alone holding them accountable. Who is it that is subject to being thrown into the lake of fire, which is the permanent result of defiance and rebellion against God? The ones who should have known better. Isn't that true? The ones who are called. Now, I'm not saying baptized, I'm saying called. You can choose not to act upon your calling by getting baptized and still be held accountable by God. But it's the ones who had an open mind—who were taught the Truth—and, for whatever reason, refused to follow it and to act upon it, who are held accountable. And these are the ones God judges and says, "You are not worthy of receiving eternal life in the God Family. Instead, I am mercifully going to put you to sleep." And symbolically that takes place through this fire.

So, who, once again, is this deception pointed at? The world? No, of course, the world is deceived; of course, the world is going to be caught up in whatever this Beast represents philosophically; that is not the point. They are not the ones at risk. You and I are the ones at risk because we know, or should know, better. So, who is it that accepts this mark and is in danger? Not the people of the world, it's the people of the true church of God. They are the only ones who have anything to lose in this.

Turn to Revelation fourteen, verses nine through twelve. Revelation 14, beginning in verse 9: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image . . ." And, you see, we say, "Well, I'll never worship any Beast. I'll never worship any false system. I don't even worry about that. That could never happen." We think we are impervious. After all, we know the Truth.

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

It doesn't say they are *tormented* forever and ever. The smoke, the ashes, of their sentencing to death and the execution of that sentence is what lasts forever because there is no redemption after this. It is a permanent end for those who go through this process.

"[T]he smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image . . ." This is in the course of that process leading up to the sentencing, after which they *will* have rest—because they are going to go to sleep forever, thank God. But in the run-up to that sentencing they have no rest because pursuing this way of life is nothing but turmoil and strife and mental anguish.

"[T]hey have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints . . ." By contrast to those who fall into this category which leads to death, and misery before death, here is the patience of the saints; here are those who do what? They "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"—which should tell you much. If you want to be sure that you do not fall into the category of one who is deceived into accepting this mark of the Beast—whatever it may be and however it may be manifested—what is your antidote? What is your protection? Obey the commandments.

Now, it seems like I'm over-simplifying, doesn't it? But I'm not. That's what it says. By contrast to the ones who go down this path of destruction and lose out on eternity, the saints—the ones who will be accepted by God and be given positions as Kings and Priests in the eternal Family of God—do something else. What is it that they do differently that results in their success? "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and *THE FAITH* of Jesus." What does that tell us? The trap—the trap—for the people of God is in misunderstanding what the warning is all about. And that is exactly what has happened in the Worldwide Church of God. If you go back and read the old articles in which Mr. Armstrong speculates about the fulfillment of this prophecy for the future, in essence, if you turn to the back of the book to find out what is the mark of the Beast, his answer is that it is likely Sunday worship—Sunday worship—which would be wonderful and great if it were true. I wish it were that easy. The problem is that it's not that easy. And where did this concept originate? Did it come from Herbert Armstrong? No. Church of God, Seventh Day, which had roots in Seventh-Day Adventism, that's where the idea came from because they worship on Saturday—they believe in the weekly Sabbath. They think worshiping on Sunday is the worst thing ever. And so they concocted this whole deal, long before Herbert Armstrong, to say that the mark of the Beast is Sunday worship. They've even written books on the subject. You can find them. When you look at who wrote them you find out that they were written by those with a Seventh-Day Adventist or Church of God, Seventh Day background, and they want to say that the fulfillment of this is going to be some government regime that is going to come on the scene in the last days and force Sunday worship upon all of us. And if you refuse to bend your knee to the government and to worship on Sunday, then you won't be able to buy and sell and all of this other stuff. I wish it were that easy; because which ones of us think we are ever going to begin worshiping on Sunday? I'm never going to worship on Sunday; you are never going to worship on Sunday; we know Saturday is the only rightful day of worship; Sunday was man-made—it is not Biblical whatsoever. So, "I'm never going to be guilty of embracing the mark of the Beast. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, I'll just sit back and watch all of these other poor fools fall for the deception." No, I'm being dramatic, I understand, but tell me there is not an element of that in your thinking—or has been in the past. You think you're immune. If you think it's Sunday worship alone, you are *primed* to be deceived. It is a trap and it is sprung intentionally by the enemy who wants the people of God to underestimate what is really involved. Because that is how you trap—that is how you capture—the prey: misdirection, underestimation; then, before they know it they are ensnared.

Your enemy and my enemy, dear friends, is so much more clever than we have ever given him credit for. I'm not saying that you should be worried or concerned that you are a prey because you don't have to be. There is good news in all of this. I'm going to tell you today how to focus on the right things concerning this long-range prophecy that will actually help you to confidently—not smugly or arrogantly, but righteously—avoid the trap that so many are going to fall into, and already have, by the way. Some will say I'm being provocative in telling you that the majority of God's people in the true church today are already embracing the mark of the Beast. How is that for a statement? I am going to explain to you how that is so. The trap is in accepting simple explanations like the one that it is merely Sunday worship.

We have new knowledge, by the way, in Church of God, The Eternal which came through Mr. Raymond Cole, and this is some of the material that I gave to you in part in past Feast of Tabernacles sermons. One of the things that Mr. Raymond Cole taught us is that accepting the mark of the Beast is synonymous with rejecting the faith once delivered. And you didn't hear that in the Worldwide Church of God. You heard that in this group. Truly, that is the answer in the back of the book. Accepting the mark of the Beast is synonymous with the rejection of the faith once delivered. Didn't we just see that, in part, from what I read to you in verse twelve of Revelation fourteen? "Here is the patience of the saints"—here are the ones who get it right; here are the ones who avoid the deception and successfully come through this to rule with Jesus Christ. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and THE FAITH of Jesus"—otherwise known as the "faith once delivered." It is because they believe that the Truth came by divine revelation and cannot change—that Jesus Christ was the foundation of the church, not any man, and, therefore, they refuse to change or to pervert any teaching that comes from human scholarship, and then they endure whatever trial or temptation required of them in order to hold firm to the very end. If you are going to hold on to the faith once delivered, number one, you had better know what it is. And so you are going to get eight sermons from me at the Feast this fall on, "What is the faith once delivered?" And if you know what that faith is and you hold on to it, you are immune, truly, to getting caught up, even accidentally, in partaking of the mark of the Beast. There is your immunity. That is your immunity.

I'm not going to take the time, but Revelation chapters seventeen and eighteen show that all nations and all kings have committed fornication with this Beast power. God says they have, symbolically, committed fornication and that they have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The whole world is consumed in this system, okay? They are not the ones at risk. They are deceived—God has never opened their minds—so, of course, they are under the mark. But it is not deadly to them; it is deadly only to you and me because we are supposed to know better.

So what is the Beast? This is what we can know: Don't ask the question, "Who is the Beast?"—physically. Another mistake that was made in the past was speculation in areas in which God gave the ministry no authorization to try and pin down specifics. And so we were taught that it is a ten-nation amalgamation of European powers under Germany. That's basically what we were taught. So the Beast power is the "United States of Europe," headed by Germany, we were taught. And if you buy into that, you are primed for deception because then you are not looking at all of the other ways that God might fulfill those very prophecies on the world stage in the very last days. I'm not saying that is not part of it. I'm very sure it will include some of these things because, as I just told you, it says in chapters seventeen and eighteen of Revelation that *ALL* nations—including the nations of Europe—are part of this system. Oh yes, you can find evidence that they are part of it. I'm just telling you that you are going to find evidence that all of the other nations around the world are part of it, too, and that is the part that has been missed. Whatever this system is, it's *WORLD*-encompassing—another thing that Mr. Cole brought out to us decades ago that the Worldwide Church of God never understood or acknowledged. What is this system really? What is the Beast? This is the most I am able to tell you about it, but it is really what you need to know: This Beast is the Satan-inspired system seeking to counterfeit the work of God. That's what it is, it's the Satan-inspired system seeking to counterfeit the work of God. And I tell you, therefore, my dear friends, do not ask, "Who is the Beast?" Instead, your question should be, "What is ever the purpose of God's enemies?" What is ever the purpose of God's enemies? Satan is the enemy of God. He is the god of this world. I'm not going to turn to all of those texts; I think most of you understand these things, so I'm depending upon that background.

God has allowed Satan to continue as a deceiver. He has the limited power within God's jurisdiction to create deception on the earth. What is Satan doing? What has he always done? What is his modus operandi? Isn't it always to counterfeit the work of God? What was it that Satan wanted, most of all, that led to his rebellion? Didn't he want to be like God? Isn't that what the Bible says? He ascended to heaven and actually created a war—he went to war with God. He got it in his mind somehow that he was equal to God and that he had a chance to be God. He was a created being who was never going to be God, but he came to believe that he had the right to it and the ability to make it come to pass. He led one third of God's holy angels with him into rebellion and, of course, was immediately repulsed back to the earth—which was the habitation God had assigned to him. Only now, he is a rebel and he is an outcast. But he has always wanted to emulate God—act as God, be treated as God—and now because he has made God his enemy, but is still the servant of God, like it or not, he always tries to counterfeit the activity of God.

So, he knows the plan. What is the plan and the purpose of God? Why does this earth exist? Why do you, as human beings, exist on this earth? Why were you born? As Mr. Armstrong taught us, you were created for the potential of becoming God. Lucifer and the angels never were. And, so, this whole six-thousand-year exercise is leading toward the ultimate rulership of Jesus Christ for a thousand years, culminating, then, in the end of the plan that is mapped out in the keeping of the annual Holy Days—which, by the way, the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Church of God, Seventh Day people don't think applies to them. Which is why they don't understand the first thing about the real Truth of God, in spite of the fact that they worship on Saturday. Big deal. They don't know the plan. Okay, God is going to bring utopia to this world, isn't that true? Isn't that what we are doing on this weekly Sabbath? Doesn't this weekly Sabbath picture the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ? Yes, it does. The seventh day of the physical week pictures the seventh thousand-year period in God's dealing with humankind. So God is going to create a utopia on this earth. So, what does Satan do? Satan tries to create his own utopia. Well, at least he is trying to deceive human beings into thinking they are creating a utopia when his real desire is to destroy all of mankind. So, if God's declared work is to create paradise on the earth, Satan says, "No, I'm going to create paradise on the earth differently than the way God would do it. I'm going to set up a counterfeit—a competitive work to try and achieve, ostensibly, the same thing, but not by following God's laws." So,

what is the goal and mission of the powers of the world that are extant today? Isn't it to bring paradise to the earth? All you have to do is read what they write; all you have to do is listen to what they say. Isn't that exactly what it is all about? What do you think you are dealing with? What do you think the nations—comprehensively, around the world—are trying to achieve? Utopia. They are all, in their own way, trying to achieve it. Now, the problem is, they don't agree about how to do it. But there are enough of them that do agree, and they are surreptitiously trying to bring it about. And who do you think is behind it? The enemy of God. It's not God's work at all.

So if you get involved in all of these do-gooder activities to try and "solve poverty in the third world," you are part of the system. If you think bringing medical care—modern medicine—to third-world countries is a way to bring about prosperity and paradise, you are part of the counterfeit, because that whole system is not godly at all. It's part of the counterfeit of the enemy of God. Do you believe that is true? Really? Wasn't it Jesus Christ—in His final prayer before He was arrested and killed, summarizing those final chapters in the book of John—who prayed to the Father not to take his disciples out of the world but to keep them from the evil? Because it is an evil world—it is Satan-inspired, it is highly deceptive. And if you don't know the Truth of God and if you are not committed to defending the Truth of God, then you will get caught up in it—in its philosophies—one way or another, whether it's politics or whatever. Do you think you are going to vote in your election, even as an independent, for a president or a prime minister or a parliament, or whatever, because you are going to "make things better"—that your vote is going to count? Really? If so, you are part of the system—you are part of that which opposes the very government of God. That's not God's government. All nations are part of it. They don't have a knowledge of the True God so they are not being held accountable by God for their choices. But the people of God know better, which means that if you and I get involved in this, we will be culpable. Again, the Beast is the Satan-inspired system seeking to counterfeit the work of God—because Satan has *always* counterfeited God's work—that's his goal.

Okay, what can we know about this mark? Back to Revelation chapter thirteen. Now we are going to spend a little bit more time with verses sixteen and seventeen. Revelation 13, beginning in verse 16:

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.

Alright, here is a little exercise that I went through to try and understand as much as we can—however much God will allow us to understand. Again, my point is to be constructive and give you something you can sink your spiritual teeth into, if you will. It's to help you. I'm not saying, "Don't read the prophecy." No, let's read the prophecy, but let's interpret it wisely and not jump to false conclusions which actually make us part of the deceived. So what I did was to look up the word "mark." I wanted to know more about what this word really means in the Greek—to receive a "mark." This happens to be the Greek word, *charagma*, c-h-a-r-a-g-m-a—*charagma*. They "receive a mark [a *charagma*] in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had [this *charagma*], or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." So I looked it up in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*—which is not the "true scholar's" source, but it's good enough for me. And here is the *Strong's* definition of this Greek word:

. . . a scratch or etching, i.e. Stamp (as a badge of servitude), or sculptured figure (statue)—graven, mark.

Okay, what does that tell me? It also says that it comes from the basic Greek word which is *Strong's* 5482, so I looked up 5482, which is the word, *charax*, c-h-a-r-a-x. Does that shine any light on it? It means:

. . . (to sharpen to a point; akin to *grapho* through the idea of scratching); a stake, i.e. (by implication) a palisade or rampart (military mound for circumvallation in a siege)—trench.

I thought, that doesn't help me. I'm trying to figure out what the mark of the Beast is, and now we are talking about a military fortification and a trench. But, then, that word says it is also akin to 1125, so I looked up 1125 in *Strong's* and it is the Greek word, *grapho*, g-r-a-p-h-o. Does that give me anything more? It's a primitive verb which means:

. . . to "grave", especially to write; figuratively, to describe—describe, write(-ing, -ten).

Alright, where did that leave me? What do I know? Here is the gist of it—just from the technicality: Whatever this mark is—the underlying element from the Greek—we are talking about a "mark" or a "scratch"; it's a word that means a "trench." It means when you write, when you carve, when you sculpt, you actually make a line, for example, on a piece of metal. It's not like a trench outside of a fortress, which is a big ditch, but if you had a pen big enough to draw it, you could make a ditch. But we are talking about an indelible mark, and as with the original word, *charagma*, it means an "etching," a "stamp," or some kind of graven identifier.

But that still doesn't tell me very much. So I did what I was taught to do in the church. Let's look in the New Testament for any other place where this same word, *charagma*, is used to see if we can learn anything from the context. So guess what I did? I looked up *charagma*, and I figured there would be a number of places in the New Testament where it is used. But guess what? There is only one other place. Outside of the book of Revelation, there is only one other use in the New Testament of this word *charagma*. And do you know where it is? Acts 17:29. So, turn with me to Acts 17:29. Now, this is when I really did get valuable information. I'm not going to call it a revelation, but let's just say it was revelatory in that the gaps were filled in for me. What does Acts 17:29 say?

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

First, do you know where the word, *charagma*—"mark"—is here? The same one that is translated as "mark" in Revelation, as in the "mark of the Beast"—do you know where that word is in this verse? It's the word "graven." And that's consistent with the definition I read to you. In this context—"gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device"—what is the topic? The symbolism is of an etching, like fine artwork in metal, or stone. Okay, that is consistent with it.

What else do we know? Well, I wanted some other information, so what about the rest of this? ". . . gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." I looked up the Greek word translated as "art." It's the Greek word *techne*. I apologize for all of the Greek words, but I want to get us up to a point and then I want to give you a summary. So I am just leading you quickly through the process, scholastically, that I went through. So what is this "art," *techne*—t-e-c-h-n-e? It means, "a trade, or (generally) skill—art, craft, occupation." So, we are not talking about fine art, necessarily, but we are talking about what I am going to call tradecraft. We are talking about a skilled artisan who has the ability to create something of value with his hands. We call it tradecraft. Alright, I looked up the last phrase in Acts 17:29: "man's device." What is its meaning—"man's device"? It's the Greek word, *enthumesis*, e-n-t-h-u-m-e-s-i-s. It means, "deliberation—device, thought." And as soon as I saw that the definition includes "thought," the light went on. And you are probably still thinking, "I have no idea what you are talking about or where you are going with this." Let me give you my re-statement of Acts 17:29: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God . . ." And we understand that we are the children of God—right? We were called to be His divine children, but we—the ones with whom God is working—are, even now, called His children. He has revealed Himself to us through a calling; He is dealing with us as children. So, "[f]orasmuch then as *we* . . ." Of whom is this speaking? This is not talking about the deceived world, it's talking about those called into the true church of God. That's the subject here. "Forasmuch then as *WE ARE* the offspring [the children] of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead . . ." And that term is better translated "God's divinity." It's the essence of what God is, the way God thinks, His purposes, and His methods. That's what "Godhead" means. ". . . [W]e ought not to think that [God and His divine purposes are] like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device"—meaning we are not to think that God and His work are, in any way, influenced or improved upon by man's skill, craftsmanship, ideas, or thoughts. Isn't that what he is really saying? As the called people of God with this priceless opportunity, we are required never to fall into the trap of thinking that the work or the purpose of God are in any way influenced or improved upon by *MAN'S* skill, craftsmanship, ideas or thoughts. That's what he is saying.

What does that have to do with the mark of the Beast? It's because this mark, this engraving, is exactly what Satan's counterfeit is always about. It's

trying to modify or improve upon God's work. Man thinks he can make it better. He is not satisfied—and never has been—with what God gave and made holy. Man will put his own indelible mark on it to make it better. This is why I tell you, my dear friends, you should not be asking, "What is the mark of the Beast?", you should be asking, "What is always the hallmark of the enemy of God?" The "mark," you see, is a stamp of ownership; it's like a signature; it sets it apart from all others; it tells you something about an orientation behind the scenes; it's a special etching—just as the Greek word implies—which makes it stand apart as unique. In other words—and I have already used the word—it's a "hallmark."

The title of this message is not "The Mark of the Beast," but I've entitled it, "The Hallmark of the Beast," because when you look at what is really implied here, we are talking about the orientation behind it—what makes it tick; what's its philosophy? When God warns about accepting the mark of the Beast, He really means the "hallmark" of this Beast power, which is steeped in everything which God hates. I read these texts, and especially Acts 17:29, and I realized we are talking about a hallmark. Now, you are never going to find the word "hallmark" in the New Testament, because the word "hallmark" is an English word. But I think it captures exactly the essence of what God is talking about here. So I went to our big, huge volume of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and I looked up the English word "hallmark" to see if I was correct in how I was thinking about this. Here's the definition of the English word "hallmark." The first definition is:

In England, an official mark stamped on gold and silver articles . . . to attest their purity and comprised of the king's or queen's mark, the maker's mark, the assayer's mark . . .

It also includes, "a mark or device placed or stamped upon an article of trade to indicate origin, purity, or genuineness."

So, in essence, I looked all of this up as it applies historically. If gold and silver was being mined and turned into money as part of the king's treasury, then this gold or silver bouillon would have a stamp placed upon it. It would be stamped or etched into the face of the bouillon, and the stamp had three parts, as we just read in the definition.

The first was either the king or the queen's mark. Why? Because it's the king or the queen in charge of the government who basically is authorizing this bouillon to become part of the treasury or a part of the monetary system of the nation. Alright, so they are the power behind the inclusion of this precious metal in the monetary system. So it would have the king or the queen's stamp on it to say, "This is coming from an authorized source."

It would also have what is called the "maker's mark." What is the "maker's mark"? The maker is the individual who actually smelts the metal when it comes out of the mine in order to purify it—to separate it from all of the other things in the ore which are not gold or silver. Alright, so the maker is the one who goes through the process of actually producing a pure result—a gold or silver bouillon bar. So the maker would also put his stamp on it in order to certify, by his craftsmanship, that it was pure—that it was not just a lead bar that was painted to look like gold; it was not a counterfeit; it was the real deal; this is real gold. And it would have the maker's stamp on it, along with the king's mark, to say, "I put my own reputation behind the claim that this is authentic."

And the third mark was the assayer's mark. Who is the assayer? The assayer is a third party who tests it to verify to its authenticity because, you see, the maker might be inclined to steal by certifying something as authentic when it is not—stealing the real gold and substituting a lead bar, for example. The assayer is a third party at arm's length who tests it and verifies that "yes, indeed, this is legitimate gold or silver."

So, the hallmark—the original word—meant a three-part stamp that included the king's, the maker's and the assayer's marks. All for what purpose? To attest that this was the genuine article and to indicate its origin and its purity. It is an etching—a permanent mark that was added. So what? That is exactly the implication, as far as I'm concerned, when God is talking about a mark of the Beast in the book of Revelation. He is likewise talking about a signature, a stamp—something which sets that whole system and ideology apart for what it is, as opposed to the revealed Truth of God. It is the orientation of the enemy.

What, then, is the hallmark of the Beast—the signature, the identifier—of this enemy? It is an attempt to take credit for the things of God—to put man's stamp on the things which God, and no one else, created and made holy. That's

what it is. Taking credit for or trying to improve upon the work of God through the scholarship, the craftsmanship, that comes out of the human mind. That is what the Beast is all about.

Revelation 13:18: It says, "Here is wisdom." Now, why is that statement made? It's like saying, "Here is the key to your enlightenment and understanding. If you want to understand the mystery of this long-range prophecy that is shrouded in symbolic wording—'the mark', 'the Beast', 'the dragon', and all of these things which are hard to apply in the real world—then, 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.

I don't know why it is six, six, six and I don't spend my time trying to convert people's names into the mark of the Beast as other people are doing—and they do it all of the time. It's foolishness. You're wasting your time. Do you think you are going to identify an individual as "The Beast," as if all you have to do is avoid him? "Well, if I never have anything to do with that individual, once I identify him, then I'm okay. Aha! He's the Beast! Well, I'll just stay a long way away from him and then I'm safe." No, if you have those kinds of thoughts, you are a sheep for the slaughter. That's what you are. Because the enemy has taken you by sleight of hand. Don't ask, "WHO is the Beast?" You ask, "What is the philosophy of this Beast system?" And, then, you have the potential to avoid it.

The important part of this verse is the fact that it says it's the number of a man. My hypothesis is that this is God's way of emphasizing, again, that it involves man trying to put his stamp on God's work—man inserting himself where he has no business. That's what it is. At its basic, most simple level, that is always what separates man and God, and that is always the tool that Satan—the enemy of God—uses to try and divide us: by perverting what God made holy. What are some examples? Exodus twenty, verses twenty-four and twenty-five. If you think I am all wet, you be the judge. Does this matter to God? Let me show you how much it matters to God and what He did, symbolically, to prove it. Exodus 20:24–25:

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

So God is defining to Israel the rules for their rituals that they need to follow in order to please Him and come into a close relationship with Him. Alright, so we are talking about building an altar upon which sacrifices are going to be made. And He said, "Actually, I prefer an altar made of earth—dirt." There's nothing great about dirt—there's nothing inherent in it that encourages people to worship dirt, is there? And, so, it actually says, "I prefer that you use an altar made of dirt." Because the point is not to idolize the altar, the point is that the altar is only a tool that facilitates the offering of the sacrifices, which, then, signifies the relationship of respect between God and His people. *It's not about the altar*, it's about the sacrifice. So He said, "My preference is a dirt altar—earth." But it was permissible to build an altar with materials other than earth, He says in verse 25:

"And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone [so that was permissible], thou shalt not build it of hewn [h-e-w-n] stone . . ." What does "hewn stone" mean? It's a stone upon which you have carved, sculpted or graven in any way. ". . . if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." What does that tell you? Symbolically, God is saying that if you are going to have a relationship with Him, and therefore you are going to offer sacrifices, you must do it His way. And spiritually, today, that has to do with our keeping of Sabbaths and Holy Days when we come to make our offerings before Him and show respect. It includes our prayers. When you get down on your knees and you pray to God, you are making an offering to Him—you are approaching unto His throne. And so He says, "When you do so, then you do it my way, or else I won't accept your offering." And, so, physically, He uses a stone altar symbolically and says, "You will not do it with stones which have been squared off to make them stack really nicely and look pretty. You will use natural stones the way God made them in nature." Because He said, "When you put your tool on it—when you think you are going to improve upon the natural stones by making them level, or making them square, or by doing whatever you might do to them—you pollute them." He would not accept that. I'm telling you, my dear friends, that was symbolic of how

we are to handle the commandments, the statutes and the judgements which He gave to us, which were perfect as they were given. They need no improvement. They will not be improved upon when man tries to put his own interpretation and his stamp upon the commandments of God. They are never made better, but are polluted instead. That's what this is all about.

Isaiah nine, verses six through ten. Did ancient Israel ever get it? No. Isaiah 9 verse 6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." Oh, yes, that *is* going to come to pass, you see, because Jesus Christ *is* going to return and He *is* going to rule this earth with a rod of iron—meaning He is going to brook no interference or rebellion. The nations *will* subject to His power and authority; Satan *will* be bound and put aside even though he has deceived the nations into thinking they have power of their own—and a "right," by the way, to autonomy, by virtue of being human beings. And they have no such right because God *is* going to rule them whether they like it or not, and He will enforce His government upon this earth. Now, it is going to be a loving and benevolent government, but there is going to be no democracy. So it is going to happen, and it will be the government of God. It will not be the government of Satan; it will not be a government in which man "has a say" in how the statutes are written or whether or not they are modified over time. There will be no modification of the Law of God which rules on this earth.

. . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

He is saying, "Make no mistake about it, this is going to come to pass whether human beings like it or not." There will be no negotiation; there will be no compromise; this *is* going to be the future upon this earth.

Verse 8: "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel." He *revealed* Himself to a particular chosen people called Israel. He made them a nation and He gave them His Truth through commandments and statues and judgements and He offered them a relationship through a covenant—a marriage

covenant. And what did they do with it? They violated it; they polluted it; they showed gross disrespect to their Husband, the King of Israel—none other than Jesus Christ, who was the God of the Old Testament.

"The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria . . ." These are all rebels, by the way, whom God is going to humble and bring down because they did not remain true to the commandments. ". . . Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria"—which implies the northern ten tribes—"that say in the pride and stoutness of heart . . ." You see, because they are so smart; they are so intelligent; they are so educated; they are so wise in the truth of the world. ". . . that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones . . ." So God allows His people to be cursed—that is why the bricks are fallen down; their works, their efforts, humanly, have been destroyed because they were rebels. And so God allowed them to get their own comeuppance with a curse. And, so, God's people are under a curse *because God is chastising them for their sins*. But do they acknowledge their sins? *NO!* They say, "Well, we had bad luck, but that's alright, because we are very capable. We have strength of mind and body and ability, and we will rebuild what we have lost."

". . . The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones." Now, think about this spiritually—conceptually—not just in terms of physical buildings. God makes a mockery of their ideology—their false concepts, inspired by the god of this world, Satan, the Devil, which they have embraced; concepts like evolution and every other fallacy about who God is, who man is, and the capabilities of man. They think they are so wonderful because they have this inherent power; they all think they have immortal souls. It's all a lie. And, so, every time God exposes their stupidity for what it is, instead of learning, they recommit themselves to upholding and rebuilding their false ideologies. And God compares it to hewn stone—stone which *they* have fashioned according to *their* craftsmanship (like we saw in Acts chapter seventeen), their skill and their ability to use a chisel or an engraving tool to precisely and delicately create and shape stone images or things out of gold, silver or other precious materials (natural materials that God made). But man is going to make them so much better through his craftsmanship—the same thing they are doing, ideologically, today. "The bricks are fallen down [by the curse of God], but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars."

They will not accept the curses of God; they will not humble themselves; they just reinforce their determination to hold on to their ideology and to rebuild their own utopia their own way, without God. And He says it is never going to fly because He is going to humble them.

The nations of the world are going to have to learn, but again, they are deceived, right? They do not have a chance to understand or to know the true God. So they are not being held accountable. But who is? Who are the few on the face of the earth right now whom God is holding accountable? The ones who are called into the true church of God. That includes you and me and those under the hearing of my voice. You know better, and if you don't know better, you should know better because you have been given a chance to know better. And if you don't know better it is because you refuse to hear, or to act upon what you believe is true—either way. If you are not defending the faith once delivered, you are already under the mark of the Beast. The point of the mark of the Beast, as I read to you at the very beginning of this message, is that whoever is under the mark, what happens to them? They lose salvation; they end up in the lake of fire. In how many other places does God say throughout the Bible that the way to show honor and respect to Him is to keep and sanctify His Truth? What did Christ say in the book of John? "If you love me," do what? Keep. My. Commandments—not the way you interpret them, Mr. and Mrs. human being; not through your wisdom or the way you would like it to be, but the way God revealed them, because they are perfect from their inception. You can neither make them better nor improve them *IN ANY WAY* by your actions. You must embrace *EXACTLY* what God gave through chosen servants, and then you hold on to that and defend it with all that is within you, until the very end, by the power of the Holy Spirit which is also offered. And that's the only way you and I are going to have salvation. Any other path is going to end in destruction and is synonymous with accepting the mark of the Beast.

The mistake, my dear friends, is in thinking that there are multiple paths to destruction—you know, if you do this, you will end up being destroyed in the lake of fire OR if you accept the mark of the Beast you end up being destroyed. *THEY ARE ONE AND THE SAME*. So, would Sunday worship be included? Yes, because if you renounce the seventh-day Sabbath and worship on Sunday instead, then you have repudiated the faith once delivered. But is that the end-all, be-all of the mark? NO WAY! No way. Any repudiation of revealed Truth puts you or me

under the mark. That's the hallmark of the enemy of God—which is the counterfeit of His revelation. That's what it is.

John seven, verses sixteen through eighteen, in case you think I'm all wet. Here is how important it was to Jesus Christ because here is what He said Himself about His own commission when He was in the flesh as the ambassador—the representative—of His Father; this is how He described His responsibility which affected His own future. John 7, verse 16 through 18:

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine . . .

I want you to think about this in terms of the fact that He is saying, "I have not lifted up my own craftsman's tool upon this message one iota. I have not personally sought to improve upon what the Father gave me."

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be OF GOD, or whether I speak OF MYSELF. He that speaketh of himself seeketh HIS OWN glory [a counterfeit glory and honor separate and apart from God who is supposed to receive all glory; emphasis added].

Christ is saying, "I have not fallen into that trap." In essence I'm telling you that what Christ is saying is that, "I have not accepted the mark of the Beast. I am fulfilling my responsibility faithfully to preserve and to teach exactly what the Father delivered to me, as He delivered it to me, as though it were a natural stone that has not been hewn. I am delivering exactly what I was given; I leave no engraving and no mark upon it; my initials are not carved into it saying 'Jesus was here'; there is nothing on it that will point to me; it all points to the Father." That's what a faithful servant does; he doesn't try to leave his own mark; he delivers it precisely as it was given to him and is confident in doing so.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Does this make sense? Do you see it? Isn't the test for salvation always in having respect for God and His work and not polluting it? Isn't that really the hallmark of success as opposed to the hallmark of this Beast power, which is always a counterfeit?

Another concept inspired by this Beast system is a fixation on prophetic titles of leaders—which so many of these other groups are doing. They spend their time trying to convince their members that they are fulfilling the role of Elijah, or Elisha, or this or that prophetic office. It is nothing but human arrogance. It is vanity. It is not godly at all.

Others include believing that a man—even an apostle—has authority to change God's doctrines, or that Truth is derived through human Bible study. Those are all examples of accepting the power of man—six, six, six—as your god. In that context, I ask you, what do you think happened in 1974 in the Worldwide Church of God when they embraced changes to Pentecost on the basis of what? An Israeli rabbi's interpretation of a Hebrew word. That was the justification for the change. If you don't believe me, you go back and read the letter that Herbert Armstrong wrote to the church at the time he announced the change in Pentecost from Monday to Sunday, and read the explanation there for why they were doing it. It was based upon a reinterpretation. They went to the scholars of the world for their evidence and used that to change the doctrine. They rebuilt with hewn stone because they weren't satisfied with what Jesus Christ gave. They were going to improve upon it under the guise of "growing in grace and knowledge." Growing in grace and knowledge—taking a rough, natural stone, which is plain, and chipping off what we feel are the rough spots, and making it smooth and uniform so that it is easier to build with. It is man "improving" upon the revelation—"growing in grace" by continuing to find ways to make "improvements" upon what Mr. Armstrong started with at the beginning. Do you see it, my dear friends?

And here is a church that the whole time was reading these prophecies concerning the mark of the Beast, and thinking, "Oh, well, the mark of the Beast is just Sunday worship, so, as long as we never worship on Sunday, we are fine." And, ironically, they started worshipping on Sunday when they changed to a Sunday Pentecost. Maybe the mark of the Beast *is* Sunday worship—maybe the mark of the Beast does include Sunday worship, whether it is worshipping on every

Sunday or worshiping on a Sunday Pentecost. But it's not the way Mr. Armstrong originally envisioned it when he wrote those articles back in the 1940s and 1950s. But, irony of ironies, that was probably prophetic as well.

I am not going to take the time to read Galatians 1:6–12, but the Apostle Paul is the one that said, in essence, "no man, not even an apostle (because Paul was an apostle), has the authority to change what God gave." And Mr. Armstrong used to quote this very passage in saying that even as God had inspired through the Apostle Paul that the words he had received and taught did not come out of his own mind, but were revealed to him, even so the doctrines that Mr. Armstrong gave to the church were by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Mr. Armstrong *thundered* that principle over and over and wrote about it. So, if he received it by revelation, then why did he allow liberals—including his own son—to induce him to change it? It *was* a manifestation of the hallmark of God's enemy. A perversion of the faith once delivered, in any way, is the mark of the Beast. Revelation twenty and verse four. Revelation 20, verse 4. Who are the ones who get it right? Who are the ones who avoid this trap?

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God [here are the ones who do it right], and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

These are the only ones who avoid it. Avoiding the mark of the Beast is synonymous with salvation. And, so, leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the only ones that God deems as having avoided this mark are the ones who ultimately become part of the firstfruits. Now, the masses of the world—the nations who were deceived from the beginning—are going to be taught the difference between truth and error for the first time after Christ returns. Where does that leave the ones who *were* called but who didn't hold on to the faith because they embraced all kinds of false doctrines? If they don't repent before their time is up, they will be guilty, by God's decree, of accepting the mark of the Beast. So, if you think, "Oh, well, I never had an implant underneath my skin. And because I wouldn't have anything to do with Prince Charles—whose name, 'Charles, prince of Wales,' condenses down to six, six, six—I'm fine." Do you

think that is going to keep you safe? If you are keeping a Sunday Pentecost or a Sivan six Pentecost; if you have rejected the Hebrew calendar in favor of some other interpretation of when the year begins, or how to count the months; if you are quibbling over the proper day to keep the Passover; if you have embraced modern medicine and you think that it is God's system to be a blessing to the church for healing; if you have talked yourself out of the obligation to tithe and give offerings; if you don't think annual Holy Days need to be kept at all, you are under the mark of the Beast, because these are not the faith once delivered. All of those concepts carry the mark of man. They have all been conjured by the scholarship and reasonings of deceived human beings. That's what the mark is.

Revelation chapter twenty-two in closing. Revelation 22, verses 14 through 20—the last words of the last book of the Bible. How important is this whole concept to God? It is everything. Notice how adamant He is: "Blessed are they that do his commandments . . ." How important are the commandments? And some want to say, "Well, let's not allow doctrine to stand in the way of fellowship." Spare me that nonsense. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life . . ." Do you want to partake of the tree of life—meaning, do you want to live forever? Do you want one of those offices which God has promised to the faithful? Then pay attention to what he is saying.

. . . and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

What is a lie? A perversion of the Truth. If you embrace a perversion of the Truth, you make yourself part of a lie. Verse 16: "I Jesus have sent mine angel [messenger, representative] to testify unto you these things in the churches." *DID HE, OR DIDN'T HE?* Do we believe, or do we not, that Jesus Christ sent chosen individuals to make sure the church had the Truth? Did He, or didn't He? If you believe the church under Mr. Armstrong began with a mixture of truth and error, and that the scholars must help us sift out the error and embrace more truth over time, you don't get it. You are not even on first base. And until you embrace this principle of God giving divine Truth from the beginning which cannot be improved upon—even though he uses fallible human beings as the messengers—you are not even at the starting blocks. "I Jesus have sent mine

[messenger] to testify unto you these things in the churches." And He did it through a human ministry—like it or not.

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.

Do you really want His Kingdom to come? Do you want Jesus Christ—I mean the real Jesus Christ—to rule on this earth as your King, or have you concocted your own form of Jesus Christ which you like better than you prefer to rule? "And let him that is athirst . . ." The ones who thirst for the real Truth—the orientation of God. "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It has been offered to you. It has not been offered to the world, but it is offered to you. It is in your hands, my dear brethren. You have a right to it because God has *given* you the right to it. All you have to do is embrace it; all you have to do is decide that it's important to you and prove it by the choices you make in your life—prove that there is nothing that you value more than this opportunity to be part of that glorious Family. How badly do you want it? What are you willing to sacrifice in order to have it? *NO ONE CAN STOP YOU*; there is no one who can prevent you from this glorious future, because God has given you the right to it. All you have to do is love it and then defend it.

And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy . . .

And who can hear except one who has had a miraculous opening of the ears? *IF YOU WERE CALLED, YOU HEARD.*

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall *ADD* unto him the plagues that are written in this book [emphasis added].

Do you think you are going to take your craftsman's tool of scholarship, or "inspired" ideology, or whatever you think is so valuable, and improve upon what you heard originally through a chosen servant? He says, "Think again."

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

There, my dear friends, is the methodology for you to read the prophecy concerning the Beast and the mark of the Beast, and glean something that you can sink your teeth into spiritually—to use right now in developing a closer relationship with God. Forget all of this speculation about who, physically, among the nations might fulfill this or that. This is a prophecy for the church. It is a tool for you, if you understand the underlying principles that are involved—the real tug of war between Truth and the counterfeit of Truth, and the means for you to avoid it.