

# The Mark of the Beast

By Greg Gwin

Many people are confused and disturbed by the various signs and symbols used in the Book of Revelation. Numerous self-proclaimed 'prophecy experts' add to the confusion with their erroneous interpretations which suggest that current world events are the fulfillment of the things discussed in Revelation.

Students of this important book in the New Testament should always remember the important 'keys' to understanding which are expressed in the very first verse. It clearly states that "things which must shortly come to pass" are under consideration, and these are "signified" (spoken in signs by use of symbolic language) in the book.

Many have tried to decipher the "mark of the beast" which is mentioned several times in the final chapters of Revelation. Here's what seems clear:

- The "beast" was a representation of agents that Satan ("the dragon") was using to persecute Christians.

- Those who worshipped the beast and received his mark were the ones who aligned with those evil forces that were opposing God and His people.

- Some have speculated that those who received the "mark of the beast" on their hand were the ones who compromised with these opposing forces for their own safety and prosperity. They might not have really accepted the worship of the beast 'in their head,' but they outwardly complied for convenience sake. But, those who received the mark on their forehead were the ones who were fully accepting of everything these evil forces were doing.

- The promise of God was that any and all who united with the forces that were opposing the Lord and persecuting His saints would "drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (14:10).

The "mark of the beast" is not something that is happening in the world today. But it is still true that those who oppose God will pay an eternal price for their rebellion.



## Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the Building

Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Eli Williams (Friend of Sarah Norman)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Johnny Welsh (Debbi Coleman's Cousin)	Stephen Freeman (Phillip Box's Friend)
Virginia Crawford (Hunter's Sister-In-Law)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Betty Bradford	Arlene Harkrider (Nichole Pender's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Carl Alexander (Hannah Alexander's Uncle)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Melissa Walker (Chuck Hahn's Cousin)	Roger Whatley (Daphne Whatley's son)	Marion Vanhal (Paula Davis' Uncle)

- May Birthdays
- 1 - Barrett Gilbert
  - 2 - Emily Anne Rouse
  - 3 - Paula Davis
  - 10 - Ian Norman
  - 11 - Caleb George
  - 11 - Scott Perkins
  - 12 - Daphne Whatley
  - 13 - Jana Hall
  - 13 - Anna Grace Long
  - 15 - Bryce Daniels
  - 15 - Kerri Pender
  - 16 - Shawna Harris
  - 19 - Madison Seals
  - 24 - Andy Roberts
  - 25 - Chuck Hahn
  - 26 - Fallon Hartsell
  - 28 - Candy Long
  - 29 - Rebekah Buchanon

**News and Notes**

Our VBS will be on June 18-21. Be sure to have the registration forms for children attending to be turned in by May 18.

Let us remember David Hartsell and his family in our prayers. He is making progress in his recovery!

Let us remember our expectant mothers in our prayers, Candy Long and Terria Burton.

We have printed VBS postcards in the foyer for you to use to invite others!

Jim Bell will have open heart surgery in Daytona, Florida on Tuesday.

We extend sympathy to Mary Ann Roberts in the loss of her step sister on Wednesday.

# The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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### Thoughts to Ponder

He who says that some lies are just says no other than that some sins are just, and therefore some things are just which are unjust. What can be more absurd?

**Do You Have a Bible Question?**  
Call (334) 734-2133 or  
E-mail:  
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class .....9:30 AM  
Worship .....10:20 AM  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 PM

### Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse  
Evangelist and Editor

## Coming to the Defense of Sin and Error

By Jonathan Perz

A common problem that always seems to surround sin and sinners is the need for people to come to their defense. We see this clearly in the controversy surrounding President Clinton and we see it in churches and homes. Often times, people will soften the blows of truth to comfort those they deem afflicted. Too often, people will condemn the righteous while comforting the sinner. Many times, excuses are made for sin and error. Is this God's wisdom or is it man's? Is this what the Bible teaches we should do or do we have things backwards? What does the Bible have to say regarding the defense of sin and error?

### Exposing Error

When one is steeped in sin and error, the last thing they want is someone to expose their error, even though it is what they need (Ephesians 5:11-12). In John 3:20-21, it is written, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Clearly, when a person has sin in their life, their eternal soul is in jeopardy. We know sin separates man

When we make excuses for sin and error, we do a grave disservice to the guilty. The Bible says, "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah" (Isaiah 26:10).

from his God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Therefore out of love, both for God and man, friends and loved ones must seek to expose those who are in error and save them from hell. In Galatians 6:1, the Bible says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted" (see also James 5:19-20; Jude 22-23). These are the commands of God. Yet, this becomes extremely difficult when men come to the defense of sin and error.

### Softening the Blows of Truth

Under the guise of love, defenders will seek to soften the chastisement of men

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who are speaking the truth in love. They themselves neglect to affirm the truth. Rather than admonish those in error, they comfort them. Rather than save them from eternal destruction, they let them fall headlong into it. This is tragic!

What defenders of error and sin fail to realize is that when a man speaks the words of God, it is the chastisement of God they reveal. In **Revelation 3:19**, the Bible says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (read also **Hebrews 12:5-11**). This is what the word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, has the power to do (**Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16**).

Yet, men dull the blades of truth by softening the blows of God. Defenders of sin and error use words like humbled, broken, crushed, distressed, and contrite to describe the sinner and pull emotion and pity from the hearts of those who must expose their error. Sometimes, such words are fitting and true and manifest themselves in godly sorrow and repentance (**2 Corinthians 7:8-11**). However, more often than not the sinner—when confronted and exposed—becomes angry, upset, puffed-up, prideful and defiant. These are not the fruits of humility. These are the fruits of a man lost in sin. These are the signs of a man who does not need watered down medication to cure the woes of his soul, but strong doses of truth to humble and heal him (**James 4:4-10; 1 Peter 5:6-9**).

### **Condemning The Righteous**

Another problem with those who defend sin and error is that they condemn those who are standing for truth and righteousness. Those who justify wickedness attribute names and motives to those who seek to uphold the word of God (**1 Kings 18:17-18**). They are called mean-spirited, evil, unloving, and unkind. They are likened unto bulldogs, vultures and carnivores. They are accused of attacking innocent people, making a big deal out of nothing, hitting men when they are down, and focusing on trifles and small vices of others. All of this, whether intended or not, clouds the waters of righteousness and diverts attention from those in sin. Why can't men understand how God feels about such evasive and unrighteous maneuvering? The wise man wrote in **Proverbs 17:15**,

"He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, even both are abomination to the Lord." Again, in **Proverbs 28:4**, the Bible says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them." The apostle Paul asked of the Galatians in **Galatians 4:16**, "Therefore, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

This attitude needs to be likened unto one who despises a doctor for saving their life. Or a child who says 'I hate you' when they do not get their way. In a very physical sense, would I be despised of you for breaking your arm by pulling you out of the way of an oncoming car? It is the same thing as condemning the righteous.

### **Never Make Excuses**

Sin and error do not need excuses, they need exposure. They do not need defense, they need truth. There is no excuse that will make sin and error right in the sight of God. For that matter, there will be no excuses or defenders in the judgment—only the Lord, yourself and the life you have lived. There will be no loopholes, gray area or confusion—only a righteous and just examination of your life and a speedy judgment.

When we make excuses for sin and error, we do a grave disservice to the guilty. The Bible says, "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah" (**Isaiah 26:10**). Again, in **Jeremiah 23:14**, the Bible says, "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." Excusing sin now prolongs justice until the end, when it is too late.

### **Conclusion**

It would be unfair to say that there are not cases of people suffering "unrighteous judgment." It happens often. There are many false accusers who will give account of themselves before God. But, the apostle Peter gives the righteous man the correct attitude to bear in such cases (read **1 Peter 2:19-20**).



# Choices

By Jeffery Kingry

A wise man once said, "A man's character is the sum of all the decisions he has made in his life." When we discuss character, and what makes people what they are, we overlook this simple fact. Have you ever wondered why some people are nothing while folks from the same background somehow turn out to be just the opposite. I believe the answer lies not in man's environment or his genetic makeup, but in each man himself.

When I was a child a next door neighbor had a Japanese "pinball" machine. A lever was cocked and released and a small steel ball the size of a pea was launched up in the air to come clattering down, bouncing and careening off hundreds of little pins that changed the direction of the ball—until finally it came to rest in one of several cups placed about the interior of the machine. The object of the game was to hit the "jackpot" cup: the hardest cup to reach, right in the middle of the board, guarded on all sides by the pins of destiny. The "way" into the cup was barely large enough for the steel ball to pass. It would be no accident if the ball went in. We used to sit for hours, fascinated with the infinite variety of ways the ball would find to bounce down. On the rare occasion that the ball would hit the "jackpot" cup, we would painstakingly try to recreate the way that we had done it.

In a way, this is how life is. Only it is not the law of probability that determines whether we reach the "jackpot," but the either-or choices we make day by day. The response we make to each decision we must make determines which way we are going to "bounce." Every soul receives the same initial shot into the arena of life. All are confronted with the same "pins of destiny": decisions that must be made. Life is lived a second at a time. Every man is confronted with choices—the responses of man to those choices makes him what he is. "Lot chose him all the plains of Jordan" (**Gen. 13:11**). Lot's character was not fully formed when he stood with his uncle surveying the land seeking to make a choice where to pitch his tents. But the loss and sorrow he saw years later when his substance was destroyed, his wife dead, his sons and daughters gone, his youngest daughters corrupted and pregnant through incest, started when he made that first selfish decision to take the "best part" from Abraham. He chose the plain—he chose to pitch his tent towards Sodom—he chose to live in Sodom. Lot's character developed in the opposite direction of Abraham.

Joshua knew the power of the right choice in determining character, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (**Josh. 24:15**)! Our day by day choices make us what we are. So often we see a young person who walks the edge of what is right. She begins to wear her skirt shorter, her makeup thicker, her sweater tighter. The choices are made, the character is formed and before long she is lost to the Lord and her-family. Any who have eyes to see have witnessed it. The young man who is silently sullen, who uses "little deceits" to conceal his actions from those who might rebuke him. His parents and brethren might jokingly chide him about his long hair or the hickey on his neck. They are hurt and wonder "why?" when he grows to be a man that has no use for morality or godly living.

### **Responsibility Is Respond-Ability**

Jay Adams in his book *Competent To Counsel* noted, "What is responsibility? Responsibility is the ability to respond as God says man should respond to every life situation, in spite of difficulties." God declares that every man will be judged according to his deeds whether they be good or evil. This implies responsibility in man. Man cannot approach God with his sins and seek to justify them by minimizing them, by imputing them to others, by blaming environment or circumstances. Man is responsible. He doesn't have to sin. Every man has the ability to make right choices according to God's word. "There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (**1 Cor. 10:13**).

Each time we make a decision to do evil we step away from God and bend our character in the direction of Satan. Very many steps in the wrong direction produces a character more like the Devil than God. In the church we see brethren that ignore such passages as **Matt. 5:23, 24** and **Matt. 18:11-17** and let their brethren die in sin. The responsible Christian goes to his brother to change his behavior. Brethren who ignore sin in their own lives or the lives of others will reap the eternal consequences. What we are, and what we will be is determined by the choices we make now. Do we stand with God, or do we stand alone. What is your choice?

