

## SESSION 8

## REVELATION 13:11–14:20

*The Completion of the First Conflict Section*

## I. THE SECOND BEAST [= FALSE PROPHET] (Rev 13:11-18)

Elsewhere, the Second Beast is called the False Prophet (see 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). As with the first Beast, numerous suggestions have been made as to its identity. One preterist view takes the False Prophet as the embodiment of the priests in the Caesar-cult. During the Reformation, he was often regarded as "papal Rome." Alan Johnson takes him as representing "the false prophets of the Olivet Discourse" (p 530). Some of the early church fathers, however, understood him to be the main religious assistant to the Antichrist (so Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus). The latter is a better interpretation, because the False Prophet must be an individual who is eventually given to the lake of fire (note 19:20; 20:10). His role is in contrast to the two true prophets of ch 11. Thomas (2:173) notes, "Like them, he performs great signs, stands before the one he represents (11:4; 13:12), has special power over fire (11:5; 13:13), has a connection with resurrection (11:11; 13:14-15), convinces men of their superior's supreme power (11:5-6; 13:17), and directs men to worship the one they designate (11:13; 13:15)."

Looking at ch 13 as a whole, we see that these two "beasts" work together to implement a one-world government, a one-world religion, and a one-world economic system.

## A. Characteristics (13:11)

The False prophet is obviously an evil deceiver. Like the First Beast, he is also a "beast" (ἄλλο θηρίον), which reflects his devilish nature and intentions. On the other hand, he is described as having two horns like a lamb. That is, he does not appear evil but innocent (cf. Mt 7:15). Furthermore, he "spoke as a dragon." This could either refer to the manner of his speech (like Satan, he is deceptive), or to the content (perpetrates demonic doctrines and thought).

## B. His Satanic Activity (13:12-13)

Having authority like the Beast (both Satanic), he makes the earth to worship the first Beast. Hence, he has a similar function to the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. He also performs great signs (cf. 2 Thess 2:9-10). Because of the signs, he will be able to convince others about the "image." Special attention is called to the sign involving "fire from heaven." For this, compare the two witnesses (Rev 11:5) and the acts of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:38).

## C. The Construction of the Image (13:14-15)

(image = εἰκόνα)

This is the first of ten references in Rev to the image (the others being *articular*). Despite the fact that it is man-made, the False Prophet brings it to life. He is able to give "breath" (Gk πνευμα) to it. Walvoord, noting that the word used is πνευμα, not ζωή (life), thinks that it only *appears* alive. Thomas, however, thinks the sign is real, noting that (1) v 15 says "was given" reflecting divine permission and enablement; and (2) a similarity with "the breath of life" in 11:11. In any case, the making of the image has two purposes (note ἵνα + subjunctive): (1) to speak and (2) that it might cause some . . . to be killed. The latter has in mind capital punishment, consistent with Rev 13:9-10 (but note the allusion to Dan 3:5-6).

Yet, there is an irony involved: if you don't worship, you can be killed; but if you do worship, you get God's wrath (14:9-11; cf. 16:2 and the torment for those who take the mark). Possibly the image is the *abomination of desolation* that coincides with the breaking of the covenant.

In v 14, the Beast is described as he "who had the wound of the sword and has come to life." His recovery from death is the reason for worshipping him. The verb translating "has come to life" (ἐζήσεν) is used in 2:8 of Christ's resurrection.

D. The Mark of the Beast (13:16-18)  
(mark = χάραγμα)

1. The Purpose of the Mark

"Just as the elect receive a seal to protect them from the coming of the wrath of God, so the followers of the beast receive his mark to escape his wrath against followers of the Lamb" (Thomas, 2:180).

The mark is given for the purpose of being able to exert economic pressure on the citizens of earth. Without the mark, one cannot buy or sell. This suggests that the whole world will share a common economic system. For most people, the economic pressure is forceful enough to get most people's obedience, but not necessarily to the point of worshipping the Beast. Hence, a stronger incentive like capital punishment will serve to accomplish this desire of Satan. So, there are three incentives for people to cooperate: (1) the signs, (2) economic pressure, and (3) capital punishment. Those who resist are those who are able to keep their perspective (see the Song in 15:2-4; cf. 7:9-17).

2. The number 666 (Greek ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ)

Gematria? For a general explanation, see A. Johnson in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, pp 533-535. This probably involves *counting* to solve the riddle (the verb ψηφισάτω means "let him count"). The letters had numerical values. Note the remark that "the number is that of a man." Thus, the name pertains to a specific king, not just the empire.

Explanations number as many as the commentators themselves. Barclay, for example, uses the Hebrew letters and comes up with "Nero Caesar," in keeping with the theory that the Antichrist was Nero redivivus. Speculation, however, is needless, as it will probably only be useful to Christians of that time as an aid (or confirmation) to recognizing the false Christ.<sup>1</sup>

## II. THE LAMB WITH THE 144,000 (14:1-5)

The 144, 000 here recalls Rev 7:1-8. In the former case, they were identified as those who were sealed from the tribes of Israel. This scene is meant to mark a strong contrast to the preceding chapter in which the two beasts are allowed to persecute and kill believers.

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<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus (V.29-30) relates the number to the age of Noah at the time of the flood (600 years) and the 60 and 6 dimensions of Nebuchadnezzar's image. But he advises not to try to specifically identify a person based on this.

**Chapter 13**

13:1 – "and he stood on the  
the sand of the seashore"

The world worships the beast

Satan's leaders depicted as beasts

Followers of Beast marked on fore-  
head and on right hand

Deceiving those on earth

**Chapter 14**

14:1 – the Lamb is seen standing  
on Mt. Zion

The 144,000 worship the Lamb

Christ depicted as a Lamb

144,000 have name of His Father  
written on their foreheads

"no lie was found in their mouth; they  
are blameless"

A. Is this a heavenly scene?

Some would take this scene as a heavenly one, i.e., Mt. Zion looks at the heavenly Mt. Zion. In support of this, they would point out: (1) there is singing before the throne; and (2) Mt. Zion seems to depict the "heavenly Jerusalem" in Heb 12:22. However, it is not clear from the text that the 144,000 are to be equated with the singers, or that they are in the same place. The main point is that only the 144,000 can learn the song. Even if the reference in Heb 12:22 should be a heavenly one (and it probably is), that does not mean that the reference to Mt. Zion in Rev 14:1 must be understood that way (all five other references to Zion in the NT do not — see Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15; Rom 9:33; 11:26; and 1 Pet 2:6). On the other hand, there are some striking similarities to Rev 3:12 where the New Jerusalem is in view ("which comes down from heaven"). Perhaps, this should remain an open question.

B. What does this scene depict?

Thomas and Walvoord take significantly different views.

1. Thomas: a look at the millennial kingdom of 20:4-6

Thomas feels that the scene is meant to look into the distant future, forming a contrast to ch 13, thus providing encouragement in light of the suffering of ch 13. He states (2:191), "So this advance projection pictures the Warrior-King of 19:11-16 as having already returned to earth bringing with Him that select number who have suffered martyrdom at the hand of the beast (13:15)." One should be aware, however, that Thomas regards these 144,000 as martyrs, of the same group mentioned in Rev 12:17:

The sealing they received protects them only from the wrath of God, not from the wrath of the dragon and the beast (cf. 12:12). These are the same 144,000 as in chapter 7, but they are also the same as the rest of the woman's seed in 12:17, the witnesses to whom the dragon has access through the beast and who will experience martyrdom because of their refusal to worship the beast (13:15). They are a special group as 14:4 indicates. They are the vanguard who bear the brunt of the struggle against the beast and pay the price of their own lives. They enjoy a special bliss because they faced martyrdom bravely in anticipation of their ultimate triumph that is pictured here (Moffatt). In this scene, they have returned to earth to share in Christ's millennial reign (2:192).

2. Walvoord: survivors of the Tribulation who live to stand with Christ on a literal Mt. Zion

Rather than being martyrs, Walvoord sees them as survivors of the Tribulation period. When Christ returns, they are alive to stand with Him on literal Mt. Zion (i.e., in Jerusalem). So, despite all the tactics of the two beasts, this glimpse to the end of the Tribulation reveals the true victors. He states,

... this is the same group mentioned in 7:4-8, except that here they are in a later period of the Tribulation. Chronologically the vision anticipates the triumph of the 144,000 still intact at the time of Jesus Christ's return from heaven to earth. In contrast with many others who become martyrs, these people live through the period. But they are not the only ones to survive, as many Gentiles and Jews will turn to Christ in the end time and somehow escape martyrdom and be honored to welcome Christ at His return.<sup>2</sup>

#### C. Other Observations

The reference to the "new song" in v 3 may be a loud angelic chorus (note 5:11 and 7:11). The 144,000 do not represent all the redeemed, as they are celibates—lit., "virgins"—and "have not been defiled with women." This characteristic should be understood in light of the special period in which they live. Celibacy is not normally exalted as a virtue (1 Tim 3:2; 4:3), but in the Tribulation it may be expedient (at least for this special group). Also, the phrase "not having been defiled with women" need not imply anything negative about legitimate marriages. The idea is probably that in the Tribulation, many earth-dwellers will be participating in *illegitimate relationships* (e.g., adultery, fornication, etc.). The 144,000 do not allow themselves to be defiled in this way. Believers (in general) in the Tribulation are certainly free to enter into *Christ-honoring marriages*—in contrast to unbelievers—but the 144,000 will neither marry nor commit fornication.

### III. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY SIX ANGELS (14:6-20)

#### A. Four Climactic Announcements (14:6-13)

##### 1. 1st Angel in Midheaven (14:6-7)

This seems to be more of a message of God's righteousness and judgment than a message of salvation. However, it represents one clear and final call to turn to God before the final judgments. Will men be so hardened as to turn a deaf ear to this final direct warning?

##### 2. 2nd Angel (14:8)

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" – an anticipation of the last bowl judgment (cf. Isa 21:9). On the "wine of the passion of her immorality," see Jer 51:6-7.

##### 3. 3rd Angel (14:9-12)

This is a warning of worshipping the beast and his image (or receiving the mark). They are objects of God's wrath. Verse 10 says "they will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength." That is, there will be no mercy mixed

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<sup>2</sup> John Walvoord, "Revelation," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, 964.

with it! The reference to "in the presence of the Lamb" is a sad reminder that they will see all the glories of what could have been. What a lesson for us not to be envious of the wicked, for they will pay a heavy price!

4. The Faithfulness of the Martyrs (14:13)

This is a special blessing for those who die in the Tribulation (in contrast to those who are tormented in vv 9-12). The remark "for their deeds follow with them" looks forward to rewards that will be gained for faithfulness to Christ during this time.

B. The Harvest and the Vintage (14:14-20)

1. Introduction: *one like a son of man sitting on a cloud* (14:14)

This refers to Christ (cf. Rev 1:13). The sickle looks at judgment He is about to bring.

2. 4th Angel (14:15-16)

harvest of the earth is ripe (ἐξηράνθη) – withered or *over ripe*

3. 5th Angel (14:17)

4. 6th Angel (14:18-20)

grapes are ripe (ῥιμασσαν) – "to be fully grown" or "in prime condition"

"wine press of the wrath of God" (cf. Isa 63:1-6; Lam 1:15; and Joel 3:13)  
– this may be prophetic of Rev 19

"outside the city" – a reference to Jerusalem (so Walvoord, Toussaint, Thomas). Recall 11:8.

Even if the reference to blood up to the horses' bridles is a hyperbole, it still represents a massive slaughter and loss of human life.