

# Love Community Baptist Church

## Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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## Revelation – Chapter 13 and 14

The beast rising from the land.

(Revelation 13:11) John's initial description of this second beast.

*Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.*

This creature represents someone like the beast rising from the sea, because the same word beast is used to describe them both. At the same time, this beast is different.

- They are different in origin, because one comes out of the sea, the other out of the earth.
- They are different in rank, because the second is subordinate to the first (causes the earth... to worship the first beast, Revelation 13:12).
- They are different in appearance, because the second has a mild, "lamb-like" appearance.

**And he had two horns like a lamb:** The two horns may express the fact that this beast has authority in two realms, such as religious and political authority. Or, he may have two horns simply because that's how many horns lambs have (two horns like a lamb).

Despite his lamb-like appearance, the message of the second beast is the same as the message of the first beast.

- This second beast is called the false prophet (Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10), as someone distinct from the first beast (the Antichrist) and the dragon (Satan).
- With the dragon, the beast rising from the sea, and the beast rising from the land we have an unholy trinity. The dragon is the anti-Father, the beast rising from the sea is the anti-Christ, and the beast rising from the land is the anti-Holy Spirit.

(Revelation 13:12-15) The second beast's "job description."

*And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth — by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

The beast rising from the earth is essentially a Satanic prophet, who leads the world to worship the beast and the dragon.

It may seem fantastic to some that the world will be led into worship of a man and of the devil. But by nature, men have an undeniable religious impulse, and they also have an undeniable rebellion against

God. What men want most is not the elimination of religion, but their own religion. They say they want the kingdom, but they don't want God in it.

The beast rising from the sea has the "signs and wonders" to back up his false teaching. A specific miracle of the false prophet is described: he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. It is important that John highlights this miracle. In the eyes of the deceived world, it answers the miracle of the two witnesses, who minister during this period and are persecuted by the Antichrist and his false prophet (Revelation 11:5). To the deceived world, this also puts this false prophet in the class of Elijah (1 Kings 18). We can imagine the false prophet as saying, "Let the true God answer with fire" and then performing his deceptive wonder.

- In the days of the Exodus, Aaron performed miracles, and up to a point was matched miracle-for-miracle by the magicians of Egypt (Exodus 7-9).
- In Deuteronomy 13:1-5, God assumes there will be supernatural works on behalf of false prophets and idols, and He warns His people to judge a worker of miracles by their message, not only by their works.
- Jesus said that some who worked miracles — even in His name — were false followers and would perish in hell (Matthew 7:22-23).
- Jesus said that in the end times, false prophets would emerge and show great signs and wonders to deceive (Matthew 24:24).
- Paul said that the Antichrist will come with all power, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- Knowing all this, the emphasis on signs and wonders among some Christians is frightening. Some Christians say or think, "You can really know where God is and where His power is by signs and wonders." Thinking this way is to leave yourself wide open to deception.

The beast rising from the earth will use a deceptive, animated image as the focus point of the worship of the beast.

i. It may seem strange to us to have the whole world give this kind of worship to the image of a man, but the personality cults of totalitarian governments in the twentieth century are a good example of this kind of worship. All we have to do is remember totalitarian states like the Soviet Union or Communist China, and their omnipresent pictures of Stalin or Mao and we see a pattern that will be ultimately fulfilled by the Antichrist.

ii. The image of the beast is animated in some way, in that it has breath and can speak. Whether the image is animated supernaturally or technologically, the result will be impressive. The Psalmist mocked idol worshippers because the idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not (Psalm 135:15-16). This image of the Antichrist will be a different kind of idol, because the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

iii. This idolatrous image is what Jesus, Daniel, and Paul spoke of as the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). It is an idolatrous image set up in the holy place of a rebuilt temple; it is an abomination in the sense of being supreme idolatry, and it is desolation in the sense that it will bring the judgment described by the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

iv. This is the summation of the power of the Antichrist, whose authority ends after forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). This marks the halfway point of the final seven years of man's rule of this planet. The Antichrist's power ends as soon as it peaks.

v. This is not a recent understanding of this passage. The first commentary we have on the Book of Revelation, written by Victorinus in the early church, says of this Revelation 13:15: "He shall cause also that a golden image of Antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, and that the apostate angel should enter, and thence utter voices and oracles."

### **(Revelation 13:16-17) The economic strategy of the first beast and the second beast.**

***He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.***

- a. He causes all... to receive a mark: Under the government of the beast and his associate, all will be given a mark. Without the mark, one will not be able to participate in the economy (no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark of his name).
- i. Since the ancient Greek word for mark (charagma) isn't generally applied to people, some have taken this as a symbolic mark. But a literal mark needed to buy or sell is certainly conceivable and practical.
- ii. The technology to give people a mark that enables them to buy and sell in the electronic economy is available. There are many different ways it could happen, and such programs are proposed and tested constantly.
- b. A mark on their right hand or on their foreheads: Satan is not a creative being, all he can do is imitate God. We are not surprised to find that this too is a Satanic parody of something God will do; it imitates God's mark upon his people (Revelation 7:3-4).
- c. The number of his name: This was a common concept in the ancient world. In Greek (and Hebrew as well), letters were assigned a numerical value, such as "A" equaling 1, "B" equaling 2, and so forth. For example, graffiti in the ruins of Pompeii reads "I love her whose number is 545."

**(Revelation 13:18) The number of the beast.**

***Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.***

His number is 666: Does this tell us who the beast is, by figuring out the numerical value of a name and seeing if it adds up to 666? Using this method, many candidates for Antichrist have been suggested, such as the Pope or the Papacy, John Knox, Martin Luther, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and so forth. But the schemes for unlocking the number of the beast are as confusing as they are endless.

Some commentators observe that there are six Roman numerals (I, V, X, L, C, and D). If you add them all up, you get 666. Some take this to say that the Antichrist will be a Roman. Or, they point out that all the numbers from 1 to 36 add up to 666. Beast in the evil sense appears 36 times in the Bible.

It is the number of a man: One persistent opinion, especially in the early church, was that this number identified the Antichrist with Caesar Nero. But to make the name "Caesar Nero" fit, one must take a variant spelling of the Greek form of a Latin name, transliterated into Hebrew characters.

It is the number of a man: The letters of "Jesus" in Greek add up to 888. 666 may be a Satanic counterpart to the name of Jesus, or 666 may be God's evaluation of such a Satanic counterpart — it falls short.

- As compared to the number 888, the number 666 may signify an unholy trinity. It may be a human and demonic imitation of God, inherently falling short of the perfect and true. Seven is the number of completion and totality, and 6 doesn't quite make it.
- **His number is 666:** Or, the number 666 may harken back to Solomon's wages. 1 Kings 10:14 says that Solomon received yearly six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold. Perhaps this suggests that the Antichrist, like Solomon, is a good man who becomes corrupted.
- Modern interpretations of the idea of the Antichrist are full of the idea of some demon-child, marked by obvious evil from his birth, such as in the Omen movies. But the Antichrist may be someone whose evil is only seen after his rise to power.
- **His number is 666:** Christians need not fear the number 666 in a superstitious way; but it is interesting to see the way the world has an attachment to this number — even with things like "666" brand cough syrup.

The two beasts are Satanic imitations. We are presented with a false “Christ” and a false “John the Baptist” who promote the false god. Satan can’t create, but he can effectively deceive with imitation.

Imitations work precisely because they are similar; if they were so obviously different, it would be easy to tell the difference. We must beware and be familiar with the genuine.

Instead of obsessing with fear and interest about the imitation — the Antichrist — how much more appropriate is it for Christians to be interested in the genuine: Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 14

### IMAGES OF GOD’S VICTORY AND THE BEAST’S DEFEAT

**The fate of the 144,000.**

**(Revelation 14:1-3) The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion.**

*Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.*

These 144,000 were last seen in Revelation 7, where they were identified as a group of Jewish believers who minister during the great tribulation and are given a seal of protection throughout that period. Since they stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb, it shows that they emerge victorious from the great tribulation. The beast of Revelation 13 certainly has not defeated the 144,000; here they are triumphant, worshipping, and standing firm with Jesus.

- Revelation 14 will answer two important questions raised by Revelation 13. The beast of Revelation 13 was terrifying and awesome; he even can make war against the saints and overcome them (Revelation 13:7). So it is fair to ask, “Is the beast completely victorious over all God’s people?” The presence of the 144,000 on Mount Zion with the Lamb emphatically says “no.” The second question has to do with this Satanic dictator himself: “What happens to the beast and his followers?” The rest of Revelation 14 will answer that question.
- In Revelation 7, the 144,000 are seen at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 14, it shows them in triumph at the end of the Great Tribulation.

They gathered on Mount Zion because Zion — the ancient name for the hills that make up Jerusalem — is the place where the Messiah gathers His redeemed and reigns over the earth (Psalm 48, Isaiah 24:23, Joel 2:32, Obadiah 17 and 21, Micah 4:1, 4:7).

- The 144,000 are like the young Jewish men who survived the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:19-25. They prove God’s ability to preserve His people.

**Having His Father’s name written on their foreheads:** The followers of Satan and the beast may have a mark on their hand or forehead (Revelation 13:16-17). But this mark is just a copy of the idea behind the identifying mark on the foreheads of each one of the 144,000, showing that they belong to the Father.

**The voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder:** This is the voice of God (Revelation 1:15 and 4:5). Perhaps God spoke here to proclaim His approval of these 144,000 faithful servants in the spirit of Matthew 25:21: Well done, good and faithful servant.

**And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps:** We remember that the elders of Revelation 5:8 have harps. Perhaps this is where their music is heard, to accompany the worshipful singing of the 144,000 as they sing a new song, unique to them.

**And they sang as it were a new song before the throne:** In Revelation 14:1, the 144,000 have their feet firmly planted on an earthly Mount Zion. Yet their praise takes them right to the presence of God, right before the throne. In our praise and worship, we really can transport ourselves and be heard in heavenly places.

**(Revelation 14:4-5) The description of the 144,000.**

***These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.***

Many take the virginity of the 144,000 as simply a symbol of their general purity (as in 2 Corinthians 11:2). Nevertheless, Paul recommended celibacy in distressing times (1 Corinthians 7:25-35), and Jesus spoke of woes upon those with children and families in that day (Matthew 24:19-21). It isn't hard to see that God would call these 144,000 to a literal celibacy for the kingdom's sake during the great tribulation.

- Commonly the term virgins is applied to women, not men. So does the use of virgins here mean that all the 144,000 are women? Not at all, according to the great Greek scholar A.T. Roberston: "Parthenos can be applied to men as well as women."

**These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes:** These 144,000 are of Jewish heritage (Revelation 7:4-8). Yet they are also clearly believers in Jesus, otherwise they would not stand with the Lamb, follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and could not be without fault before the throne of God.

- Each of the vast multitude saved during the Tribulation will be saved in exactly the same manner as anyone today: by grace, through a personal faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation. Even though the rapture of the church ends God's dealings with the church as such on the earth, it certainly does not change the way people come to salvation or become part of the larger family of God, which includes all the redeemed, before and after the church.
- Because they are described as firstfruits, many have thought that they themselves will be instrumental in God's plan for bringing in a great ingathering during the tribulation. Revelation 7:9 describes an innumerable company saved out of the Great Tribulation, and these 144,000 described as firstfruits, may be used to preach the gospel to those who will be saved in this period.

**Proclamations from heaven.**

**(Revelation 14:6-7) An angel preaches the gospel.**

***Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people — saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."***

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth: This other angel preaches the gospel, but also announces judgment (the hour of His judgment has come). Because the judgment of God is so evident on the earth in great tribulation, it is no wonder why the crowd of those saved through the great tribulation can't be numbered (Revelation 7:9-14).

This is what the angel will tell the whole world to do. They can do this and give glory to God and worship Him willingly in this life, or be compelled to give glory to Him later.

- It is certain that one day all will give glory to God. Philippians 2:9-11 says, Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.

**To every nation, tribe, tongue, and people:** This can be a valid fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel would be preached to all the world before His second coming. But this can never be a valid excuse for neglecting the urgency of missions. God has not given the responsibility for spreading the Gospel to angels, but unto His people.

- However, this is the only place in the New Testament where we see angels preaching the Gospel. In God's sublime wisdom, He has chosen to give that responsibility to people alone, apart from the rarest of exceptions.

**(Revelation 14:8) An angel announces Babylon's fall.**

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

More on Babylon will come in Revelation 17. For now, it is enough to see it representing mankind in organized rebellion against God.

**Because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication:** When we are told that Babylon has led all nations into fornication, the main idea is spiritual fornication — the worship of other gods. However, we are never surprised to see spiritual fornication accompanied with literal immorality.

**(Revelation 14:9-11) A third angel warns of coming judgment.**

***Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."***

If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand: This reminds us that there is a connection between worshipping the beast and his image and receiving his mark on his forehead or on his hand. No one will casually or accidentally take the mark. The connection between worshipping the beast and taking the mark will be clear enough.

- Although, receiving the mark may seem innocent enough to those who dwell on the earth. In their eyes it may not seem like much more than a mere pledge of allegiance and devotion to the Antichrist and his government. It was the same way in the first few centuries of Christianity, when to burn a pinch of incense to an image of Caesar, and to pledge "Caesar is Lord" was regarded as an innocent act of civic duty to the ancient pagans.

**He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation:** Those who worship the Antichrist will be forced to drink the wine of the wrath of God. This cup of God's wrath is like undiluted wine, mixed with spices to make it still stronger (full strength).

- The idea that God holds a cup of wrath, which He makes those under judgment drink is expressed more than thirteen times in the Bible (Psalm 75:8 and Jeremiah 25:15 are examples).

This is the idea behind the cup that Jesus wanted to avoid if it were possible (Matthew 26:39). Jesus willingly took the cup of the Father's wrath that we deserved; here, the enemies of Jesus have no choice — the cup is forced upon them.

**The wine of the wrath of God... the cup of His indignation:** The wine in the cup is associated with wrath (the ancient Greek word thymos), which describes a passionate anger. The cup itself is associated with indignation (the ancient Greek word orge) which is anger from a settled disposition.

- The ancient Greek word orge is the common word for God's anger in the New Testament. The ancient word thymos is used only 11 times, and 10 of the 11 are in Revelation. Usually, God's anger towards sinners does not flash against them; it is simply His settled opposition against sin and unrighteousness. But in the Book of Revelation, which so clearly describes God's ultimate judgment, the term for passionate anger is used much more often.

He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night: This passage teaches several important truths about hell and the eternal destiny of the damned.

- In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb: This shows that God is not absent from hell. He is present in all His holiness and righteous judgment. Those who are in hell will wish God were absent, but He will not be. It is wrong to say that hell will be devoid of the presence of God; but it will be without any sense of His love. The presence of Jesus will be there, but only the presence of His holy justice and wrath against sin.
- The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night: Those who worship the Antichrist and receive his mark will endure this wrath and indignation for eternity in hell. Here, the fact of eternal torment is plainly stated; forever and ever means "forever and ever." If the only consequences for sin are in this life, or if the only penalty for sin is temporary, then clever sinners have won out over God. Walvoord says of the phrase forever and ever: "Literally 'into the ages of ages,' the strongest expression of eternity of which the Greek is capable."