

Pondering the Times

Daily I sit and reflect on the events unfolding as the unprecedented pandemic of COVID -19 extends itself to the four corners of the earth.

I listened to the many plans for mandatory vaccination, track and trace, cashless society all being suggestions of responsive actions to try and curtail the devastating effects of the disease. My heartbeat was slightly elevated when I consider the bible and its warning against accepting the mark of the beast, the repercussions to be faced by those who rejected this mark, in that they will not be able to buy and trade or have any means of feeding their families.

I started thinking about the current position of the majority, saved and unsaved, aren't we all tied up into the financial institutions of the country in which we live? Our monies are already in their banks, our salaries are given through their banks or biometrics and everything about us is already known. So, could we evade a cash-less society if we wanted to, if this is truly aligned with the mark?

From the church's perspective, do we have an independent financial structure? Any back up plan? I also look at the fact that the bible did not guide us on how to prepare ourselves for this impending crisis, at least not in the physical sense. Is it that God forgot to reveal to his people how to physically prepare for such times? Or is it that the knowledge of surviving the mark of the beast has nothing to do with the physical? Is it that God is a Spirit and so his plans are to be understood as He is? Therefore, what separates the believers from those who are not will be the state of their spirit man, those whose spirits are a true reflection of God himself. Could we say that God's ultimate concern is with the prosperity of the soul of His children, and so everything He reveals is to encourage the survival of their souls unto eternal life? After all the flesh is physical and mortal. It was made to return to dust.

John 4-24 says "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God has never encouraged us to examine what we look like on the outside nor to focus on those things. In fact, he tells us not to take thought of what to eat, drink or wear (Matthew 6:25-34) nor to judge others on how they look "Judge not according to appearance, but Judge righteous Judgement" (John 7: 24). Isn't righteous judgement a matter of a man's heart, soul and spirit? The apostle Paul reminds us "so we fix our eyes not on what is

seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthian 4:18).

It is quite clear that the determining factor of entry into heaven/ the kingdom is not based on what we look like or even on how we dress on the outside but on how our spirit man adorns himself. What is it cleaving to and to what does it hold dear? We are told in Matthew 19:16-24, of a certain rich man who did a lot of good works, feeding the poor, taking care of his family and strangers a like. When Jesus told him to sell all his possessions to gain eternal life, he turned and walked away. This shows that while doing good and loving thy neighbour is a fulfilment of God’s command in our lives, if the spirit man is entangled with the material things of this world then our access to eternal life may be compromised.

Further evidence of God’s emphasis being not on what we look like but on the condition of the spirit was revealed in Matthew 22:1-14. Here it shows that the kingdom of God was first offered to the children of Israel- the chosen nation. The Israelites religiously clung to the mosaic law and missed the mark. Their focus was on the external rituals that showed outward holiness, forgetting the righteousness that flows from the heart through love. The righteousness of God that fosters forgiveness, humility, patience, mercy and have no part with hypocrisy and pride. So focused were they on the literal, physical, tangible way of living the gospel that they missed the Messiah and his offering of redemption to them. Jesus in turn opened the door of the Kingdom to all nations and tongue, by going into the by-ways, bidding all to come into the Kingdom. Verse 10 says both good and bad accepted this invitation to the kingdom feast. If both good and bad received such invitation, then both groups must be willing to adorn themselves likewise. However, when the King came there was one who was not dressed for the occasion and was rejected. You see, it was not his outer garment that Christ saw, as God judges all, searching the hearts and minds of His people. I believe there is a righteous glory that radiates from the hearts of God’s children, that identifies them with Him. This stranger may have blended in quite well physically attired but could not deceive the omniscient King, as he had not the spiritual glory of the saints.

A lot of emphasis may not have been placed on how to physically prepare for the events of the last days. Events of famines, diseases, rumours of wars to

come- Matthew 24:7. But we are given insight of what is to come, so that we be not overcome by fear but be ready in mind and be resolute in spirit.

In Revelation 13: 16-17, we are told “And he causeth 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.”

There are many talks centred around the rolling out of microchips. Do we accept? Do we reject? Will there be options? Is it the dress rehearsal for the mark of the beast?

What truly is the mark of the beast and how do we identify it? What are we accepting that will associate us with the beast? Why is it associated with the right hand and the forehead? Is it really a physical engravement? For years I studied the book of Revelations and this has always eluded me but today, not intending to do bible study, the mark of the beast was placed before me, the mark in the right hand was shown parallel to the right of God and the word “power” was spoken. So, I started to type all this in a split second.

Revelation uses symbolism and analogies to reveal to us things to come. The symbols are no different from those used before in the scriptures, a lot of which were already interpreted by prophets of old.

Let us examine this verse: “And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads”

Throughout scripture the word arm/hand is always used to acknowledge power and authority. Isaiah 40 vs 10, Psalm 10, Ezekiel 30 vs 21, all stated that God’s own arm was the source of deliverance for His people. In Psalm 98:1, David told us to “Sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his *right hand*, and his *holy arm*, hath gotten him the victory”. The Holy spirit in action is the right hand of God- all power lie with Him who sits on the Holy throne.

So, when we are told that a mark is placed in the right hand. We are not looking for anything physical but we are looking to identifying the spirit of those who have accepted the doctrines of this world and are acting in authority of the

prince of darkness, exercising power through the teachings and implementations of plans and policies. The mark is a spiritual manifestation shown to the world through their deeds. It is the acceptance of a worldly principle and the readiness to embrace and propagate its message and lifestyle. These people are willing to offend and oppress those who speak out against their sins and injustices to whatever end. They act in the spirit of the antichrist.

The mark can also be accepted in the forehead. There is a hierarchical system in society- the superiors and the foot soldiers. Not everyone will be at the top as the superior – the superiors have great power and influence. They make decisions, drive policies, and implement strategies. Those who get to top would have received the mark in their right arm- principalities in high places. But the masses – the foot soldiers will show their allegiance by accepting the mark in their foreheads. Why the forehead?

From a scientific perspective the forehead could also be looked at as the frontal lobe of the brain. This is the seat of consciousness, where we exercise our intellect to accept or reject information. What we accept we openly declare and what we reject we also openly declare. What we strongly believe on the inside will manifest itself through our spirit and actions on the outside.

The bible makes many references to forehead-

In Exodus 28: 36-38, Aaron the chief priest had to wear a plate of pure gold, constantly declaring holiness to God. This served as an open declaration of his faith and his allegiance to God as well as an open confession to the people whom he serves.

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

³⁷ And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be.

³⁸ And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

In 1 Samuel 17:9- 10. We examine the speech of Goliath:

“⁹ If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.”

¹⁰ And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.”

Goliath was a mighty warrior, a feared giant of the land who usurped authority on the nations around him. Here his thought processes were made clear, he seeks to be served by the chosen nation of God as well as to blaspheme the name of God. His intentions were clearly an open declaration of defiance against the God of Israel- to go against the children of Israel is to go against their God.

Goliath was later taken down by a stone to the forehead. The same figurative stone that crushed the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue bringing to naught all kingdoms on earth. This stone is Jesus. Here, we see the power of God destroying the ideologies professed by the spirit that seeks to exalt itself, seeking to exercise power and control over His Kingdom.

The forehead is revealed as the seat of conscious decision making, to accept and declare one’s true allegiance. Unfortunately, for Goliath he was on the wrong side.

We are also told in Revelation 17:5, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Here on the forehead is the name of a woman revealed. The woman in scripture is often linked to the church. We are not expecting to see that name written boldly on the door of any church building, are we? But rather we are given insight into the many spirits that flow from this church. Their practices will reveal their thought processes of what it is they accept and embrace. A counterfeit of the true Church.

And Finally but not exclusive to Isaiah 44: 5-6 we are told “One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of

Israel. Thus, saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

In this scripture, God’s people stand bold, those who have rejected the mark of the beast bears the mark of God in their foreheads and are consciously declaring his name – “I am the Lords” and they shall act in the authority of the sovereign God- and they “shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord.” These are the elect that will be saved because they bear the mark of the Father on their forehead and were sealed with the protection of the Holy spirit that none may harm them. (“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads- Rev 9:4.)

But Woe unto those who worketh iniquity and exalt themselves against the Most High, their end shall be bitter- Revelation 14: 9-11:

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,
¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

It is not for us to be anxious or fearful considering the events that are unfolding around us. God has given us insight into his plans for his people. He has given us the spirit of discernment, that we be not deceived due to lack of knowledge. Let us anchor our souls in the Lord, gird up the loins of our minds and declare the God of our salvation. Let the seat of our hearts mediate day and night on the goodness of the Lord and never cease to offer praise and thanks giving. Let us walk in boldness and act in righteousness holding the banner of the Father high.

Let us not grow weary in well doing, let us not fall into slumber like the 5 foolish virgins. These virgins became complacent, they failed to maintain their vessels through fervent prayer and fasting. They failed to strengthen the spirit man by spending time in God’s presence and His word. When they found themselves in

the darkest part of the night, when all hell is breaking loose, they had no strength, they fainted just before the break of day. They had not enough oil, the spiritual drive fuelled by the Holy spirit was not there to help them navigate to the very end. They had grown weak. Jesus says abide in me and i will abide in you. Stay alert my friends, watch, and pray, encourage yourselves and nurture your spirit in the Lord. Though dark times may come, we have a hope. There awaits us, the Light of our Saviour. He will be there to receive us with open arms if we faint not.

God bless you and may his peace rest upon you perpetually.

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