

CHAPTER 41: Revelation 13 to 19

Midway through the Tribulation Period something referred to as “a beast” emerges onto the scene. **Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns were ten diadem crowns, and on its heads a blasphemous name.** (Revelation 13:1) This beast is the antichrist. He is a person empowered by Satan. Like Satan, he is a deceiver. Let’s take a closer look at him.

Satan knows God’s plan. He’s aware of all the prophecies we read in the book of Revelation. But Satan has no idea WHEN the last days will take place, just like we don’t. As a result, Satan has always had his man ready. This is the reason why we have seen so many evil antichrist types throughout history – people like Nero, Genghis Khan, Pope Leo X, Henry VIII, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin and so forth. These were all powerful and ruthless men. They exalted themselves. Many encouraged their subjects to follow them with blind loyalty and to worship them as cult-like heroes. The antichrist presented here in Revelation 13 will be very much like his predecessors. He will set up a form of worship and will pressure the world to follow him. He will exercise supreme authority within his government. He will persecute and kill those who oppose him.

In John’s vision he watches an early deception played out by Satan and the antichrist. It fools a lot of people. The antichrist appears to be killed. Satan, the master of deception, miraculously “restores” the antichrist back to life. As a result of this apparent resurrection from the dead, many people become enamored with the antichrist. The antichrist uses the resources of the media to blaspheme God and the Tribulation saints. He promotes his anti-God agenda with full force. During the second half of the Tribulation he will have unrestrained power to say and do as he pleases.

So the beast [antichrist] opened his mouth to blaspheme against God – to blaspheme both His name and His dwelling place, that is, those who dwell in heaven. The beast was permitted to go to war against the saints and conquer them. He was given ruling authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation, and all those who live on the earth will worship the beast, everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life belonging to the Lamb [Jesus] who was killed. (Revelation 13:6-8)

Not everyone in the world bows down to the antichrist. The Tribulation saints refuse to worship anyone other than Jesus. As the antichrist gains greater power over

all of the nations of the earth he ramps up the persecution of these Christ-followers. Things become worse and worse for them. Many people of all nations and people groups become martyrs for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Then I saw another beast coming up from the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but was speaking like a dragon [Satan]. (Revelation 13:11) John previously saw a red dragon, which was Satan. After that he saw the beast, which was the antichrist. Now he sees a third member of this “unholy trinity.” This one is referred to simply as “another beast.” Later on this person will be called “the false prophet.” His primary function is to point everybody to the antichrist. Just like Satan and the antichrist, he deceives people through unusual powers that allow him to perform miraculous signs and wonders.

Here is one example... The second beast, the false prophet, pretends to give life to a created image of the antichrist. The image appears to come to life and begins to speak. This life-like deception fools a whole bunch of people and they are coerced into worshipping this image.

Those who follow the antichrist receive what is known as “the mark of the beast.” This is nothing more than the antichrist’s copycat idea of what God did earlier. Recall that God had placed His mark on His followers back in Revelation 7. The mark of the beast (whatever it is) has something to do with the number 666. With this mark a person will have the capability to buy or sell anything. So then, if you want to provide food for your family, you better receive this mark. Those who do not have it will be left to starve or fend for themselves. In the midst of such intense persecution and with overwhelming odds against them, will the Tribulation saints remain faithful to the Lord?

Then I looked, and here was the Lamb [Jesus] standing on Mount Zion, and with Him were one hundred and forty-four thousand, who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1) John sees Jesus standing in heaven with the 144,000 redeemed Jews from Revelation 7. They now have God’s seal displayed on their foreheads. Mount Zion refers to the heavenly Jerusalem. So then, the 144,000 are in heaven. How did they get there? More than likely they were martyred for their faith sometime during the Tribulation. They remained faithful to Jesus even though it literally cost them everything!

The Tribulation saints join in with the rest of the heavenly throng singing before the throne of God. Their sadness and pain has been replaced with joy. They sing a new song, though we are not told what that song is.

With these 144,000 Jews (who had been God’s primary evangelists during the Tribulation) with their Lord in heaven, God must now provide other preachers of the Gospel. This time, instead of men, God chooses angels. **Then I saw another angel**

flying directly overhead, and he had an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language, and people. (Revelation 14:6)

Because of His grace God often sends a messenger to warn people of impending judgment before He sends it. This gives people a chance to repent. This is God's usual method of operation prior to divine judgment. Before the Flood, God sent Noah. Before He destroyed Nineveh, God sent Jonah. Before God's people were taken captive into Babylon, God sent His prophet Jeremiah. Here in the latter days of the Tribulation, God sends another messenger to warn of impending doom. With no humans available to preach, God commissions an angel from heaven to go down to earth and proclaim the Gospel. The angel's appeal to the people of the world is this: **"Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has arrived, and worship the One who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water!"** (Revelation 14:7) Unfortunately the angelic preacher has no more success in getting people to repent than the previous human messengers.

But God doesn't give up. He sends forth yet another angel. **A second angel followed the first, declaring: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great city! She made all the nations drink of the wine of her immoral passion."** (Revelation 14:8) The term "Babylon" is synonymous with the evil and idolatrous world system established by the antichrist. This angel pronounces divine wrath on the world's evil system. Babylon will most certainly fall!

A third angel announces: **"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark on his forehead or his hand, that person will also drink of the wine of God's anger that has been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath, and he will be tortured with fire and sulfur in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night, along with anyone who receives the mark of his name [mark of the beast]."** (Revelation 14:9-11) There is no hope for those who follow the antichrist. They are all doomed to a devil's hell.

Meanwhile the remaining Tribulation saints – those still alive on the earth – continue to endure patiently every trial that comes their way. They hold firmly to their faith. John hears a voice from heaven. God the Holy Spirit speaks: **"Write this: 'Blessed are the dead, those who die in the Lord from this moment on!'"** **"Yes," says the Spirit, "so they can rest from their hard work, because their deeds will follow them."** (Revelation 14:13). In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus encouraged all those who follow Him to **"let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 5:16) The good deeds of these faithful Tribulation saints became their lasting legacy.

Well, the time for God's final judgment upon the earth has arrived... **Then I looked, and a white cloud appeared, and seated on the cloud was one like a Son of Man! He had a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.** (Revelation 14:14) "Son of Man" is a term Daniel used for the Messiah (Daniel 7). We now know that this is Jesus. A sickle is a farm implement used to harvest wheat. Jesus appears here as the Great Reaper (as opposed to the Grim Reaper). The scene that John is watching unfold shows us heaven's perspective of God's final judgment on the earth. This is what the Old Testament prophets referred to as the Day of the Lord. Judgment Day is finally here!

The harvest is ripe. It is because of God's patience that He delayed judgment as long as He did. Now an angel urges Jesus to swing His sickle over the entire earth. As Jesus does so, the earth is harvested – saint and sinner alike. A few swift strokes and the harvest is complete! The Lord of the harvest then separates the righteous from the unrighteous, believers from unbelievers. Being a perfect and fair Judge, our Lord makes no mistakes.

Another angel announces the next phase of the harvest. It will deal exclusively with God's wrath against an unbelieving world. With the believers now separated out, God unleashes His fury on the group that willfully rejected Him. Unrepentant humanity falls into the horrific vat of God's final judgment. **So the Angel [Jesus] swung His sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes from the vineyard of the earth and tossed them into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Then the winepress was stomped outside the city, and blood poured out of the winepress up to the height of horses' bridles for a distance of almost two hundred miles.** (Revelation 14:19-20) Just imagine a battle scene so horrific that the blood from those slain flows four feet deep over a distance of 200 miles! This is the awful image that John sees following God's judgment on unsaved humanity.

The scene suddenly shifts back to heaven. John sees all the saints of God, including the Tribulation saints. They are standing before the throne praising and worshipping God. They sing the song of Moses (Exodus 15) which tells of God's coming kingdom and how He will deal with the evil in His world. They also sing the song of the Lamb (Isaiah 66) that tells of the promised Messiah King, Jesus, who will save His people.

Seven bowls filled with God's wrath are handed out to seven angels. **Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever...** (Revelation 15:7) The angels wear clothing similar to what was worn by the high priests in the Old Testament. Smoke, symbolic of God's presence, fills His heavenly temple. God's awesome glory and power

are on full display. The time for mankind to respond to God's mercy has ended. It's judgment time!

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple declaring to the seven angels: "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls containing God's wrath." So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth. Then ugly and painful sores appeared on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. Next, the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea and it turned into blood, like that of a corpse, and every living creature that was in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they turned into blood. (Revelation 16:1-4) This is an ecological and commercial disaster! The earth's water and food supply are dealt a terrible blow by the hand of God. Now we know where all the blood we saw earlier came from.

So, why is God doing all of this? It is because innocent blood of the saints and of God's prophets has been shed. The time has come for those responsible to face their judgment! God at long last vindicates those martyred saints who earlier we heard cry out from underneath the altar, "**How long, Sovereign Master... before you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?**" (Revelation 6:10) Now they finally get their answer. "**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.**" (Romans 12:19) God avenges the deaths of His saints in His own time.

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was permitted to scorch people with fire. (Revelation 16:8) One would think that this preview of hell would convince lost humanity to cry out for mercy and be saved. But that's not what happens. The very opposite takes place! Instead of repenting, lost humanity defiantly digs in their heels and curses God. The deception by Satan and the antichrist has hardened their sinful hearts.

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast [antichrist] so that darkness covered his kingdom, and people began to bite their tongues because of their pain. (Revelation 16:10) Unrepentant people tend to blame God or others for their problems. They rarely accept personal responsibility for what happens to them. Here, influenced by the antichrist they blaspheme God and refuse to repent.

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates and dried up its water to prepare the way for the kings from the east. (Revelation 16:12) "Kings from the east" is a reference to massive armies from possibly Japan, China or India that mobilize with the antichrist. They make their way through the dry riverbed heading to battle against God.

The unholy trinity comprised of the dragon (Satan), the beast (the antichrist) and the other beast (the false prophet) convince the world that God is to blame for the mess the world is in. **For they are the spirits of the demons performing signs who go out to the kings of the earth to bring them together for the battle that will take place on the great day of God, the All-Powerful.** (Revelation 16:14) They make their way toward Armageddon, in the Megiddo Valley of Israel. Today we know this place as the Jezreel Valley. It really is the perfect place to mobilize a large army. It is in a massive valley, flat terrain, with an active airfield, in a very strategic location.

As these armies mobilize for war, Jesus gives one final message to the Tribulation saints – those who are still on the earth: **“I will come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays alert...”** (Revelation 16:15) In other words, “You continue to do what’s right even in these godless times. I am coming!”

Finally the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying: “It is done!” (Revelation 16:17) The final judgment appears in the form of the largest recorded earthquake in history. It is massive! It shakes the entire world. It causes tremendous destruction in every city of the world. Islands disappear and mountains crumble. Huge watermelon-size hailstones, each weighing 100 pounds, rain down from heaven bombarding the earth. And how do the unsaved people react to this furious display of God’s wrath? They blaspheme God! Nothing is going to make them turn to God. They are bent on hell and destruction. Sin has blinded them. Satan has deceived them. They are doomed and without hope.

Chronologically, the next event that takes place is Jesus’s return to the earth with the saints of heaven. But before we get to that, John sees another vision. During the godless regime of the antichrist, he operates a church-state government. The false state religious system is referred to as **the great prostitute who sits on many waters.** (Revelation 17:1) The commercial system is called **Babylon the Great, the Mother of prostitutes and of the detestable things of the earth.** (Revelation 17:5)

The antichrist’s world domination lasts only seven years, much shorter than other great empires in history. The antichrist starts out as leader of a multi-nation alliance that rules the world. At the mid-point of the Tribulation he breaks ranks and forms an oppressive church-state dictatorship. He becomes the supreme authority. In the wealthy false church that is sanctioned by the antichrist all manner of abominations are practiced. All are done in the guise of true religion. Many Tribulation saints are persecuted and martyred with the full backing of the antichrist’s evil government. Many who believe in Jesus Christ and does not have the mark of the beast is killed.

Toward the end of the Tribulation there is a rift between antichrist’s false church and his political government. This causes the hollow religious system to collapse. Why

would the antichrist effectively destroy the false church that he once backed? Here's why -- By now the antichrist has gained enough political power to proclaim himself as the dictator of the entire world. So he no longer needs the help and power of the church. She becomes expendable. The antichrist implodes this false church and her hollow version of religion. He instead promotes the worship of himself.

For God has put into their minds to carry out His purpose by making a decision to give their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled. (Revelation 17:17) God is in control right up to the end. Despite all the evil intentions of Satan and his cohorts, God's plans and purposes will ultimately play out!

The antichrist's government is totally depraved. The evil world leaders and businessmen who follow the antichrist are motivated only by greed, money and power. The wickedness of the new "Babylon" of the antichrist is even worse than the wickedness of the original Babylon of Daniel's day. As a result, God's judgment on the new Babylon will be more severe than the judgment spoken by the prophets against ancient Babylon (such as Jeremiah 51). The attitude of the antichrist and his regime is one of complete arrogance: "I am in charge, not God. I am financially secure. I don't need God. I'm not going to experience sorrow. God's a liar. He's not going to hurt me."

God's responds... **"For this reason, she will experience her plagues in a single day: disease, mourning, and famine, and she will be burned down with fire, because the Lord God who judges her is powerful!"** (Revelation 18:8) Those who put all their stock in the antichrist's worldly system will lose it all. They will weep as they watch their cherished Babylon burn. These greedy, materialistic, self-sufficient, arrogant fools will carry on like a bunch of babies as the smoke from Babylon rises.

They will stand a long way off because they are afraid of her torment, and will say, "Woe, woe, O great city, Babylon the powerful city! For in a single hour your doom has come!" (Revelation 18:10) Yes, the great Babylon falls. The antichrist's kingdom crashes and burns. Her activities cease. No music, no light and no happiness can be found anywhere in the ungodly realm of the antichrist.

Now, lest one should feel sorry for poor old Babylon, God reminds us of the reason for her impending doom: **The blood of the saints and prophets was found in her, along with the blood of all those who had been killed on the earth.** (Revelation 18:24). So that's what is going on down on earth.

Suddenly the whole scene shifts to heaven. The dark shadow of gloom and doom hanging over sin-filled earth is replaced with the brilliance of heaven. John sees and hears a huge heavenly choir, "a vast throng" now assembled. It's made up of the saints of all the ages. They sing: **"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, because His judgments are true and just. For He has judged the great**

prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and has avenged the blood of His servants poured out by her own hands!” (Revelation 19:1-2) The 24 elders and the four living creatures respond by singing, “Amen! Hallelujah!”

The anticipation level is rising. God is preparing to finally reclaim His fallen creation. **Then I heard what sounded like the voice of a vast throng, like the roar of many waters and like loud crashes of thunder. They were shouting: “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the All-Powerful, reigns! Let us rejoice and exult and give Him glory, because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.”** (Revelation 19:6-7)

Heaven is about to celebrate a wedding! It’s called the “wedding celebration of the Lamb.” We know from Revelation 5 that the Lamb is Jesus. Do you remember John the Baptist’s famous declaration when he saw Jesus coming to be baptized? He said, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** and then he pointed to Jesus. (John 1:29) So this is Jesus’s wedding. He’s the Groom. OK then, who is His bride? Paul answers that for us in Ephesians 5 when he is talking about the relationship between Christian husbands and wives.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church – He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her... (Ephesians 5:22-25) So then, Jesus’s wife, His bride is THE CHURCH – the saints of God, the redeemed, those who have confessed their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. This is going to be quite a wedding!

But the wedding celebration can only begin after Jesus, the Groom has gathered together His ENTIRE bride. While most of His bride, the Church is already in heaven with Jesus, a small portion remains on the earth. These are the Tribulation saints. Some are in prison and others are just trying to survive. There can be no wedding feast without them! So then, Jesus prepares to go get them.

With eager anticipation all the saints of heaven put on their wedding clothes – bright, clean, fine linen (the righteous deeds of the saints). They are now dressed and ready to accompany the Lord Jesus back to the earth. The written invitation has been sent out: **Then the angel said to me, “Write the following: Blessed are those who are invited to the banquet at the wedding celebration of the Lamb!” He also said to me, “These are the true words of God.”** (Revelation 19:9)

And so it is that the clouds of heaven part and Jesus appears with the army of His saints ready to return to earth.