

This composite beast of Revelation 13 receives his power from the dragon.

4. What clear instruction did God give His people about life after death?
(*Ecclesiastes 9:5*)

The Bible teaching on death could not be any clearer. The doctrine of the immortal soul is not in the Bible.

5. Who is this dragon? (*Revelation 12:9*)

God's Word tells us that the dragon is the devil or Satan. He is behind the apostate religious system called the beast power. Just as God works through His church, the devil works through fallen religious institutions that have rejected God's law. Working through pagan Rome, the devil tried to destroy Christ. Revelation 12:4–5 says this "dragon," the devil, attempted to destroy "as soon as it was born" the "male Child" who was later "caught up to God and to His throne."

Pagan Rome is the beast that received its power from the dragon. Revelation 13:2 says that the "dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority." This prophecy was precisely fulfilled when Constantine moved his capital from Rome to Constantinople, leaving a power vacuum in Rome. Careful scholars throughout history have identified Rome as the citadel of the beast power.

The beast is not a person; it is a religious organization that has substituted the truth of God's Word for human tradition.

6. How extensive would the power of the Roman church become?
(*Revelation 13:3–4*)

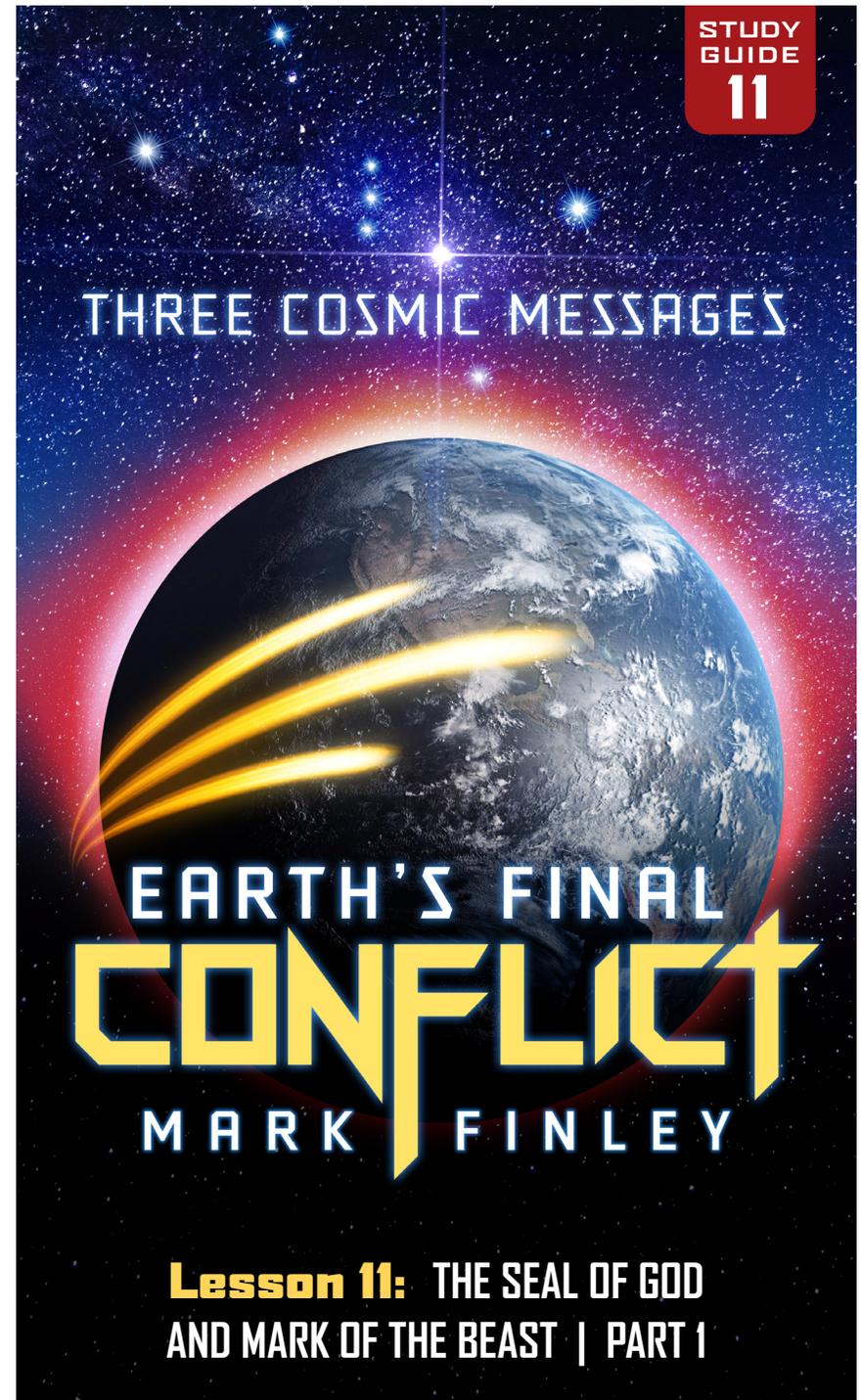
The beast of Revelation 13 and 14 is an apostate religious power that rises out of Rome and becomes a worldwide system of worship.

Millennia ago, a created being—an angel of dazzling brightness—challenged the government of God in heaven. Love was the motivating force behind God's kingdom. God gave each of His creatures free will, whereas the beast uses force and coercion and at times bribes and rewards. This age-long drama—this cosmic conflict—will one day come to its conclusion. Rather than worshipping the beast, God's people find their greatest joy and highest delight in worshipping Him. They are committed to Him because they know how committed He is to them.



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THERE IS A RELATIVELY NEW BIOMETRIC IDENTIFICATION DEVICE CALLED A VERICHIP. It's a biochip the size of a grain of rice that is implanted beneath the skin in an outpatient procedure. It shares a patient's medical history by passing an external scanner across the area of skin where the VeriChip has been inserted. Some regard this technology as a conspiracy to enforce the mark of the beast. Others believe the mark of the beast has to do with bar codes or a mysterious number that supposedly adds up to 666 on dollar bills. Others believe it has to do with the Masonic order, the Illuminati, black helicopters, and the United Nations.

More Than Strange Symbols

The message of the Book of Revelation is much more than cryptic symbols, strange beasts, odd images, bar codes, and mysterious biochips. It speaks of eternal truths written by a loving God to an end-time generation. The conflict between Christ and Satan, begun in heaven over worship, will come to its final climax over worship.

1. What do the following two verses tell us about true and false worship?

a. **Revelation 14:7** _____

b. **Revelation 14:9** _____

Heaven appeals to us to give our supreme allegiance and heartfelt worship to the Creator in light of heaven's cosmic judgment. Worshiping the Creator stands in direct opposition to worshiping the beast. It finds its expression in keeping the commandments of God. Revelation 14:12 summarizes the issues this way, "Here is the patience [endurance] of the saints [believers]; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." God will have an end-time people who are loyal to Him in the face of the greatest opposition and fiercest persecution in history. At the heart of this great controversy between good and evil is worship and the Sabbath.

These committed followers of the Savior not only have faith *in* Jesus, but they also have the faith *of* Jesus. Hanging on the cross, the Savior trusted even when He could not discern the future. He trusted His Father's love when circumstances called for doubt. The faith of Jesus is so deep that it trusts when it cannot see, believes when it cannot understand, hopes when it cannot comprehend, and hangs on when there is little to hang on to. It is itself a gift from the Father.

A Cosmic Struggle

The overarching theme of Revelation is this cosmic conflict and Christ's triumph over the principalities and powers of hell with a central focus on worshiping the Creator.

2. What is the basis of all true worship? (Revelation 4:12)

Throughout Revelation, worship and creation are indissolubly linked. Revelation 14:7 calls us to worship the Lord of all creation. Against the backdrop of evolutionary theory, the Sabbath is an eternal reminder of our identity. It constantly reinforces the idea that we are created beings and that our Creator is worthy of our allegiance and worship. This is one reason why the devil hates the Sabbath so much.

Trouble Ahead!

The mark of the beast prophecy in Revelation 13 reveals the absolute fever pitch of Satan's war against God. Ever since Jesus died on the cross, the enemy knows that he has been defeated, but he is determined to take down as many with him as possible. His first strategy is deception. When deception does not work, he resorts to force. He is behind a decree stating that anyone who refuses to worship the beast or receive his mark will suffer the consequences.

Jesus warned that "the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2; see also Matthew 10:22 and 1 Peter 4:12). Persecution was common in papal Rome, especially during the dark ages.

Like the persecutions in the past, the mark of the beast is designed to force all to conform to a certain set of beliefs and an approved system of worship. The prophecy says the persecution will involve economic sanctions; "no one may buy or sell" unless they have "the mark" (Revelation 13:17). Anyone who refuses to receive the mark will eventually be placed under a death decree (see Revelation 13:15). The devil is preparing even professed Christians, through compromise, to receive the mark of the beast.

A Message of Encouragement

This prophecy is not intended to terrify us but rather to encourage us. When the persecution is at its maximum point—when it appears that the whole world is following the beast (see Revelation 13:3)—suddenly the scene changes, and the prophetic camera focuses on God's people. "[H]ere are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

By God's grace, His people stand firm when all around them everything is shaking. While the world is following the beast in wonder and admiration, they "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Revelation 14:4).

Who Is the Beast, and What Is the Mark of the Beast?

As we come to understand the beast and his mark, we come to better understand the opposite sign, the seal of God. Revelation gives us identifying clues as to the beast's identity.

3. Describe the beast that John saw rising out of the sea. (Revelation 13:1)
