

14. The Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:11-18

The Book of Revelation

YouTube Video link: <https://youtu.be/DuDeqQXkObk>

In our previous study, we looked at the rapid rise of a political and military dictator, the Antichrist. However, Satan's most destructive attack on humanity will come about when two evil forces unite: the Antichrist (portrayed as the beast rising from the sea, 13:1) and the False Prophet (the beast rising from the Earth, Revelation 13:11; 16:13; 19:20). These two will work together to deceive and conquer humanity. This unholy trinity comprised of the Dragon (Satan), the Antichrist, and the False Prophet will be Satan's final attempt to deceive the world as he will disguise himself as an angel of light to gain trust and devotion from the masses and deceive many into worshipping him. He will appear as a hero, offering false hope to a weary world. Let's now talk about the Antichrist's partner, the False Prophet:

The Beast out of the Earth

¹¹Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the Earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. ¹²It exercised all the authority of the first Beast on its behalf, and made the Earth and its inhabitants worship the first Beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. ¹³And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the Earth in full view of the people. ¹⁴Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first Beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the Earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the Beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived (Revelation 13:11-14).

This False Prophet will be a religious leader who will perform deceptive miraculous signs and wonders by the power of Satan and force people to worship the Antichrist. He will do two things that will cause true Christians (saints) to rebel against the authority of these two men:

1) He will set up an image, perhaps a hologram of the Antichrist, that speaks and demands worship (v. 15), threatening death to those who refuse (Revelation 13:14-15). The Holy Scriptures do not tell us where this image is set up, but the false prophet will likely set it up in Jerusalem. These verses in Revelation tie in with Jesus' warning to the saints that “when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then...there will be great distress” (Matthew 24:15, also v.21). (The KJV uses the word *tribulation*, and the NIV uses the word *distress*). 2 Thessalonians 2 also mentions this same time, when Paul the Apostle said that the Antichrist would “exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

2) He will force everyone to comply with his demand to worship an image of the Antichrist and Satan and to take a mark signifying allegiance to their regime. Over hundreds of years, much speculation has been made concerning what the Mark of the Beast will be. However, we are now living in a day when a literal mark could be distributed worldwide through technology.

The Mark of the Beast

¹⁵The second Beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first Beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. ¹⁶It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the Mark, which is the name of the Beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666 (Revelation 13:15-18).

In the original text of the Scriptures, the Hebrew and Greek letters of the alphabet are associated with numbers, similar to the Latin Alphabet where V is five, X is 10, L is 50, and C is 100. One is able to take the name of a person suspected to be the Antichrist, translate his name into Greek or Hebrew, and calculate if his name comes to 666. There is much research that can be made into names and numbers, but it is beyond our scope in this study. Our focus is more on what the Mark will be.

There has never been a time in history when the whole world was ever in a situation where nothing could be bought or sold without using cash. With the use of credit cards and bank accounts with computers, we are in a time when buying and selling can be facilitated entirely without paper money. Just about everything you buy in the stores now has an RFID tag (Radio Frequency Identification) that records and tracks every bit of information about the product from production to the home. This small tag is on the wrapping or printed on the product. The information on each tiny chip, some as small as the period at the end of a sentence on this page, has a little antenna read by electromagnetic energy beamed to it from a reader device.

Different from barcode technology, the reader device allows the item to be remotely identified, as each RFID chip has a unique number. All buying and selling will be digital, with each product bought linked to people, their I.D., home address, telephone number, etc. Everything about them will go to a central data storage hub, and their buying habits will be tracked.

The second way an RFID code is different from a barcode is that these chips can be read from a distance, right through your clothes, wallet, backpack, or purse, without your knowledge or consent, by anybody with the correct reader device. In a way, it gives strangers the ability to spy on you, i.e., to identify both you and the things you're wearing and carrying. Imagine walking through a doorway and having a hidden reader device identify the books in your briefcase and the brand of your underwear. Not only will everything have its own unique number on the chip, but plans are nearly complete for every person to have a chip embedded under the skin that can be read at the point of sale. Below is a YouTube video link to a commercial that illustrates how a chip like this will work.

Fujitsu's Store of the Future

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdML1IEw3tI&feature=youtu.be>

The commercial above shows how RFID is changing shopping. Cash is slowly being phased out, and mobile phones are increasingly being used to transfer money to the grocery store. This stage

of the plan will be followed by everyone having a chip in their hand passed over a reader device, bank details read, and digital money transferred.

This idea sounds terrific to some because if a person is suspected of being a terrorist, their every move and everything they buy can be tracked. There will come a time when, if a person does not have a chip embedded in his skin in the future, he will not be allowed to buy or sell. Not having the chip could also affect the freedom to travel or to receive medical care. IBM has even developed a device named the "person tracking unit" that can zero in on your RFID-tagged products and watch you like a hawk. Many people today who understand this technology are warning of the loss of privacy and freedom at our doorstep.

In some countries that are early adopters, reader devices are being placed on major roads, tracking the RFID tag on every car produced. Some major highways in Chicago, Miami, and other cities already have reader devices that take money out of your bank account when you go through a place on the toll road. There are good reasons that this technology will be valuable and helpful. Many people will welcome a personal chip embedded in their skin, especially when it comes to people stealing someone else's identification data.

With terrorism a significant concern, some will argue that having such a chip mandatory for everyone would be in the majority's best interest, claiming that it is for the safety or the common good of the people, thus making it worth sacrificing privacy and freedom. Think of the military advantages. If a fighter pilot were shot down over enemy territory, his location could be seen on a map *via* a satellite-tracking unit and rescued quickly. Think of the benefits for clothing stores: security chips can be attached to products, and clothing items cannot be stolen due to the product's RFID being read by a reader device setting off an alarm near an exit. Artificial Intelligence all over Earth will track everyone with a chip embedded in their person. There will come a time when nothing will be bought or sold except that it has the stamp of ownership on it to Antichrist's world kingdom. Taking the Mark of the Beast will be equal to selling your soul to the Antichrist. There will be a commitment along with the Mark to worship Antichrist's image:

If anyone worships the Beast and his image **and receives his Mark on the forehead or on the hand,** he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb (Revelation 14:9-10).

We live in a world that is changing fast, and not always for the better. Jesus said, "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). We live at a time when we need to be intimately acquainted with Christ, practice our obedience to His voice, and walk by faith.

How are we tempted to compromise our faith in our culture, and how can we help ourselves remain true to our faith? How does the power of community strengthen our faith in such times?

The Advance of Technology

Talking about how many technological inventions have been created, Charles H. Duell, the director of the U.S. Patent Office, was once quoted as saying, "Everything that can be invented has been invented."¹ Can you believe he said that in the year 1899? Then, there was Robert Milliken, Nobel Prize winner in physics, who said in 1923, "There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom."² Another was Lord Kelvin, president of England's Royal Society (a scientific organization); he noted in 1885, "Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."³

The speed of technological change in the last days is something that was spoken about 2,500 years ago by the prophet Daniel:

³And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. ⁴But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, **and knowledge shall be increased** (Daniel 12:3-4 KJV).

The Approaching Singularity

Some time ago, I came across an article in *Time* magazine about the coming Singularity. Some of you may not be familiar with the term *Singularity* as it relates to technology, so let me explain. Lev Grossman, the person who wrote the article, was sharing the thoughts of Ray Kurzweil, a computer scientist, inventor, futurist, and also director of engineering at Google. Kurzweil wrote a book called *The Singularity is Near*. I quote from Lev Grossman's *Time* article:

Kurzweil believes that we're approaching a moment when computers will become intelligent, and not just smart but more intelligent than humans. When that happens, humanity — our bodies, minds, and civilization — will be completely and irreversibly transformed. He believes that this moment is not only inevitable but also imminent. According to his calculations, the end of human civilization as we know it is about 35 years away. Computers are getting faster. Everybody knows that. Also, computers are getting faster —*faster* — that is, the rate at which they're getting faster is increasing. True? True.

So if computers are getting so much faster, so incredibly fast, there might conceivably come a moment when they are capable of something comparable to human intelligence, artificial intelligence, or what is known as *artilect*. All that horsepower could be put in the service of emulating whatever it is our brains are doing when they create consciousness — not just doing arithmetic very quickly or composing piano music but also driving cars, writing books, making ethical decisions, appreciating fancy paintings, making witty observations at cocktail parties.

If you can swallow that idea, and Kurzweil and many other brilliant people can, then all bets are off. From that point on, there's no reason to think computers would stop getting more powerful. They would keep on developing until they were far more intelligent than we are. Their development rate would also continue to increase because they would take

¹ <https://patentlyo.com/patent/2011/01/tracing-the-quote-everything-that-can-be-invented-has-been-invented.html>

² <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/quote-sept-23-2010-robert-millikan-nobel-laureate-physics-1923>

³ <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn13556-10-impossibilities-conquered-by-science/>

over their own development from their slower-thinking human creators. Imagine a computer scientist that was itself a super-intelligent computer. It would work incredibly quickly. It could draw on vast amounts of data effortlessly. It wouldn't even take breaks to play online games.

It's impossible to predict the behavior of this smarter-than-human intelligence with which we might one day share the Earth because if you could, you'd be as smart as they would be. But there are a lot of theories about it. Maybe we'll merge with them to become super-intelligent cyborgs, using computers to extend our intellectual abilities the same way that cars and planes extend our physical capabilities. Maybe Artificial Intelligence will help us treat the effects of old age and prolong our life spans indefinitely. Some may even scan their consciousnesses into computers and live inside them as software, forever, virtually. Maybe the computers will turn on humanity and annihilate us. The one thing all these theories have in common is the transformation of our species into something that is no longer recognizable as such to humanity circa 2011. This transformation has a name: The Singularity.

When you talk about the Singularity, even though it sounds like science fiction, it isn't—no more than a weather forecast is science fiction. It's not a fringe idea; it's a serious hypothesis about the future of life on Earth.⁴

Now, by quoting a magazine article such as this, I am not in any way saying that I would agree with or support such ideas. Frankly, the view of a new and "improved" humanity ("humanity 2.0"), as some people refer to it, makes me shudder. However, we should be aware of what some people are proposing and working towards. Someone who does not see or acknowledge humanity's spiritual component may view our species' transformation only as a positive thing. The idea presents many ethical and moral dilemmas, which are being voiced by church leaders and even those in the scientific community who have ethical misgivings about such advances. You may think, "God will never let it happen." I am not sure how far it will be allowed to proceed; however, there are many things about which we could say the same thing if we were to be able to go back in time and view our present world from a worldview lens, of say, just a mere 200 years ago.

In June 2024, Pope Francis became the first leader of the Catholic Church to address the group G7 Summit, where he spoke about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the need for AI ethics. He warned against the tool acting autonomously, stressing that AI is and must remain a "tool" in human hands. He asked if it serves to satisfy the needs of humanity and improve the well-being and integral development of people. Or does it instead "serve to enrich and increase the already high power of the few technological giants despite the dangers to humanity? This, he said, is the basic question."

Let's hear what Elon Musk says about the future of A.I. In November 2023, in an interview with the New York Times, Musk voiced concerns over the unchecked acceleration of A.I. development, likening it to the creation of a "digital god." He talked about his concerns and even sleepless nights as he contemplated the potential dangers A.I. poses to humanity. He believes that A.I.'s potential to surpass human intelligence poses an unpredictable and potentially catastrophic risk and urges regulatory control, as most countries continue to be slow in putting deep safety controls in place

⁴ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2048299,00.html>.

with legislative teeth.”

How could the development of invasive and tracking technology affect people's free will, personal freedom, and faith?

Ray Kurzweil, in his book *The Singularity is Near*, says:

The impending Singularity in our future is a period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed...The key idea underlying the impending Singularity is that the rate of change of human-created technology is accelerating, and its powers are expanding at an exponential pace. Exponential growth is deceptive. It starts almost imperceptibly and then explodes with unexpected fury.⁵

Then, there are also knowledge explosions in the exploration of DNA. Begun formally in 1990 and with a budget granted that was more than that spent on getting to the moon and back, the Human Genome Project was an effort coordinated by the U.S. Department of Energy. It was projected to take fifteen years, but because of the rapid technological advances, the project was finished two years early in 2003. What is a Genome? And why is it essential to our future? A genome is the entire DNA in an organism, including its genes. Genes carry information for making all the proteins required by all organisms. These proteins determine, among other things, how the organism looks, how well its body metabolizes food or fights infection, and, sometimes, how it behaves.⁶ We can now genetically modify food and have been doing it for some time.

Along with changing structures at the genetic level and building things with nanotechnology, many other technologies are coming together. When the Singularity arrives, sometime between 2030 and 2045, we are about to enter that era when, like Tom Horn, the writer of the book *Forbidden Gates* says:

The trend toward smaller and smaller technologies will yield greater-than-human machine intelligence. That sort of super-intelligence will increase not by self-replication but by building other agents with even greater intelligence than itself, which will, in turn, make more superior agents. The result will be an "intelligence explosion" so fast and so vast that the laws and certainties we are familiar with will no longer apply. That event horizon is called the Singularity. Our version 1.0 natural bodies are frail and subject to a myriad of failure models. The Singularity will allow us to transcend these limitations...we will gain power over our fates. Our mortality will be in our own hands, and the nonbiological portion of our intelligence will be trillions of trillions of times more powerful than unaided human intelligence. We are now in the early stages of this transition.

Trans Humanism—the Future Homo Sapiens 2.0

⁵ Ray Kurzweil. *The Singularity is Near*. Penguin Books, pages 7-8.

⁶ http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/project/about.shtml.

The new field of technology that is happening right now in our lifetime is Trans-humanism. Trans-humanism is a cultural phenomenon. It is the effort to change the human species to be what some would like it to be: Homo Sapiens 2.0. It is humanity re-designing humanity, and there are many brilliant minds today working toward this end. Some consider it to be a vast improvement to our present human state with all its limitations. Again, I am not saying that I agree with this in any way. However, serious thought is being spent on this idea (and billions of dollars of money spent by governments and the private sector in various countries).

Technological Singularity brings with it the ability to combine our natural biological bodies with machines. Scientists can now merge DNA from animals to humans and human DNA to animals by mapping out DNA. DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency here in the USA, has been given billions of dollars to research the altering of soldiers' genetic code, modifying bits of DNA to fashion a new type of human. Soldiers that will be modified into Homo Sapiens 2.0 will function as a machine, killing tirelessly for days and nights on end. They will be mutations that will revolutionize the current order of battle and guarantee operational dominance across the whole range of potential U.S. military employment.⁷

How Will This Affect Us As Christians?

The fast-approaching Singularity will bring with it another terrifying development that we read of at the start of our study. Here is the passage again:

¹⁶It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the Mark, which is the name of the Beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666 (Revelation 13:16-18, Emphasis added).

I always wondered why Scripture was so emphatic about the significance of this mark of the beast and why it would be in two places, head or hand. God has seen the end from the beginning. He exists outside of time and knows the future thoroughly, and He has shared what will happen with His people in the Word of God. Whatever this Mark is, it causes a separation among the people of the Earth, those who will take part in the Antichrist's system and those who opt-out.

What is this Mark? I believe it's not just that we will align ourselves against God by taking it; indeed, we are not to worship the Antichrist or Satan, but it may be more than just a mark on the body. The mark may also affect the mind. One possibility is that the mark could be something that is implanted in the head, such as a computer chip. People may choose to have a Brain-Computer Interface chip implanted in their heads to enhance their brainpower many times over. We must be cautious about such speculations; only when the time comes will we have the understanding to know what the true Mark is. I believe there will be no doubt that taking the mark will be a departure from the faith in some way, an aligning of self to an Antichrist system. This type of technology may sound like it is far away, but only recently, a 29-year-old man named Noland Arbaugh became the first person to receive NeuroLink's brain-chip implant in January 2024. The implant was part of a clinical trial called the PRIME study, which stands for Precise Robotically Implanted Brain-

⁷ Chris Floyd. "Monsters, Inc: The Pentagon Plan to Create Mutant Super-Soldiers." CounterPunch (1/13/03).

Computer interface. **I am not saying that this is the Mark of the Beast at this point.** Noland is a quadriplegic who is a believer in God and has taken this computer chip to enhance his life. What is interesting is how this development is a first step, a milestone. Once a computer can be put into the human brain to interface with thought, the question is, where could this technology lead?

The danger seems not so much in the interface between a computer chip and the human brain as in the potential for a connection to an outside source. Could it progress at some point to a two-way system in which the brain also receives input from an outside source? Does that sound impossible?

With brain-computer interface (BCI) technology, a person could potentially access information *via* the Internet through thought alone. Advancements in technology going on even now indicate that this is just a matter of time, but it could happen in the 2020-30 timeframe. I have included a footnote to a *YouTube* link to help you understand what Elon Musk and Neuralink are doing.⁸ There is also another link to Elon Musk's plan to merge humans with Artificial Intelligence.⁹

These brain chips will allow consumers to control a host of new electronic and communication gadgets through neural commands. Developers at Toyota and the University of Utah are also working on brain transmitters, which they hope will contribute to building a global "hive mind," a "borgification" of humanity, to use a *Star Trek* analogy. What on Earth is a hive mind? It is the concept that many people share their knowledge or opinions, producing collective intelligence and uncritical conformity. Of course, there will be a Queen Bee of this hive who will shape this collective intelligence, and this writer believes that person to be the one the Bible calls the Antichrist.

If these things are possible, what will this type of advancement mean to humanity? For example, someday, the parents of a thirteen-year-old may have to face the day when their teenager comes home from school asking to become "Trans-human." The Brain-Computer Interface will enable them to access the Google data banks, the hive mind, or whatever it will be called then. If they go ahead and have the implant, their teen will instantly know any historical question, geographical question, or any question thrown at them. They will have access to artificial intelligence, perhaps accessing it wirelessly *via* the Internet with brain-interfacing chip technology.

Imagine going for a job interview and being asked if you have the Brain-Computer Interfacing technology that allows you to think thousands of times faster than others. Only those with the chip will rise to the top of the corporate ladder. Those who are not connected with the chip in this way will be left out "in the cold." They will not be part of Humanity 2.0. They will be left behind in intelligence and opportunities available to them. Life will be more challenging for anyone who chooses not to be a part of this development, which will seem advantageous at first.

However, (and whenever this happens), as I stated before, there will come along with the Mark, the command to worship. If you want to be part of the world's system, there will be a choice that people will be forced to make that will cause them to align themselves with the Anti-Christ and his world system. People will not be in any doubt at that point as to the significance of this decision if, indeed, it is connected to this idea of becoming Trans-Human. It will be evident that a person

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jOjh6lwp9w&list=FLxEG-SJj6MLEjcSt9m5NeRA&index=22>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fGYT-glICA>

will be surrendering something of their humanity. It will change what it means for us to be human. Those bringing in this system will disallow freedom of thought; after all, if people are connected wirelessly to the central hub of the hive mind, their thoughts will be able to be read and controlled. Those who take the Mark of the Beast will upload questions into a system from which they can download data, but it would also mean they opt out of all freedom to criticize. Isn't that level of control what the enemy of our souls has sought to do from the beginning?

When the serpent, a picture of Satan, tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the temptation was **"you will be like god, knowing good and evil"** (Genesis 3:5). The temptation was to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. If we are correct as to the future, there will be a data hub that will likely be a vast tree of knowledge available to all who plug into it. The desire, as some have openly stated, is to "transcend our humanity." In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, we see a prophecy that the Anti-Christ will enter the temple of God and proclaim himself as a god. He wants to achieve god status, to be "as a god." There has been a lot of talk in the scientific community and even in popular films, such as *Avatar* and *Transcendence*, and books about what it means to be human. The temptation will be to leave *Homo Sapiens* 1.0 behind:

Do you see any correlation between this passage and the idea of humanity 2.0? In what ways is this temptation similar?

Satan never gave away anything for free, and I don't think this ability to be *Homo Sapiens* 2.0 will be free. It will cost people their souls. As with many things that become available, it could be that, at first, only the elites, the rich, and those with influence will be able to afford augmentation into Humanity 2.0. Those who reject the Mark and are not connected to the Beast system will be shut out. Those who are in but refuse to "worship" any time will have their switch shut down, and they will die. The Scripture says, **"so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed (Revelation 13:15).**

Once a person is connected to it, they will be forced to worship the one who will gain control over the whole world. i.e., the Antichrist. Another thing to remember is that Scripture tells us of a time when some people on the Earth will not be able to die, even though they will want death:

In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will escape them (Revelation 9:6).

Doesn't that sound weird? I am stretching your minds here, but those who take the Mark of the Beast may have the opportunity to upload their consciousness into the hive mind or some quantum computer. At that point, they will no longer be normal human beings; they will become Trans-human or Humanity 2.0. All information about everyone that takes this upgrade to their humanity will be on this hive artelect (artificial intellect). This writer believes that this "hive intellect" will be at the disposal of the Antichrist, giving him supreme power to be like a god; thus, they who take the Mark will become his slaves and have to worship him.

When we consider all these things, it is easy to become anxious or afraid. However, Paul gives some good advice to the Thessalonians when he tells them:

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled, putting on faith and love, as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8).

These words are excellent advice for us today. We should not be asleep but be aware of the times in which we live and look forward to the time when Christ returns. Until then, we put on faith, hope, and love. He has also promised us that He will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). If you have never entrusted your life to Christ and turned from your sin, today is a good day to do that. The Lord is as near as a prayer. He will not force His way into your life. God has given you the gift of free will, and the door to welcome Him into your life can only be opened from your side. Call on the Lord Jesus Christ and sincerely ask Him to fill your life with His love and grace. He stands waiting.

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