

Revelation Bible Study

Remember, Revelation is a book of comfort to the Christian!!

Chapters 12-14

Camera angle Three

Remember – What happens in these verses has been going on since the beginning of time and will go on until the Judgment.

At this point view the picture (chapters 12-14). It will help bring greater insight into the actions of chapters 12-14.

Chapters 12–14 serve as a *pause* between the second (8:6–11:19) and the third (15:1–16:21) sevenfold visions of events taking place on earth. During this pause opposing forces vie to rule. This break between the second and third earthly visions is more than an interlude, such as the interlude that appeared between the sixth and seventh seals in the first sevenfold vision (7:1–17) and the one that transpired between the sixth and seventh trumpet-angels of the second sevenfold vision (10:1–11:14). For in this break between the second and third visions there is a lengthy pause or cessation by which the normal flow of the visionary prophecy in Revelation concerning events on earth is interrupted. The portrayal of events on earth is *suspended* in order to permit John to see a cosmic vision expounding events that *overarch* what he has been seeing happening on earth. What John views in Revelation 12–14 *dominates and controls* the events that he sees taking place on earth. That is, *these chapters visually explain to John why the events on earth are occurring.* (CC pp. 324-325)

The events depicted in this pause are cosmic in character because the actions depicted occur both above and on the earth. For what is portrayed before the eyes of John is nothing less than the cosmic war between God and the prince of darkness, a war that takes place in the heavens and then drops down to earth. This warfare between God and Lucifer (the fallen angel, see Is 14:12; cf. Is 27:1; Lk 10:17–18) is the *source and cause* of the warfare between God’s people on earth and the forces of evil. Revelation 12–14 is thus an exposition and an explanation of all that John sees happening on the earth from the time of Christ’s exaltation up to the end of this present world at Christ’s return. (CC pp. 324-325)

The Woman and the Dragon

Chapter 12

(Notes to help understanding)

12:1 sign. For a “sign” in the biblical sense is a visual presentation that exhibits something of the divine. It could be a visible token which serves as a confirmation of a gracious promise of God, or a visible guarantee of God’s presence. In his gospel John called miracles of Jesus “signs.”

12:1 a woman clothed with the sun. She represents God’s people (Israel and the Church), the saints of all times. That includes us.

12:1 moon under her feet. While “clothed about with the sun” indicates glory, “the moon underneath her feet” suggests dominion.

12:1 twelve stars. Twelve thus represents the people of God. This later applied to the NT people of God, the Church, led by the twelve apostles.

12:2 cried out in pain. This birth represents the coming of the Savior in the flesh. (cf. Micah 5:3). The woman is not only the mother of all believers (Gal. 4:26); she is also helped to bear and nurture the Christ, her Savior and Lord (Mt. 1:23). (TLSB)

12:3 red dragon.† Identified in v. 9 as Satan (cf. 20:2). (CSB)

12:3 seven heads... ten horns... crowns. Several descriptive details here resemble the depiction of the Lamb in 5:6. This is one of numerous places where the usurper Satan attempts to pass himself off as divine. (TLSB)

12:4 tail swept a third ... earth.† Signifies the great power of the dragon (Satan). (CSB)

12:4 Stars ... cast them to the earth. Stars often represent angelic figures (1:16, 20; 9:1). On that understanding, this depiction is likely Satan’s (and his host’s) original fall from heaven, when they first rebelled against God. (TLSB)

12:4 devour it. Satan saw an opportunity when Jesus assumed flesh and came into this world. So Satan took every opportunity to thwart God’s plan of salvation. Herod’s slaying of the innocents (Mt 2:16–18) is part of what lies behind this scene. (TLSB)

12:5 a son, a male child. This was Jesus coming to earth in human form.

12:5 snatched up to God. This is Jesus’ ascension. It is striking that no reference to His death or resurrection appears here. The emphasis is on His triumph. (TLSB)

12:6 desert. As Israel wandered in the wilderness, waiting to enter their true home, so also members of the Church live as pilgrims here on earth until they reach their Promised Land and true home, the new heaven and the new earth. During this time on earth, God takes care of them. (TLSB)

12:7 war. This war is not the original rebellion of the devil against God, which took place before the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1). This war and expulsion happened as a result of Christ’s victory and elevation. Not only is Satan judged, because of Christ’s triumphant return to his heavenly Father’s throne, Satan is now expelled and banished forever from God’s presence.

12:7 Michael. He is an archangel who defeats Satan in heavenly warfare. In Da 12:1 he is the protector of Israel who will deliver her from tribulation in the last days. (CSB)

12:13 He pursued the woman. Because Satan can no longer engage the resurrected and ascended Christ directly (vv 5, 9), he makes the Church (v 1) the object of his assaults. (TLSB)

12:14 wings of a great eagle.† Signify God’s care and concern for his people. The church receives divine help against the wiles of the devil. (CSB)

12:15 spewed water...drown the woman. Though God cares for the woman by hindering and restraining the serpent, nevertheless the serpent causes her much anxiety and pain.

12:17 rest of her offspring. Since even the earth takes part in God's work of protection, the dragon becomes even more furious that he cannot destroy the woman. So now he focuses his attention on "the rest of her seed," her children.

Summary of Chapter 12

Chapter 12 presents the awesome scene of the woman with Child, the dragon who attempts to destroy the Child, and (after the Child is taken to heaven) the war in heaven which results in the expulsion of Satan from God's heavenly presence. The chapter concludes with the dragon venting his fury on the woman and her offspring.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

The Beast of the Sea

13:1-10

(Notes to help understanding)

13:1 Sea. In the OT the "sea," especially in its boiling rage, is frequently portrayed as the place of the fearful chaos and destruction caused by mankind's sin and rebellion against God.

13:1 ten horns...seven heads...ten crowns. Like in chapter 12, these are misrepresentations of Christ by the devil.

13:2 leopard ... bear ... lion. This beast appears to be a composite of the four beasts Daniel saw in Dan 7:2-7. Remember that of the 404 verses in Revelation, a total of 278 contain references to the OT.

13:2 great authority. The beast represents and symbolizes every human authority and everything of the human nature that the dragon can corrupt and control and use in his warfare against the woman (the church) and her seed (individual Christians): political, governmental, social, economic, philosophical, and educational systems, as well as individuals.

13:3 fatal wound ... healed. The heads of the beast represent kings or rulers of one kind or another, because the dragon's schemes are carried out according to the intelligence he has given to the beast, which in turn the beast exercises through rulers and leaders in various spheres. The fact that one head was killed indicates that any particular ruler will not remain forever. Rulers come and go.

13:5-8. As the beast exercises authority "over every tribe and people and tongue and nation" (13:7), the woman and her seed will be isolated and tormented to no end, for throughout the

whole time period from Christ's ascension up to the End at his return (the era symbolized by the forty-two months, 13:5), she will have no relief from the beast's oppression. But the church will not perish, for the names of God's people are indelibly "written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world," and thus can never be removed from the heart and gracious care of God (13:8) (CC)

13:10 patient endurance and faithfulness. The beleaguered Church is encouraged to believe that, come what may, their eternal election is sure (cf Rm 8:31–39). (TLSB)

Summary of 13:1-10

These passages teach two truths: (1) The beast receives his power from the devil and serves the devil's purposes; (2) the beast is a powerful enemy of the church, but he will not be able to do any permanent damage to the elect.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

The Beast of the Earth

13:11-18

(Notes to help understanding)

13:11 another beast, coming out of the earth. The beast from the earth does not force itself upon people but rather insinuates itself into their confidence and then leads them astray.

13:11 two horns like a lamb. This beast does not appear as fearful as the first one (vv 1–3). Jesus' warning about the wolves in sheep's clothing still applies (Mt 7:15). (TLSB)

13: 11 exercised all the authority of the first beast. The trinity of evil is now complete. The beast from the earth is under the authority of the beast from the sea. The latter is subject to the dragon. Satan, secular power and religious compromise (or Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet) join against the cause of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (CSB)

This second beast destroys the Church from the inside, by introducing false doctrines and errant practices (cf. 1Jn 4:1–3). Cf. Rv. 19:20, where this second beast is explicitly called "the false prophet." (TLSB)

13:13 miraculous signs. This beast seems to wield divine power, but in fact only deceives. His are not true miracles because they are not done in conjunction with sound doctrine. (TLSB)

13:16 mark. Identifying marks sometimes served to signify ownership (cf Dt 15:17). The "mark" could be any kind of "mark, stamp, brand, tattoo," or even an "image" or "representation" by which a person in his or her manner of dress and/or conduct declares that he or she belongs to a specific spiritual influence and cult. These marks thus function as the demonic counterpart to the protective seal God places upon His people (cf 9:4). (TLSB)

13:17 buy or sell. This means that faithful Christians and their business may be boycotted because of their beliefs.

13:18 666. This threefold six may indicate a threefold falling short of seven, the number of perfection. It is the number of Satan. That would be a fitting number for the anti-Trinity at work in this chapter (Devil and two beasts).

Summary of 13:11-18

When the devil is left with only the Christians on earth he uses every possible tool available to him to destroy their faith. He uses earthly powers and influences (Beast of the Sea) and works at corrupting the church to destroy its message of salvation (Beast of the Earth). This brings tremendous pressure for Christians in the Church to compromise sound doctrine.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

The Lamb and the 144,000

14:1-5

(Notes to help understanding)

14:1 Mount Zion.† In the OT it was first the fortress of the pre-Israelite city of Jerusalem (2Sa 5:7), captured by David and established as his capital. Later it became a virtual synonym for Jerusalem. In Revelation, as in Heb 12:22–24, it is the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place of God and his people (cf. Gal 4:26). Here we are dealing with the church triumphant. It comes down to the new earth in 21:2–3. (CSB)

14:1 144,000. Everywhere in Revelation, 12 is the number associated with the church. Twelve squared is 144. One thousand is 10 cubed, a number for completeness. (CSB)

This is the second and final time that the 144,000 are mentioned. In Rev 7:1–8 they represented the church militant, the Christians on earth, who were sealed by God in preparation for the conflict before them.

Now John sees the Lamb on Mt. Zion leading the 144,000. How fitting it is that after the horrifying warfare of the dragon and his two beasts depicted in Revelation 12–13 John now sees the host of God's saints in the church militant accompanied by a song of victory. Though they were conquered in the earthly warfare by the beasts (13:7, 15), they are still victorious.

14:1 Name. This is the name of God that is applied in Christian baptism.

14:3 new song.† The theme is deliverance. A song of praise, gratitude and joy over their salvation, which only the redeemed can sing. (CSB)

The words of the new song are given in 5:9–14. It contains three stanzas. The first voices the truth that the Lamb is worthy to receive the scroll because he “ransomed for God with [his] blood” a people from all the nations and thus made them “a kingdom and priests” to God (5:9–10). In the second stanza the Lamb is praised and lauded as worthy of receiving all honor and glory because he was slain (5:12). And in the third stanza both God and the Lamb are given honor and glory (5:13).

14:5 Firstfruits. In the OT the firstfruits were the firstfruits of the harvest, which were offered to God in thanksgiving. To call the saints on earth “the firstfruit” suggests that they are an offering to God for the sake of the mission of Christ.

Summary of 14:1-5

This is a picture of supreme victory on the part of Christians who remained faithful unto the end. They are singing the song of victory.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

The Three Angels

14:6-13

(Notes to help understanding)

Three angels in succession (14:6, 8, 9) now announce the judgment of God on the two beasts conjured up by the dragon. Each angel is introduced as “another angel.” This indicates that they are not from among the seven trumpet-angels. They are among the many angels who appear throughout Revelation.

14:6 eternal gospel.† The gospel is the good news of our redemption through the blood of the Lamb. It is eternal in that it will be preached to the end of time (Mt 24:14). (CSB)

14:8 Babylon the Great. It represents all the enemies of the church at all times. The angel here assures the church of final victory. At the time of this writing, Rome was the evil enemy of the church.

14:8 maddening wine of her adulteries.† In Biblical terminology spiritual fornication is unfaithfulness to God and his word. (CSB)

14:10 wine of God’s fury ... cup of his wrath.† In the OT God’s wrath is commonly pictured as a cup of wine to be drunk. It is the response of a righteous God to those who refuse his love and grace. It emphasizes the final judgment will be public, for all to see.

14:11 burning sulfur. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by a rain of burning sulfur (Ge 19:24). Ps 11:6 speaks of a similar fate for the wicked.

14:12 patient endurance. The saints of God still in the warfare (and its suffering) hear the announcement of this promised judgment upon their enemies. A godly characteristic of the saints is their patient endurance in their deference to God's judgment and his timetable of executing it.

14:12 who obey God's commandments. † Not synergism. Those cleansed by holy baptism love the Lord who first loved them (1Jn 4:19), and that love is the first step to obedience to God's commandments. (CSB)

14:13 die in the Lord. † To die as a believing child of God. (CSB)

14:13 their deeds will follow them. † As evidence of the faith by which they were justified. (Matthew 25:34-40) (CSB)

Summary of 14:6-14

This is a message of comfort after the warning (13:11–18) against false teachings. The vision assures the church that false teachers will never silence the preaching of the gospel.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

The Harvest of the Earth

14:14-20

(Notes to help understanding)

14:14 white cloud. The whiteness of the cloud could signify the righteousness of God in judgment (Rev 20:11), and in particular the righteousness of Christ. The white cloud would then suggest that, in the majesty of God, the Lord Christ will execute the judgment in his righteousness.

14:14 on a cloud. In the OT the cloud was a visible sign of God's majestic presence with his people, in particular when he spoke his word (Ex 19:9; 24:15–18; 34:5–7). It was through a cloud that God spoke on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:5). In Rev 10:1 the "mighty angel" is clothed with a cloud when he comes to John to speak the word of God which instructed John to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples (10:8–11).

Acts 1:11 is spoken by two angels to the disciples at Jesus ascension. It states: "*Men of Galilee,*" they said, "*why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has*

been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

14:14 sickle. The Israelite sickle used for cutting grain was normally a flint or iron blade attached to a curved shaft of wood or bone. (CSB)

The “sharp sickle” in his hand depicts the victorious Christ coming at the end of time to reap and gather the harvest in “righteous retribution.” The purpose of wielding the sickle at the harvest is to cut the grain so that it can then be gathered and placed in the granary. As the grain is cut, weeds and tares among the grain are also cut, but then the grain is separated, and the weeds are put to the fire (see Mt 13:24–30).

14:17-20. John stresses the violent carnage of that judgment. The trampling of the grapes extracts their blood, which provides the wine that is poured out into the cup of God’s wrath. Thus there is a slight shift in the imagery: in 14:9–10 the idolaters (unbelievers) will *drink* the cup of wrath, but in 14:17–20 the unbelievers are the trampled grapes whose blood *fills* the cup of wrath. (CC)

14:20 outside the city.† Bloodshed would defile the city. Since in Revelation “the city” is frequently a name for the church, the phrase may recall the separation of believers from unbelievers as in two parables—the weeds (Mt 13:24–30, 36–43) and the net (Mt 13:47–50). (CSB)

14:20 1,600 stadia.† It is approximately the length of Palestine from north to south. Since in Revelation the number four is associated with the earth and ten is the figure for completeness, the number 1600 is the multiplied squares of four and ten. It is another reminder that this is the final judgment of the whole earth. (CSB)

Summary of 14:14-20

The harvest of the earth represents the Judgment Day.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?