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Stamped



By the Divine, or the Devil

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Introduction

Scriptus means 'having been written', and this *Scriptus Paper* concerns people of the Bible who were stamped with a mark, some by the Divine, and some by the Devil. Firstly, God's mark on men.

Stamped by the Divine

Cain - the stamp of deterrence

*Then Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is too great to endure! Look, you are driving me off the land today, and I must hide from your presence. I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth; whoever finds me will kill me!" But the Lord said to him, "In that case, if anyone kills you, seven lives will be taken in revenge." So the Lord put a **mark** on Cain to warn anyone who met him not to kill him (Genesis 4:13-15).*

Firstly, note that Cain is a coward. Having murdered his brother hastily without thought he fears revenge assaults that will return the favour. Secondly, the Hebrew word translated "mark" is 'owth and refers to a "mark, sign, or token." The usual interpretation that God put a physical mark on Cain is not supported by the text, but it was obvious enough to convey deterrence.

A view put by [Moberly](#), concerns the relationship of the mark 'to' Cain or 'for' Cain. He writes that if one wanted to speak of a mark upon Cain himself, the natural Hebrew preposition would be "upon" (see Exodus 13:16, Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18, and Ezekiel 9:4). The non-use of this preposition in the case of Cain suggests that the mark was not any kind of sign upon Cain's body. Rather the sign is "for" Cain. But, in what sense? The normal interpretation is that the sign was for Cain's protection. After all, there were probably many who would have liked to deliver justice to the first murderer in the human race. Moreover, this would have been consistent with God's post-flood law: 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image' (Genesis 9:6).

However, the text about the sign for Cain says that it was 'to warn anyone who met him not to kill him'. The fact that Cain could be killed indicates that the mark would not guarantee his protection. So, the sign, while for Cain's benefit, was a warning sign to those wanting to take justice into their own hands, violence breeding more violence. God's mark was both an act of mercy, and of care for Cain the vagabond, but of judgment for would-be vigilantes, in a day when there was no law to govern human behaviour. God's stamp, in whatever form it took, was in itself a law against retributive, vigilante justice.

As the violence of mankind was a reason for Noah's flood (Genesis 6:11), the mark for Cain, which was designed to protect him indirectly, did not prevent the outcome of pre-flood violence that God foresaw. Cain disappears from the biblical record as he makes a fresh beginning in a new place and city apart from God. It is in his son Lamech that all of the violent DNA of Cain is found, a man making his world without God, boastful, self-sufficient, violent and dangerous ([Dod](#)), as Cain's family becomes the target of the violence God foresaw and wanted to avoid. It seems on that score, the symbolic mark failed.



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Abraham: the stamp of blessing

Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it as righteousness to him (Genesis 15:6).

*When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a **covenant** with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land (Genesis 15:17-18).*

*I am the Sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. Then I will confirm my **covenant** between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants (Genesis 17:1-2).*

*Then God said to Abraham, As for you, you must keep the **covenantal** requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be **circumcised**. You shall be **circumcised** in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a **sign** of the **covenant** between me and you (Genesis 17:9-11).*

*Abraham received the **sign** of **circumcision**, as a **seal** of the righteousness that he had by faith (Romans 4:11).*

The relevant concepts here are 'covenant', 'circumcision', 'sign', and 'seal'.

Covenant

A Hebrew covenant (*beriyth*) described various types of agreements or alliances, often with solemn and binding implications. These covenants are not just contracts but are relational, involving commitments and promises that define the relationship. "Beriyth" comes from the word meaning "to cut." This is a reference to the practice of how clean animals were cut in two parts and those making the covenant walked between them. This was a symbolism of the sacrifices that covenants entail and showed the dedication and commitment of both parties.

Moreover, the parties to this rite were laying their lives on the line, invoking the destruction that befell these animals upon their heads if they failed to uphold the covenant. In Abraham's case, he did not pass between the halves—only God did, appearing as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, components of the pillar of fire by which He led the Israelites to Canaan after the exodus (Exodus 13:21–22). God's covenant response was made after Abraham believed (15:6), which is why he does not perform the ritual, and is an act of God ensuring that He'll keep His side of the promised agreement.

Circumcision

Circumcision (*muwl*) does not need explanation, except that the word means "to cut", similar to "Beriyth" (covenant). Abraham had to show his commitment to the covenant by circumcision. Why is that? I think that the answer to that is rather simple. After the Lord promised many descendants to this barren married couple, they couldn't wait for God to fulfill His promise, so they took matters into their own hands (Genesis 16). Ishmael was the product, and so was the rite of circumcision. It was forever a reminder to Abraham, and his descendants that God's promises won't be fulfilled by the flesh. Ishmael and his descendants as the non-elect people of God were forever the enemies of the Lord's chosen people.

Sign

In the texts on the previous page, circumcision is a sign of the covenant between God and you Abraham. 'Sign' in Hebrew is *owth*, which is the same word used for the mark for Cain, but in this context means something like monument, or evidence.

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Sign continued

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In Paul’s text he used *semeion*, which means mark, sign or token. In the Greek classics *semeion* could describe anything from a marker on a border, grave or monument to a signalling flag in battle, a figurehead on shields, even a password or secret handshake.

The medical profession used *semeion* to describe representative symptoms of a certain disease ([Abarim Publications](#)). So, in Abraham’s case, his circumcision was evidence that he kept God’s covenant.

Seal

Not too dissimilar is the **seal** (*sphragis*), a wax blob stamped with a distinctive, authentic mark of a person. Especially when administration and communication began to dominate all forms of government and trade, the king’s seal quite literally held the realm together ([Abarim Publications](#)).

The earliest seals were stamp seals from sites in Mesopotamia in northern Iraq dating to about 4000 B.C. ([Kelly-Buccellati](#)). From the beginning, most seals belonged to a person, not to an administrative entity such as a temple or a bureau in the city administration, to a kinship group such as a tribe or a family, or to any other type of group. The earliest seal designs only have visual representations of figures and no inscriptions as the figure at right shows.



Around 2500 B.C., when the seals began to be inscribed, the inscriptions contained the name and in many cases the patronymics of the individual seal owner. An individual would ordinarily only have one seal which in many cases was buried with them. So, Abraham had God’s seal of approval as an authentically righteous person made so by God through his faith permanently marked by his circumcision. Abraham received the sign of circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith.

Ezekiel: the stamp of protection

*Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. The Lord called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side; and said to him, “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a **mark** on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.”*

*To the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the **mark**. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were in front of the house (Ezekiel 9:3-6).*

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Ezekiel continued

The background to this text is that the house of Judah had committed abominations, filling the land with violence and provoking the Lord to anger more than before. God's patience was exhausted and He decided to act with fury without pity, and without sparing them (Ezekiel 8:17-18). And, as the text above makes clear, the God of Israel is leaving His throne in the sanctuary and moves to the threshold of the temple. He is at this point deliberately rejecting the temple and all it means. He is about to depart and judge the nation accordingly.

Nevertheless, He preserves His loyal people amid the judgment. God never forgets His own. Inside Jerusalem the faithful to God remained loyal, whose hearts were broken at the abominations, and God had determined to put His protecting **mark** on them. None could touch, or draw near to those who were faithful to Him. They shall be delivered in the judgment that shall overtake the rebellious, as God's work of justice proceeds in parallel with His mercy.

The Hebrew for "put a mark" is literally "to taw a taw" that is, to trace the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a taw, as a seal on their foreheads. In Ezekiel's day, the Hebrew letters were written in Paleo-Hebrew script, and this final letter was, basically two crossed lines, either in the shape of an X or a cross. See the diagramme.

In Job 31:35, the same word 'taw' is used to describe Job's signature: "Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!" Just like an "X" can be used today as a signature by someone who cannot write.



Taw as the last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet means **mark**, sign, or seal, and marks the end of all that God wants to say on the matter. That is, He promises and ensures protection for His faithful people, and has nothing to add to that.

The **mark** was on their foreheads. This was, at first, the location of the 'Holiness to the Lord' plate worn by the high priest who bore the iniquity and acceptance of the holy things (Exodus 28:36-38). On the contrary, when Israel turned away from God He described their forehead as being like bronze (Isaiah 48:4).

That is, the image is that of a person who has tensed the muscles of the face and neck as a sign of resolute refusal. A real-life example of such obstinacy is pictured in Goliath, who David struck with a stone on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground (1Samuel. 17:49).

Ezekiel's men were marked on their foreheads, for like Aaron they displayed their holiness upfront amid the abominations taking place in God's sanctuary.

Jesus: the stamp of approval

*"For it is on Him that God the Father has set his **seal** of approval" (John 6:27).*

These are the words of Jesus, and 'seal', as with Abraham, is *sphragis*. One who bore the stamp of the king's seal was assigned an office of great importance, but someone who carried the instrument with which to stamp such seals upon approved goods and people, had the king's power to assess and select, to accept and reject, to assign and destroy. Here, God does the stamping of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The context of this text is the feeding of the 5000 near to Tiberias, from where the Lord and His disciples set sail for Capernaum. The locals there had heard about the feeding miracle, and wanted to see it repeated, evoking this response: "I tell you the solemn truth...Do not work for the food that disappears, but for the food that remains to eternal life—the food which the Son of Man will give to you" (John 6:22-26). On such a message, and Messenger, God the Father has stamped His seal of approval.

Here is a gift that they didn't have to work or labour for from the One upon whom God has sets His seal of approval. It is the food that remains to 'eternal life', which the Lord later defined as knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. So, for John knowing God and Christ is not intellectual, but relational, obtained through the Son.

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Faithful: the stamp of ownership

*It is God who is supporting us with you in Christ and anointing us, and **sealing** us and giving us the down payment of his Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).*

*In him you believed, and were **sealed** by the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14).*

*It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it, found yourselves home free—**signed, sealed, and delivered** by the Holy Spirit. This down payment from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life (The Message).*

*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were **sealed** toward the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).*

*God's solid foundation remains standing, bearing this **seal**: "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).*

In each text the 'seal', as with Abraham and Jesus, is *sphragis*, and in each case the One Who seals is the Holy Spirit, and those who bare the stamp of the King's seal are God's approved people.

Further, the seal is a "first installment," "pledge," "deposit," "collateral," a 'down payment' (*arrabōn*), usually denoting the first installment of money or goods which serves as a guarantee for the completion of the transaction. The down payment is a motion 'toward' arrival at our inheritance of redemption, this destination being shareholders (in the commercial sense) of the revenues of an existing enterprise without the transfer of ownership ([Abarim Publications](#)).

144, 000 Israelites: stamp of redemption

*After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the **seal** of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have **marked** the servants of our God with a **seal** on their foreheads" And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, **sealed** out of every tribe of the people of Israel (Revelation 7:1-3).*

*And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit; he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to damage the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those people who do not have the **seal** of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it stings someone.*

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Israel's unique list

There are nearly 20, non-identical listings of Israel's tribes in the Hebrew Bible, with various names excluded without explanation. While Jacob had 12 sons, he later Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons in place of Joseph after moving to Egypt. Thereafter, there were 13 tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.

The list in Revelation 7 is also unique for two reasons. Firstly, it is the only list of the tribes to exclude Dan. And secondly, it is the only list to include Joseph and Manasseh but not Ephraim. As there was no tribe of Joseph, both Dan and Ephraim become one in Joseph, and the number of 12 tribes remains. Accordingly, in the elimination of Dan and Ephraim is found the reason for this distinctive list.

So, in the history of Israel, what is common to both Dan and Ephraim is their embrace of the worship of idols in place of God. Ephraim was the source of the idols, while Dan was the first tribe to embrace them. That is, Ephraim aided and abetted the Danites in bringing idolatry into the land of Israel (see Judges 17-21). Consequently, Dan paid dearly for their idolatry with the loss of their national identity, becoming assimilated into the neighbouring Phoenicians in Tyre (2 Chronicles 2:14). By Ezra's era, Dan, once the second-most populous tribe, had been totally wiped out. This would explain why Dan is not listed among the tribes in 1 Chronicles 4 - 7 or in Revelation 7.

The lesson is that if you wipe God from your lives, He will wipe yours from His.

Stamped by the Devil

Beast: stamp of allegiance

*Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast...Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be **marked** on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the **mark**, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. Its number is 666 (Revelation 13:11-18).*

Political power

The first beast from the sea symbolises global political power, and due to its Satanic origin, it is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-saints, and in this manifestation, began to materialise in recent history after the dragon was expelled from heaven upon the ascension of Christ (Revelation 12).

Religious power

This lamb-beast in the text above rose out of the earth where the earth dwellers have chosen to settle permanently suggesting its humanism. It also began to materialise historically after the dragon was expelled from heaven.

Also, the beasts from both sea and earth, are the dragon's front-on challenge to the Creator's claim that *The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land* (Psalm 95:5). However, because the symbols (beasts, heads, and horns) may represent kings, an individual king, a kingdom, and because kings may be sequential rulers, and at other times contemporaneous kings within a single kingdom, distinctions that John may be making are not always readily discerned by us.

Beast number two has two horns like a lamb. 'Lamb' here is *arnion*, a diminutive form meaning a little or very young lamb, the same word that John uses for 'the Lamb who was slain' (5:6). However, lambs don't develop horns until they reach early adulthood. So, beast number two imitates but misrepresents the Lamb of God. It is an absurd pretence intended to create the appearance of Christ, but it is a distorted representation of the Redeemer. Its horns are a give away: this beast is not about yielding its life sacrificially, but will defend itself against all predators.

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Religious power continued

Moreover, the lamb beast is a kingdom, and acts as an assistant to the dragon and the beast from the sea. It is a dragon in sheep's clothing, for it speaks like the dragon (13:11), and speaks for it and the first beast, and thus is rightly labelled the false prophet (19:20). This Christ look-alike, but with a dragon-like voice betrays its pretended Lamb-like character. Its prophecies, then, are not from Christ, but from the Devil, as it tries to influence the minds of men, to persuade them, to gain them for the cause of the beast from the sea. It achieved its goal through the deceptive mix of religious humanism, involving great signs and wonders to corroborate its teachings, as Christ also did. Moreover, no more difference of opinion from the centralised narrative will be tolerated in order to maintain the authority, integrity and unity of this universal kingdom.

This lamb-beast is subordinate to the beast from the sea, and the two together provide the complete picture of the '*kingdoms of this world*'. In sum, the first beast tells us what this '*kingdom of this world*' does, and the second beast tells us how it does it - through false religious prophecy, false philosophy, science and religion wrapped up in humanism.

Mark. The tyrannical second beast forces the earth dwellers to take the **mark** (*charagma*), an engraving of any kind (any marking, brand, stamp or impression, trademark), or an item engraved (like a tablet or a piece of pottery, but also an idol or icon).

People probably began to mark things to declare their ownership of them, but marks and symbols quickly evolved to declare the essential character of clans and troops, and the allegiance of the wearer of the mark to that troop. Modern trademarks perfectly combine these two elements, and that is the best way to understand *charagma*. Further, the allegiance of a person to the beast from the sea would be identified by wearing the stamp, otherwise commercial activities would be denied and survival would be impossible. In the classics, *charagma* became synonym for decree or directive. Rather notably, the bite of a serpent was termed "the serpent's mark", which is not without parallel to Revelation 13:17-18 ([Abarim Publications](#)).

666 symbolism. Things can only be numbered when they are defined, and clearly distinguished from other things, that is, when they are categorised. So, man was created on the sixth day, but the fulness of creation was expressed in seven days, for the seventh day was God's day. So, "6" is man without God and the service of Him. The world, in all its fulness, with all its powers, but without God, under the influence of sin, is the symbolism of the number six.

In all of the Scriptures, only one number is explicitly said to be symbolic, and it's in Revelation 13:18: *Let the one who has insight calculate the beast's number, for it is man's number, and his number is 666.* Any other symbolism for a number must be inferred from the biblical text by demonstrating, as here, that a particular number represents a concept. Accordingly, in Revelation which was revealed by way of symbols we would expect numbers to be symbolic. However, the difficulty in making such a connection accounts for the diverse interpretive positions about the symbolism of numbers in Revelation 7, and indeed, the entire book.

Israelites were commanded to literarily wear God's words on their bodies, on the forehead between the eyes (Deuteronomy 6:8). Accordingly, a Jewish reader would understand that 666, the mark of the beast, takes the place of the word of God, and to accept this **mark** is to reject the will of God. 666 is a pledge of loyalty, not to God but rather to the Beast and his decrees ([Lizorkin-Eyzenberg](#)).

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Conclusion

What stamp do we wear? Is it a stamp of the Divine, or of the Devil? Is it the stamp of approval for communicating the right Message?

Or, are we wearing the stamp of the Devil, swearing allegiance to his political and religious proxies?

Solemn questions indeed.

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