

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

December 2008

“Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philemon 1:3).

Prayer Requests: Please pray for our secretary Ann Ford and her husband, Glen Ford. Their son and grandson were involved in a fatal car crash. Their grandson, Jason Dubbs, was killed, leaving behind a wife, Amanda, and young daughter, Aliea, while Kevin, the Ford’s son is on life support. Please also pray for Joseph Lahud and his family. They are under conviction that the Lord has called them to work for Him, and instructed them not to continue in their former occupation. As a result their farm is going into foreclosure. So, please, lift them up in prayer.

Florida Camp Meeting Reminder: The brethren in Florida are planning a camp meeting for February 19-24, 2009, at a new and better location in the Ocala National Forest, about 30 miles southeast of Ocala. Contact Jerri Raymond, 407-291-9565.

The Mark of the Beast

by Lynnford Beachy

“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” (Revelation 13:16, 17).

Most of us have heard about the mark of the beast, and have been expecting some worldwide power to cause everyone to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads. The Bible uses some of the strongest language to warn us against receiving the mark of the beast. (See Revelation 14:9-11.) Yet, many people are unclear regarding what the mark of the beast really is. It is very hard to avoid receiving the mark of the beast if we do not know what it is. Some people have thought it was the Social Security Numbers issued to citizens starting in 1937. Others think it is a tattoo of 666 on a person’s right hand or his forehead. In this computer age, many people think that it is a microchip placed under the skin. The list goes on and on. With all these varied ideas about the mark of the beast, how can we know for sure what the mark of the beast is, and how to avoid it?

Fortunately, the Bible does not leave us in the dark on such an important issue as this. First we must identify the beast so that we can understand its mark. In the first seven verses of Revelation 13, John records a vision where he saw a beast rise up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns. This beast has some amazing similarities to the fourth beast and the little horn of Daniel chapter seven. Please notice some of these similarities in the chart to the right:

There can be little doubt that God gave John a vision of the same beast that He showed to Daniel. The identity of this beast is clearly revealed in the book of Daniel. The angel that spoke with Daniel said, “The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth” (Daniel 7:23). Beasts in Bible

prophecy symbolize kingdoms or world powers. Even though this fourth kingdom is not mentioned by name, the preceding three kingdoms are, which makes it very easy to know the kingdom represented by the fourth beast.

Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11 are parallel prophecies of kingdoms that ruled the world, with chapters 8 and 11 excluding Babylon since its rule was either at an end or nearing

1st Beast of Revelation 13	4th Beast and Little Horn of Daniel 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Arises from the Sea—v. 1▪ Has 10 horns—v. 1▪ Has a mouth speaking great things—v. 5▪ Speaks blasphemy against God—v. 6▪ Makes war with the saints—v. 7▪ Has power over all nations—v. 7▪ Has power to continue 42 months (3 ½ years)—v. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Arises from the Sea—v. 3▪ Has 10 horns—v. 7▪ Has a mouth speaking great things—v. 8▪ Speaks great words against the Most High—v. 25▪ Makes war with the saints—v. 21▪ Devours the whole earth—v. 23▪ Has power over the earth for 3 ½ years—v. 25

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Something for the Young at Heart page 7

its end. In Daniel chapter two, the first kingdom is clearly identified as Babylon (Verse 38). In chapter 8, the second and third kingdoms are mentioned by name—Media-Persia (Verse 20) and Greece (Verse 21). A brief study of history reveals that Rome overthrew Greece to rule the world. There can be little doubt that Rome is symbolized by the fourth beast of Daniel seven. Nearly all Bible commentators agree with this assessment.

Rome underwent changes in its structure and government, the most significant of which was its change from pagan Rome to papal (the little horn) Rome during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries after Christ. Many of the prophecies of this world power were fulfilled during the papal dominance of the Dark Ages. Millions of Christians were killed during this time in some of the most gruesome ways imaginable. Truly this power made “war with the saints” (Revelation 13:7; Daniel 7:21).

The prophecies of Daniel leave Rome as the final world power, existing all the way until Christ comes to take His kingdom.

The Lamb-like Beast

When we come to the book of Revelation we find the Roman kingdom still exercising its power, but another beast is mentioned that cooperates with the Roman kingdom to dominate the world. Right after John saw the Roman beast, he says, “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” (Revelation 13:11). All of the other beasts of Daniel 7, as well as the first beast of Revelation 13 came up out of the sea, but this one comes up out of the earth. An angel told John, “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). The sea from which the other beasts arose represent many nations and people. The second beast of Revelation 13 comes up out of the earth, meaning that it arises in part of the world that has relatively few inhabitants or nations. It arises near the close of papal dominance, near the end of the 42 prophetic months or 1260 years, which ended in 1798.*

Just as prophesied, a world power that fits John’s description was beginning to rise at this time. The United States of America declared its independence in 1776, and began as a lamb, striving for peace and safety. The American Constitution is still one of the greatest in the world. But, the prophecy continues... “he spake as a dragon.” Can you see it, friends? The United States has already begun speaking as a dragon. It has become the bully of the world. Yet, there is more to come.

* It was prophesied that when papal Rome came to power it would root up three kingdoms. (Daniel 7:8) The last of these was the Ostrogoths who were defeated in 538 AD. After dominating the world throughout the Dark Ages, in 1798, exactly 1260 years later, the French General Berthier took the pope prisoner, ending world-wide papal dominance.

John saw that this second beast “exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Revelation 13:12). We can see that the United States will exercise all the power the papacy exercised, and cause people to worship the first beast, or the papacy. Let us not overlook the fact that there is a greater power at work above the papacy. The Bible says about papacy, “The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). The dragon mentioned here is referring to the dragon spoken of just a few verses earlier, “The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). Satan is working behind the scenes. He is the one who gave the authority to the papacy. When people worship the papacy, they are actually worshipping Satan himself, for the Bible says, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God” (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Let’s continue reading in Revelation 13.

“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live” (Revelation 13:13, 14). We can expect to see many miracles performed, but they will be used to deceive people into making an image to the first beast.

An image is a likeness of the original. The most notable and damning characteristic of the first beast was the union of church and state. The pope was the head of the church, but he was also the head of the state. Essentially the church ruled the state, and we have to but look at the history of the Dark Ages for the frightening results of this unholy union. About 2 million people were tortured and killed during pagan Rome’s rule, but that number was multiplied to 50-150 million during papal Rome’s rule. According to the Bible we can expect the United States to duplicate this unholy union of church and state.

John continues, “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 of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six” (Revelation 13:15-18).

Identifying the Beast

The beast, whose mark we are to avoid, is the first beast, or the Roman Catholic institution, called the papacy. The United States will be instrumental in causing the people of the world to receive the mark of the beast. Notice that the whole issue of the mark of the beast is about worship. The United States will cause people on the earth to *worship* the beast (verse 12), and to *worship* the image of the beast (verse 15). There is a very important fact to learn from this. Please don't miss it. The implementation of the mark of the beast will revolve around worship. Nobody will receive the mark of the beast unless they "worship the beast" (verse 12). It is a sin to worship anything or anyone other than God. Jesus said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). The first commandment states, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Those who obey the United States when they urge the whole world to worship the beast will be breaking God's commandments. Nobody will receive the mark of the beast unless they **worship** the beast or his image. Worship will be the key issue.

God warned us, "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" (Revelation 14:9, 10). This is a serious warning. For God to punish those who receive the mark of the beast, it has to involve breaking one of God's commandments. Think about this. If receiving the mark of the beast only involved a man receiving a tattoo, or a microchip under the skin, that alone could not be enough reason for God to cast him into

the lake of fire. There has to be something more to it than that, because a person could be pinned down and forced to receive a tattoo or a microchip. God would not cast a person into the lake of fire for having this done to him. There is something more that must not be overlooked and, according to the Bible, it involves worship and the breaking of at least one of God's commandments.

God's Ten Commandments

Let's take a moment to examine God's Ten Commandments. The first four deal with our relationship and worship of God, while the last six deal with our relationship toward other people. The mark of the beast, then, must involve breaking one of the first four commandments, which are summarized as follows: 1) Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 2) Thou shalt not bow down to graven images. 3) Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain. 4) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:3-11). If you obey all of these commandments, you will not, and cannot, receive the mark of the beast. Even if someone pinned you down and forced you to receive a microchip under your skin, if you have not broken any of these commandments, you have not received the mark of the beast. I pray that you realize this important point.

Look again at the four commandments listed above, and ask yourself, which of these would the United States most likely compel people to break. It has to be one of them, for these are the only ones that deal with worship.

Many years ago the king of Babylon set up a great image in the plain of Dura, and commanded all his subjects gathered there to bow down and worship the image or else they would be thrown into a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-11). The king was compelling people to break the second commandment. Three faithful followers of God refused to bow down, and they were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:12-23). The Son of God came down and performed a miracle to keep the fire from harming them (Daniel 3:24-27). By this God demonstrated that the state has no right whatsoever to require its subjects to worship. This is something that belongs only to God. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mark 12:17) There is a clear distinction between what we owe to God and what we owe to our fellow man. It is a sin to render to man those things which belong solely to God, specifically our worship. Likewise it is a sin for man to require worship from man. God demonstrated this fact for all time when He saved His three faithful servants out of the fiery furnace.

God again demonstrated this fact when He saved Daniel out of the lions' den. In this case the king passed a law that no man could ask a petition of anyone but the king for thirty days, or he would be cast into a den of lions. (Read Daniel chapter 6.) The king was requiring people to break the first commandment by putting himself above God. Daniel was

His number is 666 (Revelation 13:18)

The pope has been given the title, "Vicar of the Son of God." In the Latin (which is the official language of the Roman Catholic Church), this is written as, "VICARIUS FILII DEI." Most of us learned in school that letters are used to represent numbers in "Roman Numerals." When we evaluate the title of the pope, using Roman numerals, we come up with the exact number 666, as demonstrated in the following figure.

V	.....	5		
I	.....	1		
C	....	100		
A	.....	0	F.....	0
R	.....	0	I.....	1
I	.....	1	L.....	50
U	.....	5	D.....	500
S	.....	0	I.....	1
			E.....	0
			I.....	1
	112		53	
			501	
				666

seen praying to God and he was cast into the lions' den. God overruled by sending His angel to shut the mouth of the lions.

Here we have two examples of earthly governments passing laws related to worship. One violated the second commandment, the other violated the first. In both cases God demonstrated that His people are innocent if they disobey a law of the land related to worship.

Do you think the United States would set up a literal image and command all the people of the world to bow down and worship it? Not likely! This would not go over well in a predominately Christian nation like the US. For the government to be successful in getting people to violate one of God's commandments they need to get the people behind them. They need to make it appear as if what they are asking is a good thing. Do you think the US would ask people to worship the president as God? Again, this is unlikely. However, they may ask people to worship a false god, which is generally thought, by Christians, to be the genuine, such as the Trinity. But doing this openly would find much resistance among Jews and Muslims, as well as some Christians, and it would be difficult to implement because what a person believes about God's identity is hard for other people to see. Do you think they would ask people to take God's name in vain? Certainly not! This only leaves one commandment, the fourth commandment, which deals with the Sabbath. This, logically, is the easiest and most likely of the commandments for the US to cause all the people in the world to violate, as we will see in a moment.

Remember, to receive the mark of the beast you must violate one of the first four commandments. This is the only way it would deal with worship, and be a sin. In the book of Revelation we are given a warning against receiving the mark of the beast (14:9-11), and in connection with this warning we are given three specific instructions to help us avoid receiving the mark. We are told, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and *worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters*" (Revelation 14:7). In explaining how to avoid receiving the mark of the beast we are told to worship Him who made heaven and earth. Again we can see the emphasis is on worship, and a portion of the fourth commandment is quoted here, giving us a clue that the mark of the beast has something to do with the fourth commandment.

The Sabbath

Let us examine the Sabbath commandment and see if this could be used as a means to institute the mark of the beast. The commandment says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: *For in six days the LORD*

made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11). The commandment prohibits us from doing any work on the seventh day. This prohibition includes buying and selling on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:16, 17).

Many financial transactions today are done without the use of physical money. More and more people are using plastic cards to make purchases, or they write checks. It is an oddity to see people in a grocery store using cash to make purchases.

We have heard stories of people's credit cards being revoked, and their bank accounts frozen. To many people this would be devastating, especially if we had a totally cashless society. If all transactions were done by computers, a person's ability to buy and sell could be taken away very easily. If RFID chips, or biometric identification, are used in place of cash, it would be very difficult for someone to buy or sell unless they fit in with the program. Those controlling the computers would have the ability to prohibit certain people from buying or selling.

It would be very easy for the US to use the Sabbath commandment as a means to cause people to worship the beast and receive its mark. For example, the US could require a person's ID, that enables them to buy and sell, to be renewed each week by participating in a work program on Sabbath, or some other activity that violates the Sabbath. Yet, how could they openly require people to violate the Sabbath commandment in a world where many people are "Christians," and the beast itself is a "Christian" power. The answer is simple when we realize that the majority of Christianity violates the Sabbath commandment every week without thinking anything of it. Satan knew about the mark of the beast many years ago, and he has been planning his attack for a long time. He has succeeded in convincing most of the world that Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Christian Sabbath because Christ was raised from the dead on that day, even though there is not a single Bible text that tells us that the Sabbath was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first.

The Beast Tried to Change the Law

History teaches us that there was an attempted change to God's law, but it occurred after the Bible was written, at a time when paganism was beginning to be merged with Christianity by the papacy. The early Christians kept the seventh day Sabbath for many years after Christ died. The day after His death, His disciples "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). They were evidently oblivious of any change. The Roman Emperor Constantine enacted the first Sunday law for its citizens in 321 AD, stating:

Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades, rest on the venerable day of the sun: but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture; because it often

happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by Heaven. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article Sunday).

This Sunday law was strictly and completely a religious law, and could only be a religious law. Even though this Sunday law was enacted by a pagan emperor to benefit pagan sun worshippers, Sunday observance as a religious holiday was adopted by many Christians.

Notice what one historian has to say about this:

Centuries of the Christian era passed away before the Sunday was observed by the Christian church as a Sabbath. History does not furnish us with a single proof or indication that it was at any time so observed previous to the Sabbatical edict of Constantine in A.D. 321. (Sir Wm. Domville, *Examination of the Six Texts*, page 291 as quoted in *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, page 344, by John N. Andrews, Steam Press 1873).

A prominent Catholic Catechism boldly admits:

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic church, in the counsel of Laodicea (336 A.D.) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday. (*The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, Second Edition, by Peter Geirman, page 50).

Not only is the Catholic Church bold enough to admit that they attempted to change the Sabbath to Sunday, but they claim that it is the **mark** of their authority. “*Sunday is the mark of our authority*. The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of the fact.” (*The Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923—*emphasis supplied*) “Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. And *the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority* in religious matters.” (Thomas, H.F., Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons, in answer to a letter regarding the change of the Sabbath.—*emphasis supplied*) “The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church.” (Monsignor Louis Segur, *Plain Talk about the Protestantism of Today*, page 213)

There can be no doubt that Sunday observance is a mark of the beast, a mark of the authority of the Roman Catholic papacy, and it is easy to see how Sunday legislation could be used to enforce the mark of the beast.

The Trinity Connection

The papacy instituted Sunday observance in honor of the god they worship. The Catholic Church claims, “[Sunday] is a day dedicated by the Apostles to the honor of the most holy Trinity...” (*Douay Catechism*, page 143) Those who pay homage to the papacy by keeping Sunday are doing so “in honor of the most holy Trinity.” (*Ibid.*) Observance of a holy

day is a manner in which people worship God—it is the *how* of worship, not the *who*. Sunday observance was instituted by the Roman Catholic Church in honor of their god, the Trinity. The Trinity is *who* is worshiped through Sunday observance.

The Trinity doctrine was not always part of the religion of God’s people. On page 11 of the book, *Handbook for Today’s Catholic*, we read,

The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church... The Church studied this mystery with great care and, after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

The rise of the Trinity doctrine was predicted in the Bible many years before the fourth century. Speaking of the rise of the papacy, the angel Gabriel told Daniel, “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. *Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers*, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.” (Daniel 11:36, 37)

This description of the papacy is almost identical to Paul’s description in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. Notice, Gabriel said that when the papacy comes to power it will disregard the God of his fathers. In other words, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, would be disregarded by the papacy. Gabriel continued, “But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain” (Daniel 11:38, 39).

Just as prophesied in the Bible, when the papacy came to power, the “God of [their] fathers” was disregarded, and a “strange god” emerged whom their “fathers knew not.” This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter when Satan inspired the papacy to invent and adopt the Trinity doctrine in the fourth century.

Notice what God says about those who worship strange gods. “They provoked him to jealousy with *strange gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to *gods whom they knew not*, to *new gods* that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not” (Deuteronomy 32:16, 17). When people worship the strange god of the papacy, Satan gets what he so desperately desires—worship.

So we can see that the institution of the mark of the beast is a vehicle that enables Satan to receive worship. This he does by forcing people to honor a false day of worship, bringing honor to a false god (the Trinity).

A Push for Sunday Observance

Today, there is a large movement pushing for more Sunday laws. Even today, in the United States, we have many Sunday laws on the books—called blue laws. Have you ever wondered why many businesses are closed or have shorter hours of operation, on Sunday? In many cases it is not because of choice, but because laws restrict their businesses on Sunday. In most states it is illegal to buy or sell alcohol until noon on Sunday. In the state of Indiana it is illegal to buy or sell a car on Sunday. There are many other such Sunday laws in effect all over the country. *Time Magazine* reported, “In Pennsylvania it is legal to sell a bicycle on Sunday, but not a tricycle; in Massachusetts it is against the law to dredge for oysters, but not to dig for clams; in Connecticut genuine antiques may lawfully be sold, but not reproductions. The New York blue law code is particularly messy. Bars may open at 1 p.m., but baseball games may not begin until 2 p.m. It is legal to sell fruits but not vegetables, an automobile tire but not a tire jack, tobacco but not a pipe. It is unlawful to sell butter or cooked meat after 10 a.m., except that delicatessens may sell these foods between 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.” (*Time Magazine*, Friday, Oct. 25, 1963, article: “Blue Sunday,” online at: www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830508,00.htm).

The same article stated, “Every state of the Union except Alaska has some sort of never-on-Sunday law on the books. They range from prohibitions directed at a single activity—boxing in California, barbering in Oregon—to broad bans on industry and commerce” (*Ibid.*).

In 1998 Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter calling for Catholics all over the world to seek for Sunday legislation in their own countries. In this letter, he stated, “Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Dies Domini*, May 31, 1998).

Just this month the Catholic Church is calling for stronger legal restrictions to protect Sunday:

The Archbishop of Paris and President of the Bishops’ Conference of France, Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois, has criticized laws that extend the workday on Sundays, which he recalled is the Day of the Lord and an opportunity for family time.... “If the law extend the workday on Sundays, the harm to people and to society that will result will have an economic impact,” he warned....

The cardinal’s words come as the government of President Nicolas Sarkozy attempts to breathe life into the French economy by loosening restrictions on sales. Opponents of the change point to the 1906 law forbidding sales on Sundays as upholding a less spending-obsessed French way of life. (*Catholic News Agency*, Paris, Nov. 7, 2008, article: “Archbishop of Paris criticizes work on Sunday,” online at: www.catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=14274).

A few months ago Croatia passed a Sunday law that will go into effect at the beginning of 2009.

The Croatian parliament has passed a law forcing shops to close on Sundays in a concession to the Roman Catholic church. The church has campaigned for years for Sundays to be devoted to family or Mass in Croatia, which is almost 90 percent Roman Catholic. But Croatians have begun spending weekends in shopping malls that have flourished across the country in the past few years and remain open seven days a week. The law [was] adopted Tuesday and goes into effect Jan. 1. (*USA Today*, July 15, 2008, online at: www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-15-3207228841_x.htm).


Recently there has been talk of a Sunday law on President Elect, Barack Obama’s website. Michael Pearce, after praising Sunday laws of the past, wrote: “Perhaps we should consider enacting a Sunday Law” (Michael Pearce’s Blog, “Energy Conservation and Globalized America,” June 18th, 2008, online at: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/Tritium/gG5ngR/commentary>).

All Sunday laws are religious laws, and are in direct violation of the First Amendment to our Constitution which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

According to the Bible, Sunday is one of the “six working days” (Ezekiel 46:1). God said, “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:9). Honoring one day of the week above another is strictly religious in nature, directly relating to our worship of God. There can be no other reason for honoring a day of the week than that of worship. Seeing that Sunday observance can only relate to worship, the government has no right to regulate what I may or may not do on Sunday, if it is lawful any other day of the week. Yet, this is precisely what the government sought to do in the time of Constantine (The Roman Emperor, Constantine, passed the first Sunday law in 321 AD) and it was used to persecute God’s people, and it is what the so-called “Christian Coalition” is seeking to do again.

The mark of the beast crisis will revolve around worship and the government legislation of worship. It is certain that the governments of this world will pass a universal law regarding worship. They will most likely follow the example of Constantine and enforce religious observance of Sunday.

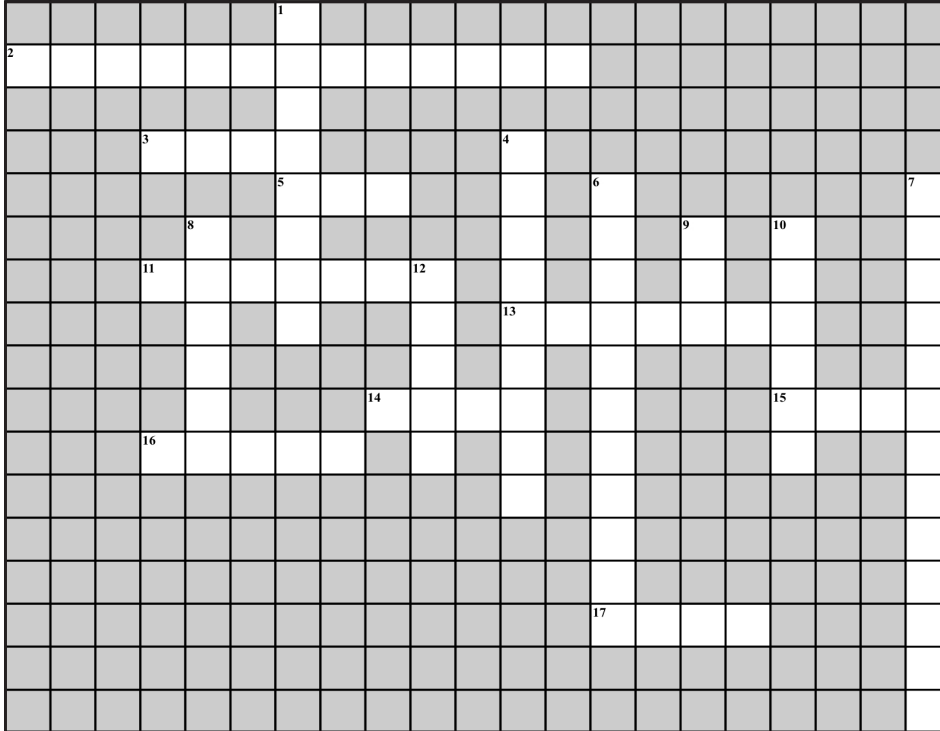
Please do not get me wrong, those who have ignorantly, or even knowingly, kept the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath have not yet received the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be mandated by the government. Until that happens, nobody could receive the mark of the beast.

I pray that none of you reading this paper will receive the mark of the beast. Obey God’s commandments, “worship Him in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), and you will not receive the mark of the beast. You will go through difficulties and “shall be hated of all men... but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). 

Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are beginning a series of crossword Bible studies based on a Bible Lesson written by Lynnford Beachy, entitled, "God's Love on Trial," based on the book by the same title. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line.

Eve in the Garden of Eden (Lesson 2)



Answers will be printed on the last page of next month's issue

➤ In the Garden of Eden Satan disguised himself as a _____. Genesis 3:1—**13 Across**

➤ Adam and Eve were not to eat the fruit lest they _____. Genesis 3:3—**9 Down**

Note: At this point, Eve innocently and completely believed that God loved her with all His heart. She had every reason to trust that God was looking out for her best interests in withholding the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from her. God had told her not to eat the fruit of that tree because if she did it would have a very negative effect upon her; she would die. Eve understood that the fruit was harmful to her and, therefore, she believed that God was good and loving to withhold it from her.

➤ Satan said, "Ye shall _____ surely die." Genesis 3:4—**5 Across**

➤ Satan promised Eve that eating the fruit would cause her _____ to be opened. Genesis 3:5—**15 Across**

Note: Please notice the intention behind Satan's lie. He was not merely contradicting God's Word, by stating that Eve would not die, but his real intention was to give Eve a distorted picture of God's character of love. Satan knew that as long as Eve understood the fruit of the tree to be bad for her, she would look upon God as good for withholding it from her. So Satan tricked Eve into thinking that the fruit of the tree was actually good for her, which would mean that God was bad for withholding it from her. This is what Satan wanted. He wanted Eve to look upon God in the same way that he did, as a Person who is unjust, unfair, unkind and unloving. This was the real intention behind Satan's first lie to mankind.

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➤ Eve began to look at the fruit as something _____ for food. Genesis 3:6—**17 Across**

Note: It was a disbelief in God's love that started Satan on his downward path. It was a disbelief in God's love that

convinced Eve to sin. It is a disbelief in God's love that keeps us in sin today. It is only through a revelation of God's infinite love, and our appreciation of it, that we can be brought back to God in a loving relationship surpassing any we have yet had.

➤ Jesus came to give us an _____ that we may know God. 1 John 5:20—**7 Down**

➤ Jesus came to declare His _____. John 1:18—**10 Down**

Note: God's character of love has been at the heart of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It has been Satan's goal to deceive men concerning the true character of God's love. Jesus is working to reveal God's love to the world. It is only through receiving a true picture of God's love that we can ever love Him enough to fulfill the commandment to love God with all our heart, which Jesus called "the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37, 38).

➤ As we approach the end of time the love of many waxes _____. Matthew 24:12—**3 Across**

➤ In the last days people will love _____ more than God. 2 Timothy 3:4—**4 Down**

➤ The _____ will be preached in all the world before the end comes. Matthew 24:14—**8 Down**

Note: The word "gospel" means "good news."

➤ Paul said the gospel is the _____ of God. Romans 1:16—**12 Down**

➤ The gospel is so powerful because it reveals God's _____. Romans 1:17—**2 Across**

➤ God's _____ leads you to repentance. Romans 2:4—**1 Down**

➤ The first of three angels had the _____ gospel to preach to the world. Revelation 14:6—**6 Down**

➤ This message calls us to _____ God. Revelation 14:7—**14 Across**

➤ Give _____ to Him. Revelation 14:7—**16 Across**

➤ And _____ Him. Revelation 14:7—**11 Across**

Closing Thought: We can see that the first angel's message is calling people

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to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God of heaven. This message is designed to reveal the goodness and love of God. It is calling people to know God's identity and His character of love, which will enable them to love God with all their hearts and gain the victory over the mark of the beast.

The Most Important Trial of All Time. Satan has called into question God's love. He has put God's love on trial, and you are a member of the jury. It is up to you to decide who is right in this controversy. The trial has come to you for a decision. Your decision will have everlasting consequences because it will determine how you relate to God, the depth of your love for Him, your obedience to His commandments and, ultimately, your eligibility to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Will you be one of those over whom God triumphantly proclaims, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"? (Revelation 14:12) Will you be one of the blessed ones who "do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"? (Revelation 22:14) If you are going to be in that number, you will need to make the right decision in this great trial that all of us have been plunged into. You will need to examine the evidence for yourself, and come to appreciate God as He is revealed in His Word and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Only then will it be rightly said of you that you are a "true worshiper." (John 4:23)

Answers to Last Month's Crossword Puzzle



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