

Class 6 – The Dragon and His Beasts; The Lamb and His 144,000 Rev 12-14

Outline of Rev 12-14

- Why Satan Is So Angry (12:1-17)
- How Satan Is Working: The Sea Beast (13:1-10)
- How Satan Is Working: The Land Beast/False Prophet (13:11-18)
- Jesus and His People on Mt Zion (14:1-5)
- Three Warnings Precede Judgment (14:6-20)

Overview of Rev 12-14

- Satan tries to destroy the messiah and when unsuccessful, persecutes his people
- Satan has been decisively defeated but oppresses Christians because his time is short
- Satan empowers governments to rival God and oppress those who will not bow down, often supplementing power plays with religious trappings
- Christians must resist Satan by not compromising; often this leads to suffering
- Jesus promises both rest to his people and judgment on evildoers
- Major takeaway: Jesus has defeated Satan. We join in his victory when we believe in him and are willing to suffer like he did.

Key Lessons in Rev 12-14

- Earthly hardship does not mean Satan is winning; it means he has lost
- Jesus' sacrifice means Satan can no longer accuse us before God
- Truth is not determined by popularity
- Political power can be used for evil
- Christians must endure
- There are often economic repercussions for serving Jesus
- We must learn to "see through" physical things to the spiritual realities behind them

Why Satan Is So Angry (12:1-17)

- Chapter 12 is a dividing point in the book; 12-22 will tell the same story as in chapters 1-11 but with more detail
- 12:1-2 – A woman is pregnant and about to give birth. The sun, moon, and stars could be a reference to the family of Jacob (Gen 37:9), since the woman appears to represent God's people (see v. 17)
- The child she will give birth to is the messiah (see v. 5)
- 12:3-4 – Meanwhile the great red dragon waits to devour the child (this is Satan, v. 9)
- His crowns (v. 3) represent his claims to authority

- 12:5 – She gives birth to the messiah and he escapes Satan. The vision fast-forwards through the life and death of Jesus and speaks to the victory of his resurrection, ascension, and enthronement
- 12:6 – Meanwhile, the woman (the people of God) flees to the wilderness, where God provides for her for the time of difficulty (recalling God’s provision in the wilderness after the exodus)
- 12:7-9 – The scene shifts to a war between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels. Satan is decisively defeated and thrown down
- This scene is another way of restating the victory of v. 1-6: Jesus has overcome and his earthly work unleashes a heavenly victory for Michael
- Jesus’ victory has curtailed Satan’s role as deceiver (v. 9) and nullified his role as accuser (v. 10)
- 12:10-12 – There is celebration of the victory and warning for those left on earth: Satan is coming and is angry because his clock is ticking
- Disciples join in the victory of Jesus when they believe in him and are willing to offer themselves completely (v. 11)
- 12:13-17 – The woman now represents the people of God on earth (the church) (v. 17)
- She is protected in the wilderness (v. 14, see Ex 19:4) and by the earth (v. 16, see Ex 15:12)
- Yet God’s protection only further enrages Satan (v. 17), so he attempts some other ways of expressing his wrath against God’s servants

How Satan Is Working: The Sea Beast (13:1-10)

- 13:1-2 – A beast from the sea is representative of a nation (Dan 7:3, 8:21, etc) and appears to be a composite of the beasts in Dan 7
- This nation claims both political power (“ten diadems”) and divinity (“blasphemous names”), but it is empowered by Satan
- 13:3 – Some scholars think this refers to Jesus’ victory; others the myth that Nero was not really dead but would return at the head of the Parthian army
- Regardless, this nation appears to be immortal and all-powerful
- 13:4-6 – This nation is worshiped as a god because of its dominion
- Notice that God is limiting its time in the sun (v. 5) despite the fact that it blasphemes him (v. 6)
- 13:7-8 – The nation targets Christians and are allowed to overcome them
- The scope of the power of the nation is nearly universal (v. 8)
- John interrupts this vision to call on the saints to faithfully endure whatever is slated for them (v. 9-10).

How Satan Is Working: The Land Beast/False Prophet (13:11-18)

- 13:11 – The land beast is an ally of the sea beast but is a parody of the Lamb
- 13:13-14 – Its role is religious, legitimizing the nation it supports and promoting idol-worship (v. 14)
- Pseudo-magical tricks like ventriloquism and false lightning were used in temples and rulers’ courts in this time
- 13:15 – Its great sign is to convince the people of the world that the beast truly is immortal

- The threat of 13:15 – bow to the idol or die – is reminiscent of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- 13:16-17 – Its threat is also economic: in order to participate in the economy, you must worship the idol
- In many places, Christians were required to make sacrifices to be involved in trade guilds
- 13:18 – The number of the beast. I don't believe this is gematria – it's easy to turn a name into a number, but not the other way around
- I believe the idea here is of complete imperfection – falling short of 3 7s. John wants them to be able to see through the realities of their day to their evil origins
- Who are the beasts? I believe the sea beast is Rome and the land beast is the local/provincial rulers of Asia Minor who promote emperor worship to curry favor

Jesus and His People on Mt Zion (14:1-5)

- 14:1 – Here is the real Lamb, on Mt Zion, with those who have the name of the Father (instead of the mark of the beast) on their foreheads. Though persecuted on earth, they are with Jesus afterward
- 14:2-3 – They are blessed to sing a new song of victory which no one else can learn
- There are three defining traits for these 144,000: they have not defiled themselves with women, they follow the Lamb, and they do not lie
- 14:4 – Virgins is not literal or physical, but represents spiritual purity (see v. 8)
- 14:4 – Following the Lamb seems particularly to emphasize willingness to suffer
- 14:5 – They faithfully witness to Jesus and do not lie (by compromising)
- 14:4 – “Firstfruits” seems to imply that others on earth will soon join them

Three Warnings Precede Judgment (14:6-20)

- Three angels give warning announcements before another picture of judgment
- 14:5-7 – One angel gives “an eternal gospel,” warning all people to fear God and give him glory
- 14:8 – One angel declares the doom of Babylon for her spiritual infidelity. This has not happened yet, but is a prediction that serves as a warning
- 14:9-11 – One angel pronounces that those who worship the beast will receive God's wrath and eternal torment
- These warnings are for both non-Christians and Christians, as v. 12 indicates
- 14:13 – Those who die in the Lord have rest that sinners do not (see v. 11)
- 14:14-16 – This picture of judgment has strong resemblance to Dan 7:13 and Matt 24:30. He “reaps” the earth
- 14:17-20 – Another angel tells him to reap the grape harvest of the earth and puts it into the “winepress of the wrath of God”. When trampled, it is a gruesome picture of bloodshed
- It is not clear if 14-16 and 17-20 are the same picture or two different reappings
- It appears to me that the message is that Babylon/Rome/beast is soon to be judged, along with those who trusted in her; this does not necessarily imply anything about the final judgment