

Marked for Life

by Arch Chater

I think we've all heard the terminology used you are a marked man or you are a marked woman. It usually carries with it connotations of being in line for some special treatment usually unkind or being ostracised, penalised or punished. But we as Christians can view this terminology in a far different light - and as a sermon deserves a title, I have titled the sermon for today "Marked for life."

The world we live in is in the final stages of earth's history and much of what we read about hear and see of this world we live in, compels us to understand that this world offers little of anything of any real value to the committed Christian. As each day passes the world offers less, whereas the wickedness, corruption and moral decay has escalated to a point where the same angel that visited Sodom, is sounding a note of warning, "Escape for thy life." And to lead into the subject I am speaking on, I refer to an extract from TM 445, 445.

"We hear of earthquakes in diverse places, of fires, of tempests, of disasters by sea and land, of pestilence, of famine. What weight do these signs have upon you? This is only the beginning of what shall be.... John sees the elements of nature – earthquake, tempest and political strife represented as being held by the four angels.... The angels of God do His bidding, holding back the winds of the earth that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads.... Those who overcome the world, the flesh and the devil will be the favoured ones who shall receive the seal of the living God."

These words were penned many years ago and you will note the truth predicted in these words, being fulfilled in abound around us today - Fires, floods, disasters by rail, sea and air, tornados, earthquakes, crashes, pestilences, volcanoes and wars.

Let us not become desensitised by the commonplace frequency of these events, desensitised to the meaning and the message they carry - the message that the end of all things is near and Jesus is soon to return.

The over-comers here spoken of are sealed and will receive passports to the mansions Christ has prepared for them in heaven. Jesus speaks about this wonderful promise in John 14:1-3. (Read text).

Jesus has gone to prepare a place for His redeemed and whilst Jesus is preparing mansions in heaven for the redeemed, they are to be building characters here on earth after the divine similitude. His name is to be in their foreheads, a symbol of His ownership, of their allegiance to Him, their consecrated lives to Him. Rev 7:3 tells us, "The redeemed shall be sealed in their foreheads as servants of God, the mark of God's sealing approval." It attests likeness to Christ in character. This is the mark. They are a marked people, marked for God and marked for life eternal. Ever since sin entered the world, unfallen beings, heavenly angels have been watching developments here on earth, eagerly waiting for the redeemed to claim the mansions God has prepared for them in heaven, the mansions John spoke about. Do we understand that God is now at work investigating character, weighing moral worth and pronouncing decisions on individual cases? TM 448. "The hour of His judgment is come " Rev 14:7.

It is taking place now and precedes the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ and this message has embodied within it an appeal, a warning that the day of salvation is not yet passed. "Fear God and worship Him that made the heaven, the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." Rev 14:7. Yet sadly, many are jeopardising their claims of being marked people for God and for life by refusing to walk in the truth because its sanctifying power upon the soul is not what they really desire and therefore condemnation rests upon them. TM 449.

The climax of world history is fast reaching culmination and we would have to be blind not to see it, to see the acceleration and calamities and disasters, the dramatic increase in problems facing the world, its governments, its people and its families. The depth of degradation and depravity the world is sinking to, is like a growing cancer, insidious in its growth, eating away at the very vitals of anything that is any good. People are becoming immune to the travesties of law and order, desensitised to the great wrongs and evils committed. We find many of God's professing people taking a care-free, lackadaisical attitude to all of God's commands; compromising His every command, beguiled into evaluating and assessing their lives on the standards about them, worldly standards, forgetting that the standard set before us is the life of Jesus. He is our standard.

Are we not a people with the message of the 3 angels to be given to the whole world? Should not the essence of this message be seen displayed in our lives that we may be witnesses to this message and in so doing, be seen as distinctive, marked people for God?

Judgment is taking place now. The hour of His judgment is come and God will have a distinctive people, a peculiar people, not an odd people, but a people specially prized, a marked people; those that keep the commandments and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints." They have hid their lives in Christ. They are distinctive and marked. They have no fear of the judgment and have passports to heaven. Christ is their advocate and will defend their case in the court of heaven. For everyone that has accepted the death of Jesus Christ on their behalf and are willing to allow Jesus to impart His perfect character to them, they are safely protected from God's wrath. They will not be condemned in the judgment. John 5:24 "He that hearth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." And Psalm 37:33, "The Lord will not condemn him, when he is judged."

What wonderful promises to the faithful. These people will be considered in the judgment as though they never sinned. Their characters, which they are allowing to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, will be seen as perfect, since Christ is imputing His spotless character to them. They are seen without spot or wrinkle because they are wearing the white garment of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. The door of salvation is not yet closed to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ, but to those who have accepted Jesus Christ, the counsel to the church of Laodicea applies and describes the present condition of many of His professed believers.

Rev 3:18 speaks of them "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see." God tried in the fire, the faith that works by love, works that result from faith and love. White raiment, the righteousness of Christ, the fruits of righteousness showing forth in the life. The imputed righteousness of Christ alone, is not enough in itself, the imparted righteousness of Christ needs to be seen in the life, the character growth. And anoint thine eyes with eye salve, each one ably discerning truth from error and shunning error at all costs. Here is the counsel to many of God's professing people and the Lord adds His invitation, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him." Rev 3:20. He will come in, not merely for an hour or a day, for it says in 2 Cor 6:16 "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Micah 7:19, "He will subdue our iniquities." DA 162, "His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul so it may be a holy temple unto the Lord." Jesus is saying, "Hear my voice and I will come in and fellowship with you," but to those who are indifferent to His warnings and indicate they have need of nothing, Jesus says He will spew them out of His mouth. Rev 3:16.

This figure of spewing out of His mouth, means and I quote, 6T 408, "That He Jesus cannot offer up your prayers, or your expressions of love to God. He cannot endorse your teaching of His word, or your spiritual work in any wise. He cannot present your religious exercises with the request that grace be given you." These are solemn words indeed, not to be taken lightly.

Do we forget that an angel of heaven has the allotted task of going from person to person, marking each one for eternal life or eternal death? TM 445, "This mightiest angel has in his hand, the seal of the living God, who alone can give life. Alone can inscribe upon the forehead, the mark or inscription on those who shall be granted immortality." Paul, in writing to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:19, counsels, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal." The unchanging nature, its condition and character is sure. The standards of His approval have never changed, will never change. 2 Tim 2:19, "And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. The Lord knoweth them that are His." And those that are His, will be vessels of honour, worthy to become marked people for God and for life eternal, sealed by God for they cherish the great gift of salvation, but time is fast running out for the human race. From EW 43, I quote, "Satan is now using every device in this sealing time to keep the minds of God's people from present truth and to cause them to waver. I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty." – sealed, marked for God and life.

We find Scripture records that just before great calamities and crises God identifies His people. Before the 10th plague hit Egypt, did not God have a sign or mark placed on the doorposts of His people? DA 51, "At length the destroying angel was bidden to slay the 1st born of man and beast among the Egyptians. That the Israelites may be spared, they were directed to place upon their doorposts, the blood of a slain lamb. Every house was to be marked that when the angel came on his commission of death, he might pass over the homes of the Israelites." They were a marked people for God and from 7BC 968-9, I quote, "the Israelites placed over their doors a signature of blood to show that they were God's property, so the children of God in this age will bear the signature God has appointed. They will place themselves in harmony with God's holy law. A mark is placed on everyone of God's people just as verily as a mark was placed over the doors of the Hebrew dwellings to preserve the people from the general ruin."

It is obvious that this mark, is a mark that the angel, but not human eyes can see for the destroying angel must see the mark of redemption. The Lord will protect every human being who bears His seal or His mark.

God will have a marked people, those that allow the overcoming power of the Holy Spirit to transform their lives and mould characters and fit them for heaven. It is a work of sanctification and man must be a co-worker with Christ in this labour of overcoming - for this to be at all possible man must be willing.

We believe that Sabbath keeping is part of the distinguishing sign of those who are true followers of Christ. How is the Sabbath related to those who are marked men and women for God? The book of Ezekiel 20:12 gives us the answer, "Moreover I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Here we find the Sabbath to be a sign between God and His people – a mark of distinction, a mark distinguishing God's people from the disloyal who have accepted a man made institution in place of the Sabbath. The keeping of the Sabbath constitutes a sign, a distinctive test of the true worshippers of God, but there is something very important to contemplate when regarding those that accept the Sabbath as the Lord's day as a sign or a seal. The Lord would teach man that although united in church capacity with their names entered on the church records and books, even holding office, they are not saved until the seal of God is placed on him or her. I quote from 7BC 979, "It is not the observance of the Sabbath that constitutes the mark.

The seal stands for that character qualification that all must have who are accounted worthy of citizenship in God's kingdom. Only those who have purified their souls, will cling to the Sabbath in the awful time of trouble preceding Jesus' return." - the time of trouble such as never was. Dan 12:1.

It will so happen for some will have no anchor. They have not allowed the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit to purify their souls. They will desert the ranks. It will be then indeed that the Sabbath will be a distinguishing mark of the loyal, true worshippers of God. These days will come and are fast approaching. Let us not deceive ourselves. It is now that we are to allow God to wrought the transforming work of our characters that we may be amongst those who boldly stand and display the inward sealing of God, by the outward upholding of His Sabbath and His commandments in the troublesome times that lay ahead.

Now is the time, is the Lord's call. Don't be like the 5 foolish virgins who had forsaken preparation till the last moment and the Lord cried out that He did not know them. Matt 25:12. Don't be like those that turn deaf ears on Noah's warning until it was too late and the doors of the ark were closed. Don't be like the man found at the marriage feast without a wedding garment and was cast out. Matt 22:13. Jesus is not willing that any should perish. He wants each one numbered amongst His marked people, but He will not force anyone.

Chapter 7 of Revelation speaks of God's marked people. Verses 1-4, speaks of the 144 000 and came through the great tribulation that is to befall this world. Here we find servants of God, sealed in their foreheads and verse 9 of the same chapter speaks of the great multitude which no man can number that were clothed with white robes. Here we find a great host of victorious people; victorious over self, over sin and over Satan. How do they become victorious? They became victors through the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ – a union of divine power and human effort. God will have a people showing forth in their lives; Jesus living in them, all to His glory. The 144 thousand and the great multitude are all marked men and women for Christ and life eternal. If we are not marked men and women for Christ and life, what then?

This raises another question, Is God's seal the only mark men and women may receive? No, it is not. Let us turn to Rev 13: 16 &17, "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 we have it.

Here we have men and women also being marked; the great antichrist is also engaged in marking men and women. Jesus said, "If you are not for me, you are against me." Matt 12:30. The marking by the antichrist is the alternative. It is one or the other. There is no middle of the road, no sitting on the fence. No no-man's land. There is no neutral ground in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. If you don't choose for Christ, you have automatically chosen against Him. You become marked one way or another. We might ask, "were there marked men and women in OT times." Yes there were. Turn to Ezekiel 9: 4 & 6. "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. 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. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Here we have Ezekiel's vision at the time of the close of Jerusalem's probation. God had exhausted all His resources and His appeals to rebellious Israel. He could do no more. Their cup of iniquity was full to overflowing. Jerusalem's probation was about to close, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, God marked His people and they were sealed. The exact nature of the mark is not perhaps important, but its reference was wholly to character and so it will be in these last days before Jesus returns.

Do we understand the import of these times we live in and the need to put self aside with its inherent vulnerabilities and shortcomings, its self-seeking weaknesses and ask God to fill the void with His holy spirit. Ezekiel's vision had primary reference to the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, but it will have another 2nd fulfilment during the closing days of earth's history.

The seal of God, worn by God's people in these last days is not unlike the mark in Ezekiel's day and it is based on character qualifications. God places His seal, or mark of approval on all those who through the power of the Holy Spirit reflect the image of Jesus in their lives. Let us cast our minds back to the idolatry at Sinai and the worship of the golden calf by God's professing people. After breaking the tables of the testimony, God had Moses remove the tabernacle, the place of worship, outside the camp. Ex 33: 6,7 records this. God did this because of their iniquity, their idolatry, signifying the removal of God's presence from the people because of their rebellion. All those who genuinely sought the Lord in true repentance, in true allegiance, in true worship, were required to go outside the camp seeking God and His forgiveness. Here we have a marked people; people who became distinctive, who stood out by their stand and show of allegiance.

God's people stood out by going outside the camp and we are counselled also to do likewise. Heb 13:13 "Heb.13.13

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. "

Jesus suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem. Calvary was outside the city walls, showing that Jesus gave His life, not only for the Jewish nation, but for the whole world. Let us therefore go forth unto him outside the camp. By going outside the camp in true repentance, having heartfelt sorry for our sins and turning away from sin, obeying God's commands without compromise, we become marked men and women for God and are marked for life eternal. By going outside the camp in true allegiance honouring the true God and His Sabbath faithfully, fearlessly standing for truth and proclaiming it on all opportunities, we become marked men and women for God. By going outside the camp we will automatically stand out and cannot but help it. We will become marked for God. Many at Sinai remained within the camp, complacent, compromising, many still longing and wishing to return to Egypt and not push on to Canaan. To a great extent, some of God's professing people now in the church today are not willing to venture outside the camp bearing His reproach and as Paul admonishes in Heb 11:26 They did not esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. How sad. They desire compromise and the things of this world.

They secretly desire to be seen as being no different from those in the world. Though reluctant to fly the colours of the flag of the One they have admitted allegiance to, compromising and desiring to remain within the camp, showing no allegiance to their Saviour who suffered and died for them outside the camp.

There is no compromising of one's allegiance in this great controversy between Christ and Satan. One might think so, but one is deceived. Sitting on the fence is Satan's ground. The middle of the road is Satan's ground and compromise is Satan's tool. Whom will ye serve? 1King.18.21 "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. "

No one can serve two masters or be on both sides of the fence at the one time. Each one of us by the choices we now make or don't make, is sealing his or her destiny, one way or another. The Lord's messenger gives some wise counsel in 5T 213 and I quote, "Courage, fortitude, faith and implicit trust in God's power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years.

By a life of holy endeavour and firm adherence to the right, the children of God were sealing their destinies"- marked, sealed men and women for God, marked for life. On the other hand if we do not want to pay the price of becoming Christ-like in character then we will also become marked men and women, but not for eternal life - it will be for eternal death. Friends, if we love Jesus and His spirit lives in us and we accept the counsel to the Laodecian church and follow it faithfully and we are willing to go outside the camp bearing reproach and sometimes hurt and sometimes shame for the sake of Christ, we become marked men and women for Christ. We are then covered with Christ's robe of righteousness and have passports to heaven. We are candidates for those mansions God has prepared for us and may by God's grace; this experience be yours and mine.