

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

★★★★★★



Corresponds to Programs 57, 58

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NKJV and KJV.

UNMASKING THE MARK OF THE BEAST - 1 & 2 STUDY GUIDE

UNMASKING THE MARK OF THE BEAST – PART 1

In this study we are going to be taking a closer look at the balance between church and state. The Bible tells us that we should obey the state or civil government, yet how does that relate to freedom of conscience and religious liberty for all people, especially those who may believe differently or may not believe at all?

Romans 13:1-9

With the historical context being that of Imperial Rome, the Bible directs us here to be supportive of civil government. The reason given is that the ruling governmental powers are ordained of God to restrain evil. The context also indicates that we can and should be supportive of every commandment that relates to how we treat our fellow human beings. This Holy Spirit-inspired insight helps us to navigate church-state separation. First, we see the authority of civil government established (Romans 13:1-5). Then follows an explanation of church-state separation similar to that which Christ had established when He said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

This text in Romans says, “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:7).

These Bible injunctions establish beyond a doubt that the civil government possesses an authority that every Christian has a duty to recognize. In this we have obligations to fulfill, duties to meet, payments to make, reverence to bestow. Not

just on a civil or national level, but also on a local level to those who “bear the sword” or enforce the laws of society. The Romans text goes one step further in revealing some of the specific obligations that we have toward our country and neighbors as law-abiding citizens (Romans 13:8, 9).

Here also, the Bible speaks of our duty to mankind. Under the inspiration of God and in the context of rendering to Caesar those things which are Caesar’s, it directs our attention to the last six commandments of the ten-commandment

law of God. It is important to note that the text in Romans 13 never mentions the first four commandments, which pertain to our worship of God. It only mentions those commandments that pertain to how we treat our fellow man.

The Bible clearly teaches that there are ten commandments, not six. It is significant that this text, regarding our duty to earthly governments, omits the other four commandments in the law of God. These missing four are not comprehended in our duty to love our neighbor as ourselves, but in loving the Lord God with all our heart, soul, and mind. (Matthew 22:37.) So why did God purposely omit any mention of the first four

of the ten commandments when describing our duty to obey earthly governments?

Only one reason can be given: the first four commandments speak of our duty to God and not to man. Romans 13 is speaking of our duty towards civil government. These obligations cannot and must not be merged with the duty we owe directly to God. Government can only regulate our relationships to fellow citizens and to the government itself. The Bible teaches that the civil powers are ordained of God, to be



“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast...” **REVELATION 13:15**

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 17:15 THE WATERS ARE PEOPLES

Daniel 7:19 FOURTH BEAST WAS DIFFERENT

Revelation 13:11 BEAST SPOKE LIKE A DRAGON

Revelation 13:14 HE DECEIVES THOSE ON EARTH

obeyed in their laws pertaining to our fellow man, but not in our worship of God. As such, these are the duties that fall under the last six commandments, as well as any other commandments that pertain to loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Any country or society that uses law to force the conscience in religious worship not only lacks any Biblical support, but places itself in a position to receive the severest judgment ever pronounced by Almighty God. If a religio-political power places itself in Christ's stead, in judgement over men and women regarding their religious convictions, that system becomes anti-Christ. ("anti" meaning "against" or "in the place of") It works against Christ, who alone is able to draw all men unto Him. In turn, they incorporate coercion, which is in character so offensive to God that He pronounced an everlasting punishment against all who propagate and support it (Revelation 14:9-11).

Romans 13:10-14

Romans 13 closes with a directive to put on the armor of light so that we can reveal God's character and love in all situations, especially in this context of obeying earthly powers. The way we relate to government when it's fulfilling its God-ordained role, and even when it does not, is determined by our "putting on" of Jesus Christ (verse 14). Believers are called to live in this world while not living like this world. In order to do that, we need to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:12-18).

Revelation 13:3, 4, 12, 15

There is in these verses one word that jumps out again and again, and that word is "worship." The central issue of the mark of the beast is worship. There are two earthly powers that are directing the worship to earthly governments instead of the Creator God. The Bible has just shown us a clear distinction between the obedience we owe to earthly kingdoms and that which we owe to God alone (Romans 13:1-9). Worship is not part of the last six commandments, nor is it included in "loving our neighbor as ourselves." Clearly, we can as believers be involved in and support government when it comes to any law that supports this principle from a Biblical perspective. However, once we move into the first four commandments that belong solely to our relationship with God, earthly governments have no jurisdiction.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST – PART 2

Revelation 14:6-10

Here in Revelation 14, we have a call to worship the God who made the heavens and earth and the seas and the fountains of water. This is part of the "everlasting Gospel." This gospel call counteracts the push in Revelation 13 to worship earthly powers. In the context of Revelation chapters 13 and 14, we have two distinct calls to worship: one call is to worship according to the dictates of the two earthly powers; the other call is to worship God as the Creator of heaven and earth.

God gives us a warning against worshiping earthly powers and thereby receiving their mark, the "mark of the beast" (remember that a "beast" in Bible prophecy simply means an earthly kingdom or power. See Daniel 7:17, 23).

Revelation 14:12

As we reach the end of the messages of warnings given by the three angels, we are directed to an end-time people who keep the commandments of God. This is, in fact, a powerful confirmation that the entire issue of the mark of the beast is the issue of worship. The commandments of God include the fourth commandment call to worship the Creator God who "made heaven and earth" (Exodus 20:8-11). This quotation from the fourth commandment lines up perfectly with the three angels' message to "worship Him that made heaven and earth" (Revelation 14:7).

As we see in Revelation 13 and 14, we have two distinct calls to worship, and today we have two distinct days of Christian worship. Millions of Christians who worship God on one day, do not worship Him on the other. These two very different days are the first day of the week (Sunday) and the last day of the week (Saturday). Those who worship on Saturday do so because they have discovered that the seventh day, as outlined in the Bible, is set aside by God, blessed and sanctified for worship, and kept by their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27, 28). The true Sabbath of the Bible was attempted to be changed by earthly powers (symbolized as "beasts") who will set up laws to enforce worship and rest from all work on the day they deemed to be holy, that is, Sunday. This call to worship, this distinction between these two groups, becomes the centerpiece of this "mark of the beast" controversy in Revelation 13 and 14.

COUNTERFEITING THE SECOND COMING

The masterpiece of the devil's end-time deception will be to counterfeit everything that Christ has told us about His Second Coming, and the new heavens and new earth. The devil will counterfeit the Second Coming, but his feet will touch the ground (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). He will perform miracles, set up his counterfeit day of worship, and seek all nations to observe this day or not be allowed to buy or sell (Revelation 13:1, 5-17). It is vital that we prepare for the counterfeit by studying the genuine. Like the wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-10 we need to trim our lamps and prepare extra oil. Trimming lamps symbolizes studying the Bible, and the oil symbolizes being sealed into the truth by the Holy Spirit. The anointing oil of the Holy Spirit teaches us all things so that we do not need to rely upon the teachings of men (Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 1:13; 1 John 2:20, 27; John 16:13, 14).

Summary

The Bible lays out a clear distinction between our obligations to earthly government and our fellow man in Romans 13 and

our heavenly Father as seen in the first four commandments. In Romans 13, the Bible deliberately leaves out any reference to the first four commandments when it comes to the duty that we owe earthly powers. Building on this, we discovered that the issue in the final crisis of the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13 and 14 centers around worship. Two distinct calls are made: worship earthly powers or worship the Living God. The two calls lead us to note the two distinct days where all Christians observe the worship of God, either Sunday—the first day of the week, or Saturday—the seventh day

of the week. Finally, we considered that those who worship on Saturday do so because the Bible establishes this day as the day that God set apart, blessed, and sanctified from the creation of the world. It is the Lord’s day, the day established and kept by our Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 20:10; Mark 2:28). Thus, the call to worship Him who made heaven and earth is a call to remember the true Sabbath day. There is still quite a bit to unpack regarding worship and the “mark of the beast.” We will continue to prayerfully study this subject that will play such a pivotal part of the last day events. ★

