

Dear Friend,

I suppose it could rightly be said that two distinct types of believers in Jesus Christ will exist just prior to His coming. According to Matthew 25, there will be those who, with increasing excitement, see His imminent appearing and those who do not. Those without vision are clinging to the rail of a perishing world, still looking for some sense of security that in reality is nowhere to be found.

I know that you are not such a person. “How do you know?” you ask. I know because you would not be receiving and reading this if you were. You are among those who care about the honor of Christ in an increasingly godless world. The promise of God to you is “vision” in the last days. Nothing will take you unawares and in spite of the increasing tumult in this world, there will be an increasing joy in your heart. As a matter of fact, this joy and expectation will so increase that you will soon be shouting, “Behold the Bridegroom! Can you see Him? Come with me to meet Him!”

What incredible joy awaits us all at the end of this part of the journey. Soon Jesus is coming for His Church. In the twinkling of an eye we shall all see Him face to face. Maybe today! Maybe tomorrow! All I know is that it is very, very soon.

Take courage, for you are in the Hand of God.

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

by Carter Conlon

“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 causes 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).

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This passage of Scripture refers to an end-time event that will cause the entire world to spiral out of control. Whether triggered by a financial meltdown or a military confrontation—whatever its cause—it will result in men’s hearts failing them and an emerging cry for a one-world government.

The Scriptures tell us that a man known as the Antichrist will arise and lead this one-world government. While at first he will appear to be a peaceful man, ultimately it will be revealed that he is indwelt by Satan himself. He will cause people to receive a mark on their forehead or their right hand in order to be permitted to buy or sell. Many Christians have spent a lot of time over the years worrying about this mark. However, there is no need to be worried—and you will understand why by the end of this message.

■ BACK TO THE BEGINNING

In order to gain a better understanding of the days to come, it is necessary to go back to the beginning. Remember that Satan exalted himself against God and was subsequently deposed from his high-ranking position in heaven. Coming down into the Garden of Eden, he approached those whom God had created in His own image, Adam and Eve, and sowed in them that same seed of rebellion. This original sin remains in our fallen nature today—a desire to be our own god, living however we please without suffering any consequences.

Now regarding the number 666: Most biblical numerologists ascribe the number six to man, the number three to God, and seven to God’s perfection. When man is indwelt in his body, soul, and spirit by Satan himself, we have what we might call a 666 trinity. Satan’s rebellion will

finally reach its climax and a man physically indwelt by Satan himself will go into the temple in Israel and declare himself to be God. That was Satan's goal from the beginning.

At that point, Satan will finally have created an unholy trinity. All of humanity that agrees with the concept that man can be as God will not think twice about receiving a mark on the forehead or the hand. They will have already stood in agreement with this fallen theology long before the mark ever came.

■ THE LAST DAYS

Jesus described the last days as being just as *"the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark..."* (Matthew 24:38). Obviously eating, drinking and marriage are not bad things. However, the danger comes when there is a preoccupation with security, and pretending that all is well—convincing ourselves that there is no God, no judgment, no everlasting peril just ahead.

Even if there is some acknowledgement of God, it comes with an inner contempt. *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?"* (2 Peter 3:3–4). There is a scorning among those who walk after their own lusts and are not seeking the things of God. Their minds are not fixed on the things of heaven, and their hands are not reaching out to do the work of God. Therefore scoffing enters their hearts and they ask, *"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"* (2 Peter 3:4). The same type of person sits here today and says, "Oh, no! Not another message about the coming of Christ. They have been preaching that for 2,000 years." However, we

must realize that the conclusion of the world as we know it is indeed very close, and there are multitudes in a place of decision. "How deep am I going to go with God? How much am I going to let Him rule my life? How willing am I to let His plan become the plan of my life?"

Paul also said, *"That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In order to fall away, you must have been somewhere to fall away from. I believe this will be a falling away of people who sat in church but never really embraced the work of God. They didn't want to go to hell, but they didn't want to live for heaven, either. They wanted the cross for redemption but did not want the cross for a lifestyle. However, that type of experience will not keep them when the storm hits.

■ WHEN DO YOU WANT YOUR INHERITANCE?

Esau, son of Isaac, had access to the promise God gave to Abraham—the promise that he would be blessed to be a blessing in the earth—and we, as Abraham's spiritual descendants, have that same promise. One day Esau returned from hunting, tired and hungry, and asked his twin brother Jacob for some of the stew Jacob was cooking. Esau, the older of the two, had the right to a double portion of his father's inheritance, but he put his temporary, physical needs over his God-given blessing and sold his birthright to Jacob (see Genesis 25:27–34). It is almost inconceivable that he traded his birthright for a bowl of stew, choosing the temporal over the eternal.

Why will people fall away in the last days? Because even though they have been part of the family, they have never internally embraced what that meant, saying, "God, You promised me life; You promised to make me much more than I could ever be in myself. You promised to lead me on

a path of righteousness as a testimony to many, and then into eternity where I will rule and reign with You."

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The Lord has given us great and precious promises, yet we may not see the fulfillment of all of them on this side of eternity. Esau, however, like the prodigal son, insisted, "I want my inheritance now! I don't want to wait until this physical life is over. I want satisfaction now; I want to be wealthy now; I want to rule now!" So he sold off what was of eternal worth and headed in the wrong direction. *"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things"* (Philippians 3:18–19). Just as Paul said, many live every day focused on the things of this world.

Picture, for example, somebody inside the first-class passenger liner Titanic after it hit the iceberg. Everyone had fled the ship or was in the process of trying to flee. One poor, hapless soul was down on the second deck examining the cabins, excited about all that he saw. "Wow! Look at this—gold faucets!" Oh, the insanity of seeking comfort and security in a ship that is going down to the bottom of the ocean. Yet it is the same for Christians who are looking for fulfillment in the things of this world. Of course, I am not

suggesting that you can't enjoy a walk in the park on a sunny day, or that we ought to walk around mournful all the time. Rather, it is our identity—who we are and what we are becoming—that should not be in the things of this world but in the things of God.

The Lord said, *“And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste...”* (Malachi 1:3). Perhaps Esau professed, “Yes, Abraham is my grandfather and the promise is mine!” Yet God said that He hated the testimony and image of God that this man portrayed in the earth—this self-focused, carnal man who claimed to be in the lineage of God. You can say that the mark was on him because he owned neither the presence nor the promise of God.

■ THE FIRST MARKED MAN

The Bible tells us in Genesis 4:15 that the first marked man in the Bible was Cain, a man who willfully brought to God less than what He required of him. I cannot help but plead for people today who are willfully bringing to God less than He requires. There are things that they know God is asking of them, but they are not willing to obey. They are looking to be god of their own lives and somehow circumvent God's will and God's Word. They are trying to justify practices, relationships—trying to make what is wrong right.

God put a mark on Cain, and he became an unsatisfied wanderer. In a sense he was relegated to a life of endless searching without ever finding that which satisfies. I cannot help but wonder why Christians run all over the world looking for Jesus, a practice that seems to have become more pronounced in the last two decades. Suddenly there is a new manifestation somewhere in the world and they are on the next flight over. Is it possible that there is a mark there? Is it possible that

they are not bringing to God what He requires? Subsequently, since there is nothing where they are—no living relationship, no prayer life, no revelation—they must wander the world searching for satisfaction.

Jesus Himself said, **“If they say he is over here, he is in the desert, don't go there, don't believe it”** (Matthew 24:26, paraphrase). The Lord is everywhere—omnipresent. He is in the text of Scripture and if you are a believer, He is inside of you. You don't have to look very far for Him. He is right here!

As you begin to do the work of God, the prophet Isaiah said you will ask, “Lord, where are You?” You will hear an inner voice saying, *“Here I am. What is it that you want Me to do? For we are walking in unison; you are walking in step with Me”* (see Isaiah 58:9).

***Beloved,
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■ WHOSE MARK WILL YOU HAVE?

“And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite:

let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary” (Ezekiel 9:3–6).

God was about to judge His own city, Jerusalem—suddenly! However, the people were caught unaware—many had chosen to put off that day; most never believed. “It's not possible that God would ever judge us—His own temple. Consider the history here; the prayers that have been prayed here. No, surely God would never do this!” But when we start to believe that, we have substituted our own thoughts for the Word of God.

However, the Lord had a man who was instructed, *“Go and set a mark upon the foreheads.”* (Remember, the mark in Revelation was on the foreheads or right hands of the people.) In other words, set a mark upon those whose value system is in line with God's; set a mark upon those who feel what God feels, who are walking in a way that Christ Himself would walk if He were on these streets. Set a mark upon those whose value system is not so intertwined with this world that they don't understand the day in which we are living. Rather, they are aware of the peril ahead; they are concerned about the plight of the eternity of those who are vomiting in the streets in the evening.

Beloved, if there is a sighing in your heart, you can be thankful for that. It is not that you are morose, but rather there is an inner awareness that you do not belong here—this is not your home, your satisfaction is not here. God has set a mark on you!

Imagine the scenario for a moment: Satan sends a demonic horde into the world and says, “Go down and convince these people they should receive a mark.” I can see this devil coming back to his captain, saying,

“Well, I went down and tried to place a mark on this person, but there was no place to put it. There was already a covering there, and it took up the whole space! There wasn’t even a corner where I could put a mark.” Satan replies, “Well, why didn’t you write over the top of it?” He explains, “Because when I tried to do that, your pen wouldn’t write there!”

The prophet Joel said that even though all of this darkness may come upon the earth, the Lord will be the help of His people (see Joel 3:16). You may hear a lot about the mark of the beast in our generation, but I want to remind you that you don’t have to worry about any of these things. You are already marked—the space is taken and nothing else can be put there!

*Always
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Always remember that God knows those who are His. He has set a mark on them, and they are sealed in His hand. I don’t know about you, but that settles it for me! Let hell throw what it may; let the devil send a flood out of his mouth; let society get as confused as it wants to get. But those who belong to Christ are sealed in the hand of Almighty God, and nothing—no flood, no fire, no army, no demonic power, no poverty, no trial—can take them out of His hand!

“*For I know whom I have believed...*” (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul was saying, “I am intimately acquainted with

Him—I know Him.” I encourage you to continue spending quality time in the Word, meditating on the promises of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to make them so real that you can stand and say, “I know in Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep everything I have put into His hand until that day I am home with Him. God has set His mark on me, and I am persuaded that nothing that comes against me is going to stop His work in my life!” Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

| | | | |
|----------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Sunday | 10:00AM | 3:00PM | 6:00PM |
| Tuesday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |
| Thursday | 7:00PM | Prayer Meeting | |
| Friday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |

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