

# Submit to our authority or lose your life

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**By Dave Havir**

BIG SANDY, Texas—In the world of religion are many theories about the "mark of the beast."

In Revelation 13:15 John wrote about a beast that will have the power to kill people. Many have speculated about the reasons this beast kills. One thing is obvious to them. They know the reason has something to do with the "mark" (verse 16).

Since the Bible does not specifically identify what the mark will be, dozens of theories abound. People often miss the big picture when they speculate about some potential scenarios.

Here is the bottom line: A religious system will claim to speak for God and will use authority to coerce submission.

The religious beast will say: Submit to my authority or lose your life.

## **Face the music**

Let's notice three examples in the Bible about coercive authority.

**First example:** Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold (Daniel 3:1) and issued a decree that when music was played everyone was to fall down to worship the golden image (verses 4-5).

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had a choice: Submit to the authority of a king or be thrown into a fiery furnace (verse 15).

**Second example:** The council (possibly the Sanhedrin) warned the apostles not to teach about the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:18).

The apostles had a choice: Submit to the authority of the religious leaders, or go to prison (Acts 5:17-18).

**Third example:** The Pharisees positioned themselves in the place of God. They created a religious system that included one class of people over another class of people (Matthew 23:5-12).

They viewed themselves as doorkeepers for the Kingdom of Heaven (verse 13).

Followers in that system had a choice: Submit to the authority of the religious leaders, or be denied admission into the Kingdom of God.

(The Pharisees did not have the power to keep the people out of the Kingdom of God. But their constant threats kept some people in bondage to a religious system.)

### **In the place of God**

When Paul wrote about the traits of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:4), he mentioned the following behavior:

- The man of sin will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.
- He will sit as God in the temple of God, "showing himself that he is God."

Most physical church organizations among the Church of God movement practice religious systems that establish men in the place of God.

Many rulers and their followers boldly state the following:

**Statement No. 1:** You are not in the true Church of God because you don't submit to the authority of our church, our headquarters and our group of leaders.

**Statement No. 2:** You are part of the *falling away* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) because you left our church, our headquarters and our group of leaders.

**Statement No. 3:** To be in the Kingdom of God you must submit to the authority of our church, our headquarters and our group of leaders.

Although it is easy to discern error when people *boldly* make those statements, I want to warn you about the greater danger: subtlety.

- Beware of rulers who do not directly say these three statements but cleverly teach and enforce these concepts.
- Beware of rulers who orally say they do not support these three statements, yet their policies prove otherwise.

If rulers do not support these three statements, they should clearly tell people so, and they should make policies to prove it.

### **Many Antichrists**

The approach of the Antichrist will be to coerce saints into worshiping in his system (Daniel 7:21-25; Revelation 13:6-7, 11-18.)

Even though you have heard that the Antichrist will come, many Antichrists are already in the world (1 John 2:18).

Rulers who seek to coerce people into their religious system practice the approach of the Antichrist. Beware of those who teach and administer this approach.

The key for saints is to worship God (Revelation 13:8).

Those who submit to the coercive approach of the Antichrist will face God's wrath (Revelation 14:9-11).

Those who resist the coercive approach of the Antichrist will be in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4).