

The Rapture As Taught In Revelation

Part Six

The Beast, The Lamb And The Messages of the Angels

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

The Anti-christ And His Character: Revelation 13

- **Verse 1:** He arose from the sea (Sea: The gentile nations of the world). He is the antichrist (Mt. 24:5,24; 1 Jn. 2:18). The world leader also called the Little Horn (Daniel 7,8,20, 21, 24, 25).
- **Verse 2:** He was like a leopard with the feet of a bear, his mouth like that of a lion: the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and his authority (Dan. 7:7, 23).
- **Verse 3:** One of his heads was wounded to death, but was healed: The world wondered after the beast.
- **Verse 4:** The whole world worshiped the dragon which gave power to the beast. No one could make war with the beast.
- **Verse 5:** His mouth spake great things and blasphemies; and power was given to him for 42 months.
- **Verse 6:** *He blasphemed God and His name, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*
- **Verse 7:** He had authority to make war with the saints, and overcome them: and power was given to him *over all who dwelled on the earth* (all kindreds, tongues and nations).
- **Verse 8:** *All who dwell on the earth shall worship him*, whose names were not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundations of the earth.
- **Verse 9:** Let all who are concerned open their ears to hear!
- **Verse 10:** He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. This is the patience and the faith of the saints. The beast and his followers will be overthrown and judged. God knows His tribulation servants will persevere and endure to the end.
- **Verse 11:** Another beast came up out of the earth, having two horns as a lamb, but spoke as a dragon.
- **Verse 12:** He had all the power of the first beast, *and causes all who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast*, whose deadly wound was healed.
- **Verse 13:** He does great wonders such as making fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.
- **Verse 14:** *He deceives all who dwell on the earth* by the miracles he does in the sight of the beast; *saying to them that dwell on the earth*, that they should make an image of the beast; and his number is 666.
- **Verse 15:** He had power to give life to the image of the beast, that the image should speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
- **Verse 16:** He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or their foreheads:
- **Verse 17:** *No man* could buy or sell unless he accepted the mark of the beast, or the number of his name.
- **Verse 18:** Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore *and* six. (My italics).

Comment: *Them that dwell on the earth:* There are three groups who belong to this phrase:

1. **Israel (temporary):** until they say, "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*". God supernaturally protects Israel after the abomination of desolation takes place in the Temple at mid-week of tribulation (See Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14).
2. **Saints (temporary):** Multitudes, a number impossible for man to count (7:9-17). Referred to as simply "saints" because they are the only ones on earth—during the tribulation—who fit the title *saints* (6:9-11). They are those who washed their robes and will be beheaded for the Lamb.
3. **Rejectors:** These include the haters who serve satan wholeheartedly in spite of the seal, Trumpet, and bowl Judgments (Rev. 9: 20, 21). They are those "who dwell on the earth" as a habitat. They have no claim on the Kingdom of God.

The Lamb of God and the 144,000 witnesses: (Chapter 14)

The 14th chapter consists of one vision divided into six parts, and evidently has to do with the closing up of the Great Tribulation and the introduction of the kingdom. The first part of the vision is that of the Lamb on Mt. Zion. John tells us,

1) "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2) And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3) And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living ones, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4) These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb, 5) And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (14:1-5).

When God says Israel, He means Israel. When He speaks of Jerusalem He does not intend us to understand that either heaven or the church is in view; and Mt. Zion is the same which David first set apart to God, and is a distinct locality to this day in the land of Palestine, within the limits of the city of Jerusalem. It is a place on earth, not in heaven, and there the Lord Jesus Christ is going to gather the Israeli remnant to Himself, when He comes to set up His kingdom. I believe the 144,000 of this chapter are the same as the sealed 144,000 of chapter 7. In the earlier chapter John saw them sealed before the Great Tribulation began; God had pledged Himself to protect them. No matter how their enemies might despise them, He had set His own mark upon them, and He had promised to bring them safely through those tempestuous and difficult days. Now, in chapter 14, we see that same company gathered about the Lamb on Mt. Zion, the firstfruits of the kingdom age.

The Lord reveals His Father's Name to them; they know God as Father, and rejoice in His care and tender love. In heaven there are those who rejoice with them. But, as the Great Tribulation goes on, Jewish believers, who will be martyred because of their faith, will also join that heavenly throng. So we are told that John heard "a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; the voice of harpers harping with their harps. These sing a new song before the throne, and before the living ones and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which, were redeemed from the earth." But God did not forget His church. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit during the age of Grace—at salvation:

- Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father **sealed**. (John 6:27).
- Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this **seal**, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2 Timothy 2:19).
- Who hath also **sealed** us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1:22).
- In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13).
- And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed** unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30).

The company on Mt. Zion is described as undefiled, a virgin band, who have kept themselves from the corruption which seemingly has taken control of this generation. They consider it a privilege to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, for they are described as being redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The blessing of Psalm 32 pronounced upon the man in whom is no guile (verse2). But David begins this Psalm because of a grave sin in his life. He considered it to be *hidden*, that is, till prophet Nathan challenged his integrity. After being forgiven, David said by revelation, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" (Vs. 1,2).

A guileless man is not a sinless man; he is one who has nothing to hide. When sin is all confessed and

judged in the presence of God, guile is absent. And so this guileless company are described as without fault before the throne of God; not that they appear there in any righteousness of their own, but saved by the same precious blood that today makes righteous the believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.¹

The second section is that of the everlasting gospel:

6) "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7) Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (verses 6, 7).

This everlasting gospel is not a *different* gospel from that which has been proclaimed throughout the centuries. The fact it is called "everlasting" shows it is identical with the gospel as proclaimed from the beginning. It is the good news, of all the ages, declaring God's sovereignty; and man's happiness depends on him recognizing His authority. The fact of the full truth of the gospel of the grace of God is that it *never* changes. The gospel of the kingdom is but another aspect of this same news from heaven, emphasizing particularly the Lordship of Christ. There can only be one gospel, for the apostle tells us, "*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" But that one gospel has different phases. In the epistle to the Galatians Paul speaks of "*the gospel of the circumcision*" and the "*gospel of the uncircumcision*"—the same gospel, but presented in one way to the Jews and another to the Gentiles.

But what exactly is different about this specific incident?

It's not Billy Graham or Bill Johnson preaching and ministering healing to the masses. It is an angel. Here he is, soaring through the heavens preaching this gospel of Jesus Christ to the Christ-rejecting nations. To me, this shows God's tremendous compassion and mercy to mankind, no matter the condition of the heart. It proves to me He will go all the way to give every person opportunity after opportunity to humble himself in tears of repentance unto salvation. As I stated recently in a earlier part of this series, there are none, not one single *Church Age* ministry noted by the Word of God—during the tribulation—by any gentile! God is using Israelites and angels to bring forth the complete gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations during this time of judgment. Now, the puzzle is this: Even through the very worst of nightmarish plagues and judgments from the throne of God continue to fall on man, a huge number living during the tribulation period *remain stiff-necked and continue to follow their father, the devil, rather than coming to the Savior.*

The Son of Man is likened unto a man who has gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. When the word is given by the Father He will descend to take the kingdom; to be proclaimed as King of kings, and Lord of lords. Throughout this dispensation, He is receiving unto Himself, from among both Jews and Gentiles all who believe on His name, and uniting them into the one body, the church. After the church has gone, there will not be a Christian left on earth. Then God is going to begin again to work among the Jews (Daniel's 70th week), and will send them out to preach the gospel of the kingdom unto the ends of the earth. Finally, we have the very last phase of that gospel, immediately preceding His coming. It is the final call for the guilty nations to prostrate themselves in the dust, and find their Creator. It is only by His grace and mercy to men in that hour—before the last judgment—that He continues to call and receive all who will come to Him and repent of their sin, while His mercies endure. We do not hear of any response in this chapter, but Scripture elsewhere relays to us that many who had never previously heard and rejected the gospel will, in that day, hear the message and repent—and that is by the ministry of angels!

¹ Lectures on the Book of Revelation By HA Ironside; Page 255; Loizeaux Bros. Publ., Neptune, N.J., ©none. 1920.

The third section of the vision is that of verse 8:

8) "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Babylon is more fully described for us in chapters 17 and 18, but we have to defer any detailed exposition of this subject except to say that just as Babylon of old was the fountainhead of idolatry, so is mystic Babylon today the mother of all false religious teaching in Christianity. It is headed up in one great false church—that worldly church, which has proved so unworthy and false to her Lord, which is to be broken absolutely to pieces, to be utterly destroyed. Unfortunately, today the mainline church seems to have fallen asleep; and many, even in our own USA are saying, "*There's no God; there's no true church.*"

It would be great if all preachers of the gospel realized that, when we play games with religion where real conversion cannot take place, and which has no place for the work of the Holy Spirit, the whole thing will soon go on the rocks. In spite of the lateness of the times in which we live, it is still true that when faithful men preach the true gospel of the grace of God under the anointing and power, people will also have the desire to live in His presence, wherever they are. Speaking generally, even unsaved men and women have more respect for the old, old story of redeeming love than they have for these modern shams. When a man comes to the place where he no longer believes in the Bible, in the blood of Christ, in regeneration, he says to himself, "What a fool I am, paying money to keep up the church."

Babylon, for a while, will dominate everything. The head of the nations will be the head of the church. The Antichrist will be supreme in religious matters; but when Babylon falls, what a fall it will be!

The next section gives us the third angel's message. We read in verses 9 to 13,

9) "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 forever 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. 12) Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 13) And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me. Write. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

What a terrible thing this is! A message from heaven declaring that those who turn away from the true God, who reject His Word, who instead worship the Beast and his image, will have to drink the very dregs of the cup of God's wrath.

When one realizes the judgment pronounced here is the Judgment of apostasy and God will press the cup of His wrath to the lips of those who have refused the cup of salvation, it all becomes clear. Nor is there any evidence judgment will come to an end, for verse eleven distinctly says, "*The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever 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 will require a great deal of courage to stand up against all that apostate condition, and hold to the truth of God as then revealed. So we are told in verse 12, "*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" This is in line with what we have been pointing out, that these converts appear to be Jewish believers. They keep the commandments of God, as made known in the Old Testament, and yet the faith of Jesus as declared in the New Testament. They will have learned, at last, that Jesus is the promised Messiah, who was rejected by their nation when He came in grace, but coming again in mighty power; and so they will repent and desire to glorify the One their

nation rejected.

Note in verse 13 that little word "henceforth." It refers to a coming day. A voice from heaven says, "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*" The point seems to be this: the darkest part of the Great Tribulation is still before them. The stormclouds, heavy with judgment, may break at any time; but, immediately following, the kingdom is to be set up. Those who pass through the tribulation will enter into the kingdom on earth. Those who die by martyrdom during its course will have their part in the heavenly kingdom, and so a special blessing will be theirs: in other words, from that point on it will really be better to die than to live. They will rest from their labors, be spared further tribulation on the earth, and shall have their place with their Lord in heaven, which will be far better than the highest place in the kingdom here on earth, glorious as that will be.

I have a question for you, whether saved or unsaved. You, too must leave this earth shortly; what kind of works are going to follow you? If saved, what have you been doing for the Lord? If unsaved, your sins will follow after you—those sins you have tried to erase from your mind; those sins from which you have fled. When you stand naked and miserable before the great white throne, you will be judged accordingly, and they will drag you down to the lake of fire. Just remember this: The blood of Christ alone can wash you from all those sins, and then, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, you can live for Him in this scene, and your works will follow you to heaven, where you will spend eternity with Christ.

The fifth part of the vision is of a most solemn harvest, as recorded in verses 14 to 16:

14) "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15) And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16) And He that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

You will remember that our Lord Jesus spoke about the harvest, and He declared that it is the end of the age, the time when the wicked are going to be separated from the just, when He is going to gather the wheat into His barns, but burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable. This is what you have here: it is discriminating judgment. The earth is reaped. Everything that is of God, the Son of Man will claim for Himself; all that is contrary will be given up to judgment. Know it is the Son of Man who sits upon the cloud and directs the reapers. All judgment is committed unto the Son: the One who once hung on Calvary's cross is the same blessed person who is coming to execute judgment. This is, I believe, the same, in nature, as the judgment in Matthew 25. It is pre-millennial, and not, like the judgment of the great white throne, post-millennial. Jesus is coming back to the world that crucified Him, and He is going to gather for His kingdom, from all nations, those who have heard His message and cared for His shepherds; but all who have heard His gospel, rejecting it, will be given up to judgment.

The last part of the vision is that of the vintage. It is very different from the harvest, in that the harvest is, as we have just seen, discriminatory, while the vintage is unsparing judgment.

17) "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18) And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19) And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20) And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs,"

The vintage has to do with the vine of the earth—and this vine is apostate Israel. We are familiar with the figure, as used in regard to Israel in the Old Testament. Isaiah uses it, and in Hosea we hear the Lord

saying, *"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."* The same figure is used in psalms 80 and 81. When our Lord was here He could say, *"I am the true vine."* He was the only one in Israel bearing good fruit, and all who accept His message become branches in the living vine. By and by, the vine is going to be replanted in Palestine. In fact, the vine *is* being replanted in Palestine. The Jews are yet going back to their own land; it stirs one's soul as Scripture is being fulfilled before our eyes. They are being replanted in their own vineyard, but replanted for what? For the vintage of the wrath of God. *A remnant will be gathered out, separated to the Lord, but the rest will be given up to unsparing judgment in the time of Jacob's trouble.* Fleshly Israel, the vine of the earth, can produce no fruit for God. But, in that day of great distress, the clusters of the vine of the earth will be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And we are told the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. This is said to be the actual length of the land of Palestine. The picture is that of the entire land drenched in blood up to the horse bridles. What will the reality be? O Lord, how long?

Thank God, there are brighter things ahead. In fact, the best days for Israel, and the whole earth, lie beyond that awful scene of wrath and carnage. But we need to remember that the people of the Jews brought their judgment upon their own heads by refusing the Prince of Peace when He came in grace to deliver them. In Pilate's judgment hall they cried, *"His blood be on us and on our children."* How dreadfully has this fearful imprecation been answered by a just God as the centuries bear witness. The scene depicted in these closing verses of the present chapter shows a more dreadful fulfilment is yet in the future. Immanuel's land, once stained with His own precious blood, will be red with the gore of those who reject Him, and who, even in that day, when their own Scriptures will be so marvelously fulfilled before their very eyes, will still refuse Him and own instead the unholy claims of the Antichrist. Of old, they chose Barabbas in place of Jesus which is called Christ. Unchanged in spirit to the very end, some will prefer the "son of perdition" to the Son of God, and thus bring upon themselves swift destruction.²

And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: (Ezekiel 36:10).

And I will make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: (Ezekiel 37:22).

After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. (Ezekiel 37:8).

The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord." (Zechariah 9:1).

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (Romans 11:26)

—the end of part six—

www.christsbondservants.org

² Ibid. Pages 263-268