REVELATION: What’s Coming Next?

Week 4: Chaos, conflict and calamity

1. Beasts & Harvests
2. The Beasts:

(*Revelation 13:1-18)*

1. Description of the First Beast
2. The sea represented often in biblical times chaos and evil which would resist God.
3. From the sea, a beast is rising. The Greek word for *beast* here denotes the idea of a *“wild and dangerous animal”.* This creature is distinct from the dragon, who most likely represents Satan. The beast is someone who clearly relates to the dragon but not the dragon itself. There are similarities but the text makes it clear that this creature is not the same as the dragon in *Revelation 12.*
4. Most likely the beast is the Anti-Christ. As we’ve discussed in the past, the Bible mentions Anti-Christ in the sense of a philosophy or system as well as speaking of an individual. The word ‘Anti-Christ’ means, “*the opposite of and instead of Jesus”.*
5. Though we refer to him as the Anti-Christ, the Bible gives him several names including:
6. The little horn (*Daniel 7:8)*
7. The king of fierce countenance (*Daniel 8:23)*
8. The prince that shall come (*Daniel 9:26)*
9. The willful king (*Daniel 11:36-45)*
10. The one who comes in his own name (*John 5:43)*
11. The son of perdition and man of lawlessness (*2 Thessalonians 2:3)*
12. There is debate as to the meaning of the ten horns and seven heads, with a wide degree of speculation but it does seem to refer to *Daniel 2 & 7* and point toward a sort of revived Roman empire that the Anti-Christ will be leader of.
13. The physical description of the beast points to the imagery of *Daniel 7*, leading some to conclude the beast simply represents totalitarian governments. The text seems to point however to an individual, who will be the final dictator to lead mankind in opposition to God.
14. The Anti-Christ will be given power and authority from Satan.
15. The Anti-Christ will apparently suffer life-threatening injury which he will survive, and it will increase his power and influence. This will be his way of copying Jesus’ death and resurrection.
16. What the First Beast will be doing
17. The Anti-Christ is described as having an arrogant blasphemous mouth and will be permitted by God to wage war against the saints and to have full rule over the various nations of the world, for a time, specifically for 3.5 years, most commentators state this healing will take place midway through the Tribulation.
18. The Anti-Christ will require worship of himself, and any who resist will be martyred. The Anti-Christ will not ultimately prevail against the saints, but he will be given the authority to take their lives.
19. The phrase of *Revelation 13:8* is a reminder that God’s plan for redemption was not an afterthought but preplanned before the fall even occurred.
20. A warning for all is issued reminding us that our choices will have consequences and for believers they should endure to the end.
21. Introducing the Second Beast
22. John describes a second beast that is resembling that of a lamb with two horns, indicating this figure will attempt to present himself as a lamb when in fact he will be a wolf in sheep’s clothing.
23. This beast is most likely the figure known as the False prophet. Despite being different and distinct from the dragon and first beast, the message coming from this beast is the same. In a sense between the Dragon and the beast from the sea, here we have an unholy trinity.
24. The false prophet will be a religious leader who is instrumental in performing supernatural signs and wonders which will be used to help deceive the masses during this time of history. (See *2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)*
25. The false prophet will be encouraging worship of the Anti-Christ and will even apparently set up some form of image that comes to life as an idolatrous way of worshiping him.
26. The false prophet will lead people to being required to receive a mark which will be required for the buying and selling. We are not told the nature of this mark, but while some believe it’s symbolic, the text indicates it is literal and the reality is that the technology for such a mark now exists.
27. There are many different thoughts as to what the number *666* represents, and there is no clear consensus. One that may yield truth is that 6 is the number of men, given mankind was created on the sixth day of creation, and the triplicate form of this would be 666. Ultimately, we just don’t know.
28. Notice that Satan never comes up with original material, he always twists and perverts what God is doing.

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1. Harvest Time:

(*Revelation 14:1-20)*

1. The Lamb and the 144,000
2. These 144,000 believers with Jesus here are the same 144,000 sealed Jewish believers in Christ from *Revelation 7*
3. Given how terrifying the beasts from chapter 13 are, and that God will permit the beasts to make war on the saints, chapter 14 is the answer to the question of, “Will Satan and his forces be victorious ultimately over God and His people”?
4. The Redeemed are gathered on Mt. Zion because of its ancient ties to the Jewish people, and because we are told that the Messiah will gather his redeemed and reign from there (See *Isaiah 24:23, Micah 4:1).*
5. The 144,000 have a mark on their foreheads, notice again that Satan always attempts to copycat God’s work. Also notice it is the Father’s name written on their foreheads, not the name of a particular church or denomination.
6. The voice of many thunders is clearly referring to God’s voice
7. There is debate as to whether the 144,000 were literally to be virgins or were spiritually considered as such. A case could be made for either interpretation.
8. The 144,000 followed Jesus wholeheartedly and were instrumental in bringing about a great harvest of saved souls during the Great Tribulation.
9. Proclamations from Heaven
10. An angel is proclaiming the Gospel worldwide as all the events of the Tribulation period are unfolding. The Gospel must remain central to who we are as believers and what we do, individually and as a church. It is the Gospel that is the “*power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:17).*
11. Notice that the first angel proclaims the Gospel to every tribe and people group.
12. The angel is giving the inhabitants of the world during this time an ultimatum, really the same ultimatum that still exists: Bow now or bow later.
13. A second angel proclaims the fall of ‘Babylon’. While there will be more extensive focus on Babylon in chapter 17, at this point, essentially Babylon at least generally refers to organized rebellion against God. Biblically, Babylon has referred to the literal city, a religious system, or a political system.
14. Babylon is condemned for having led people into spiritual adultery.
15. The third angel proclaims judgement for those who choose to worship the Anti-Christ and get his mark. Getting the mark is making a choice to be allegiant to the Anti-Christ
16. The punishment that awaits those who reject Christ and choose the Anti-Christ as being real, eternal and in a sense, in the presence of God.
17. The final proclamation was a message of hope and encouragement for those who follow Christ during this time.
18. The Harvest
19. The one who is described seated on the cloud is most likely directly referring to Jesus
20. Jesus refers to a final harvest that will take place at the end of history in *Matthew 13:39-42*
21. The angel announces that the harvest will take place when the earth is, “ripe”. The Greek word for *ripe* means, “totally ripe, rotten or withered.” God will withhold his judgement until the very last minute.
22. Many scholars believe that the imagery of blood coming out of the winepress to be a reference to the upcoming battle of Armageddon that will extend 200 miles wide.
23. Chapter 14 is the ultimate answer to chapter 13. In chapter 13, it looks as though Satan and his forces may win this struggle, but chapter 14 is the ultimate answer that God will triumph.
24. Bowls of Judgement
25. Prelude to the Final Plagues of Divine Wrath:

(*Revelation 15:1-8)*

1. A Third Great Sign from Heaven
2. The first two “signs” from heaven were the sun-clothed woman (Israel), the great red sea dragon (Satan) and now seven angels with seven plagues are coming.
3. This sign is referred to as great and amazing because of its powerful and horrific nature that will bring about a glorious result: the final fall of Satan and the forces of evil. These are referred to as the ‘last plagues’ because they will be God’s final warnings to an unrepentant world.
4. The wrath of God will be “complete” after these seven plagues because it will reach “an end or aim”.
5. The second glassy sea of Revelation most likely represents judgement coming on humanity while also a representation of God’s glory.
6. The Tribulation saints will sing two songs: 1. The song of Moses, found in the Old Testament recounting God’s deliverance for the Israelites and 2. The song of the Lamb, celebrating the Messiah’s reign and victory over all nations and kingdoms. The song is the perfect blend of the law and love, Old and New Covenant. The song praises God for His:
7. Works
8. Ways
9. Worthiness
10. Worship
11. The song points toward what our response should be for who God is and all that God has done. Notice again that Revelation is really about God revealing Himself and showing How he will bring injustice to justice.
12. The heavenly temple and tent are opened, a reminder that even the earthly tabernacle and temple were modeled after a heavenly pattern (See *Hebrews 8:9)*
13. The seven angels will emerge from the temple to bring God’s judgement in the form of seven bowls of plagues that will be unleashed.
14. Their clothing is a reminder that God’s justice is always pure, righteous, and true.
15. The angels are bringing ‘bowls’ of judgement. In the Old Testament, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take a bowl of blood from a sacrificial animal into the Holy of Holies, and it dump it on the mercy seat over the ark of the covenant. Here, since the Anti-Christ will not accept the blood of Jesus as an atonement for sins, the priestly angels will dump these bowls not on the mercy seat but on the earth.

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1. Seven Bowls of Judgement

(*Revelation 16:1-21)*

1. The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath
2. The first bowl afflicts those who have the mark of the beast and are loyal to the Anti-Christ with harmful and painful sores. This is like the sixth plague unleashed on Egypt where God afflicted the Egyptians with tumors, festering sores, itching skin.
3. The second bowl will be worse than the second trumpet judgement because it will pollute the sea by turning it into blood and killing everything in it. Whereas before it only affected 1/3rd of the sea creatures.
4. The third bowl is worse than the third trumpet, with the complete contamination of water in contrast to the 1/3rd water contamination of before. Those who have shed innocent blood will be forced to drink it.

“*They thirsted after blood and massacred the saints of God, and now they have got blood to drink.”-Clarke*

1. The fourth bowl will involve a massive heat wave with the light of the sun scorching people on fire. The afflictions will cause the people to finally admit that God exists and is in control, but they will refuse to repent, instead cursing His name.
2. The fifth bowl will be targeted at the regime of the Anti-Christ. Since the Anti-Christ and those who are loyal to him love spiritual darkness, God will have the entire planet covered in physical darkness. This darkness will be so dark even the moon and stars will not be seen. This period of darkness is like the plague of darkness God brought on the Egyptians. God will continue to be blamed for these events, but no repentance.
3. The sixth bowl will involve the Euphrates River being dried up so that the kings of the east may gather to attack in the battle of Armageddon. Demons will also be involved to help gather nations against God and His Messiah
4. Armageddon is only mentioned here in the Bible once. The word translated means, “Mount of Megiddo” which is a large hill west of the Jordan river.
5. Over 200 battles have been fought in this area from 1440 BC to 1917 AD
6. Speculation as to the timing of the battle.
7. The seventh and final bowl will involve something released into the atmosphere, perhaps aimed at the “prince of the power of the air”. Massive earthquakes will take place leading to dramatic changes to the surface of the planet. Hail as large as 100 pounds will fall.
8. Babylon the great will be expounded upon in the next chapter of Revelation.
9. The people continued to curse God and refuse to repent.

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