

## Revelation XIV: Two Distinct Outcomes, Part I

[Read Revelation 14:1-13]

### Introduction:

Some of the most profound and sobering words, spoken by our Lord Jesus to His disciples, as He prepared to make His way to Jerusalem; words that wholly contradicted their own understanding of the nature of the ministry of the Messiah, and the nature of their own future ministry, were as follows, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:34b-38).

The two beasts, which we have considered, are two of the main allies who serve and align themselves with the dragon. They are indeed fierce and they threaten the well being and lives of all who fail to join their idolatrous cause. They manifest themselves in physical realities; governing authorities, false religions and satanic cults. Clinging to an invisible, and yet, very real and powerful Christ, can be very difficult when contending with visible, felt opposition. Many Christians throughout all of history have suffered terribly at the hands of these beasts, and at the end of the age, the church will basically have her light put out by them. The beast will overcome the people of God, from a physical standpoint.

Chapter thirteen brought us to view another ugly, terrifying and painful reality, which the church must face until the return of Christ. But once again, our God brings John (and us) to another scene of encouragement, giving us a breath of fresh air, as it were, reinforcing the call for us to persevere and endure, in light of what we know to be true, underneath the pain and sufferings and trials and temptations of this world. Chapter fourteen carries us forward, past the ultimately short time period of the existence and opposition of the beasts, to the end of all things. Here we find two distinct outcomes granted to two different groups of people...and take

note again, there is no third group. Here we find the end of the saints; the final victory of those who have withstood the fierce opposition of the beast (even unto death), and the ultimate demise of those who have served and worshiped the beast unto the preservation of their short lived lives in this world. The end matters, doesn't it!

## **I. The Lamb and the 144,000**

Here we are once again brought to view the 144,000, whom we have seen, back in chapter 7. There we saw the 144,000, representing the true Israel of God on earth. They were the church militant; the church still in the battle; they were still in the process of enduring and persevering, and the encouragement there, was to know that they were sealed. They had the seal of God upon them, guaranteeing their ultimate victory in Christ, and that they would stand in the Day of God's wrath and Judgment!

Well, here, we see these 144,000 again, and here (as in the end of chapter 7), they have made it home to their rest. They persevered to the end, and their reward was at hand. Consider some of the glorious elements of this vision of the triumphant 144,000 (again, those representing the true church; the true Israel of God, now safe at home with Christ):

1) They are standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Mount Zion is always that mountain that is directly associated with God and His people. Here it represents the victorious heavenly gathering of Christ and His people. The 144,000 here have faithfully finished their journey on earth; they have prevailed, and they stand with Christ, their Redeemer, in glory. This is also the final consummated fulfillment of Psalm 2:6. In contrast to the once ruling kingdoms of this world, the one who struck a death blow to the beast, finished the beast off, and takes His rightful place of rule. "Yet I [God] have set My King on My holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6).

2) They have the Name of the Lamb (ESV) and the Father's Name written on their foreheads. Again, contrasting those who have been branded with the Mark of the beast (the servants and followers of the beast), these bear the Name of the Lamb and of the Father on their foreheads. They have been subject to God's authority and have worshiped and served God rather than the beast. God has sealed them with His Name unto this end, and now they; the people of

God; the people marked with His Name, have their time of eternal rejoicing on Mount Zion with their Christ! Note the promise given to those who overcome, written to the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:12, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the Name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new Name."

3) [Read verses 2-3]. Here, the people of God sing triumphantly, giving glory to God and to the Lamb, who have brought them safely home. All 144,000! Not one is missing--the precise number of God's elect; those marked out and sealed by God, bearing His Name, have been victorious in Christ...and they sing a new song, as it were, before the heavenly court and in the presence of God. They alone can sing this song, because they alone have been redeemed from the earth; they have experienced the great and glorious benefits of Christ's redemption, and have been taken from the earth as an offering, as an offering of the first fruits, which belongs to God. They were set apart to be a holy people, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and they sing accordingly, the song of their redemption, which only the truly redeemed know and understand.

And their singing is both powerful and most glorious! It is a magnificent, majestic choir, thundering forth like the voice of many waters; like a large waterfall coming down and thrashing the waters below. It is a mighty, thunderous voice that shakes heaven as it were--powerful, heartfelt, sincere praise. It is powerful and yet, it is orderly, angelic and beautiful. It is accompanied by the sound of harpists playing their harps. It is a musical entourage that blows every concert in this world, out of the water! Powerful, lovely, glorious! It is the sound of pure unhindered joy, mixed with thanksgiving and praise. The redeemed from the earth sing it before the throne, giving praise and honor and glory to God in the presence of the hosts of heaven! The creation was lost, corrupt, defiled and condemned, but these have been redeemed unto God!

4) [Read verses 4-5]. Obviously, this is not to imply that the 144,000 were literal virgins or sinless for that matter. Rather, the point here is that they remained faithful to God. They have kept themselves spiritually pure, as a Bride set apart unto the Lamb. They stood firm in Christ, and by His blood, overcame the beasts and the whore. The rest of the world has defiled itself by worshiping the beast and by committing fornication with the lustful whore of Babylon (see this

contrast in verse 8). The 144,000 have kept the faith; they were a chaste Bride unto the Lamb and no deceit was found in their mouths. They are without fault before God, because they have abided in the blessed Lamb, who has redeemed them by His shed blood. Consider as well these descriptions of Israel from the OT: 2 Kings 19:21; Lam. 2:13; Jer. 18:13; Amos 5:2, and also the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Cor. 11:2.

These have been set apart by God, taken out of the world as firstfruits, wholly dedicated to and given over to God. They are His holy seed!

## **II. Two Distinct Outcomes**

Such is the end of those who overcome, bearing the seal of God and not the mark of the beast. John then sees three different angels flying in the midst of heaven, each with a message to be given in light of the temptations that will exist to compromise with the beasts. And it is here that we see once again, but perhaps in a more sobering way, the two distinct outcomes that are to fall upon all people. Again, there is no third option.

1) [Read verses 6-7]. The first angel comes with a final warning to the whole world, calling all people, from every nation, tribe, tongue and people, to repent; to turn away from serving the beast (the counterfeit divine) and to serve the living God.

This angel preaches the everlasting Gospel; the Gospel, which alone can save the never dying soul forever, and the only true hope for mankind. You see, the beast comes with his own gospel--worship him and live and buy and eat and drink--only, his gospel is false; it is a lie, which gives no hope beyond this life. It satisfies temporarily, and then abandons the soul to eternal hell fire. But the Gospel of God is everlasting; it redeems the soul forever and brings one to glory. This angel gives the "last call" as it were. Judgment is imminent; it is soon to come. The gateway into the grace of God will soon be closed off, and the final bowl judgments will come, leading to the final judgment before the throne of God.

And so, the angel cries out, "Fear God and give Him glory," and worship the true and living God, who created heaven and earth and all things! Repent, embrace God's Gospel, and

given Him glory before it is too late. For the time soon comes when this offer will no longer be on the table!

2) [Read verse 8]. The second angel exposes the judgment that is to come upon the whore of Babylon; that licentious whore, who smothers the world with her lusts, leading people away from God and toward lust and materialism, and a love of wealth and temporal things. This angel proclaims that her judgment is due; it is imminent (so sure to come, it is proclaimed in the prophetic present tense), thus showing how foolish it is to put your hope and trust in the glory of a lying, fading whore. It is a call to recognize that all of the allurements of this world; all of the materialistic and sensual pleasures, held out by the luxurious nations of this world will soon come to an end. Think long term; see through the shallow nature of what promises to fulfill, but cannot, and is soon to be judged (Rev. 18-19). Give heed to the first angel, fear and worship God before it is too late. For this world's system of material lust and sensuality is soon to collapse, along with all of those who commit cosmic adultery with it.

3) [Read verses 9-13]. The beast makes many promises; he ensures your safety and invites you to drink of all of the fleshly lusts of Babylon, as long as you continue to worship and serve him, rather than the Lamb. One of his greatest strengths is to lead his followers to concentrate all of their attention on this life (this life is everything to those who follow the beast), while keeping them in denial or leading them to ignore the reality of eternity.

This third angel follows the other two; he follows the call of the Gospel and the revelation of what is to soon come of Babylon with a final sobering revelation of the end of those who worship the beast and receive his mark. The severity of this rather lengthy message is clearly meant to firm up the magnitude of the warning. It really is a call for people to look beyond the temporal and to consider the eternal, as if this angel were saying, "Look, the beast's wrath is real and painful, but it is short lived and can go no further than bodily death. Fear not those who can kill the body and nothing more; rather, fear Him who can cast both body and soul in hell forever. Notice the horrible description of the end of all who worship the beast; of all who remain outside of Christ:

a: They will drink of the wine of the wrath of God! They have had their fill of pleasure and lust in this life. They drank to the full unto their own temporal preservation. But in the end, they will have to drink of another cup forever and ever, namely the cup of God's wrath...unmixed.

b: The emphasis placed on this cup being "poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation," is meant to imply that there is no relief to be found whatsoever in the suffering that is to come upon unbelievers. It is full blown; it is unmixed and not diluted or softened one iota; it is the righteous cup of God's wrath poured out into the cup of His indignation. People live in their sin in the presence of God, every day, assuming that God really doesn't care. They willfully break His Law, as if it is a small matter. And yet, the whole time, they are actually filling up for themselves a vat of pure, undiluted wrath, which will be drunk to the bottom on the Day of Judgment.

c: They are tormented day and night forever and ever and ever, with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. Eternal torment, anguish, weeping and gnashing of teeth, a longing for even a moment of relief...with no inkling of relief granted ever. The constant feeling of the intense burning of fire and brimstone, while the conscience is continually reminded of every poor choice ever made that has brought them to this place. The forever regret of, "Why, why, why...why did I sell my never dying soul for such short lived, temporal, unfulfilling joys? And now, I am chained in this flame; and now, I am given over to this non-stop torment forever!". After a million million years pass, the same thoughts will still plague them, as they writhe in pain and agony forever.

"And the smoke of their torment;" the burning agony of their tormented consciences ascends forever and ever; "and they have no rest day or night!"

The warning of this last angel is clear; it is thorough; it is detailed, and it is sobering. And those who are Christ's will take it to heart for themselves and for the lost. It will impress their consciences now, along with the glorious end of the righteous, so that what is seen will never overshadow what is unseen. Such promises and warnings continually carry the true people of

God through every visible threat and temporal affliction that comes from the beasts, and every luring temptation that comes from the whore of Babylon!

And following this reminder, once again, we are given a glorious description of the final outcome of those who worship *not* the beast, and who abide in Christ:

Those who patiently endure and who persevere in Christ (do we see this theme again, brethren, repeated over and over---underline it--it is the message of Revelation!); those who remain faithful and keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'"

They have suffered for a short time, even terribly in some respects, but they are indeed the blessed of God! They have stood fast; they have persevered and remained faithful, even at the expense of their very well being and lives. Now, they are at rest, forever and ever; never again to experience any of the toils, torments, trials, pains or sufferings that they have experienced in their life in this world. Every consequence of the fall, from an outward and inward standpoint has been wholly removed forever...they are at rest! And their works; their faithful service unto God, which seemed so small and irrelevant from the standpoint of the world; every last one of them will follow them into their heavenly rest. What seemed so small in the world, will be acknowledged and rewarded in glory.

#### **Conclusive Thoughts on Chapter XIV**

The dragon and his beasts are indeed fierce, manifested, felt and painful, but they are all temporal, ultimately defeated at the cross and can do nothing whatsoever to harm the never dying soul. Most will follow them as a means of clinging to the temporal joys and comforts of this life, but in the end, they will suffer eternal regret. The true people of God must and will persevere; they are sealed by God and by the Lamb, and they will stand fast even under much pressure, suffering, hardship and death itself, because they take what is not seen, to heart. They know and understand the final outcome of everything. They see the big picture, while everyone else is locked into a "this world" focus. They can see "what really is" in light of "what seems to be." And so, they persevere.

Next time, Lord willing, we will see these two contrasts conveyed again with the use of very graphic imagery, describing the return of Christ unto the harvesting of His people and the destruction of His enemies.

AMEN!!!