

Revelation 13:3–14

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The Sequence — Worship, Blasphemy, War

Verses 4 through 7 present a progression that is worth tracing. First, worship — the dragon and the beast are worshipped (verse 4). Then, blasphemy — the beast opens his mouth against God, against His name, His tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven (verses 5-6). Then, war — it is given to him to make war with the saints and overcome them (verse 7). The object of worship forms the worshipper. When the object is the dragon and the beast, what follows is blasphemy against God and war against His saints. The sequence runs in the opposite direction from what is true of the Christian: where worship of the Lord Jesus forms what is said and what is done in conformity with what He is.

Blasphemy Against Those That Dwell in Heaven

The beast blasphemes God's name, His tabernacle, and those who have their tabernacle in heaven — Darby's rendering more precisely: *those who tabernacle in heaven*. The caught-up saints are in heaven. They dwell there. The beast knows it — one does not blaspheme what one does not believe exists. This shows the corruption of a heart that is in possession of the facts and hardens itself against them. The same principle explains why the impenitent will not repent even under the plagues that fall in the tribulation — and why the Lord, when He was here, did not trust Himself to men, knowing what was in man. Light does not automatically produce repentance in a heart set against God.

All That Dwell Upon the Earth — A Moral Class, Not Every Person

Verse 8 states that all who dwell upon the earth shall worship him — all whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb. This phrase appears approximately ten times in the book of Revelation, and it does not mean every last human being alive on the planet. If it did, no one would be left to enter the millennium. It is a moral class: the apostates of Christendom, those who were given over to the worship of the beast, those who received the mark. The godly Jewish remnant who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ are specifically excepted.

Darby notes an important difference in how the verse should be rendered. The names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world — not that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. In Scripture, certain things are said to be from before the foundation of the world, and these are characteristically connected with heavenly callings and the church. Other things are said to be from the foundation of the world — and these are characteristically

connected with the earth and with Israel. The writing in the book of life from the foundation of the world belongs to the earthly calling. It is another marker that this passage is in the context of God's ways in the earth after the church is gone.

Kept from the Hour — Not Kept Through It

The promise to Philadelphia in Revelation 3 is to be kept from the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole inhabited earth. The hour of trial is a larger scope than Jacob's trouble — it embraces the whole world. Jacob's trouble has Israel particularly in view. But Philadelphia is kept from the hour, not the trial — kept from the time of it, which means not to be present during it. This corresponds to the Lord's prayer in John 17: *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil* — kept out of the evil, not merely protected within it. The language of John 17 and of Revelation 3 is parallel, and both speak of exemption from the epoch, not preservation through it. The time of Jacob's trouble is not the church's trouble — it is Jacob's. God will not deal with Jacob in that way while the church is still present.

He That Killeth with the Sword — Reaping What Is Sown

The statement in verse 10 — *he that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword* — is a warning addressed to the saints of that day, providing the moral framework within which they are to endure. Galatians 6:7 gives the unchanging principle: *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*. God is not mocked. The enemy whispers that one can get away with it — the Scripture says otherwise. The beast is at the height of his power, it seems as though he is invincible, but the moral universe has not changed. Those who have led into captivity will themselves go into captivity. The Lord will deal with that in His time.

The verse is followed by: *here is the patience and the faith of the saints*. Endurance and faith — not military strength, not political power, not miraculous signs. These are what the saints of that day are called to. To the flesh, patience and faith look like weakness. But from God's side they are what He prizes, and they belong distinctively to those who are separated from evil unto Him. David's patience and faith in the days of Saul is the model: content to wait for God to work, refusing to take matters into his own hands, even when opportunity to act directly presented itself.

The Second Beast — Two Horns Like a Lamb, Voice of a Dragon

The second beast rises from the earth rather than the sea — suggesting more of a Jewish or Palestinian character, as distinct from the Gentile nations in commotion. He has two horns like a lamb but speaks as a dragon. The two horns speak of power — the same two offices that Zechariah 6 ascribes to the true Messiah: priest upon His throne, the true King. This beast combines a kingly and priestly function in imitation of Christ, who is the true priest-king. He is the Antichrist — the false Christ — and also the false prophet, directing the worship of the whole world toward the first beast and toward the dragon.

He performs great wonders: fire from heaven in the sight of men. Elijah called fire from heaven — this is a Moses-like and Elijah-like imitation. Satan is the great imitator. In Pharaoh's court, the magicians followed Moses as far as they could until they reached the point where they said: *this is the finger of God*. These signs and wonders have enough substance to deceive those who have rejected the truth and are given over to the working of error. The image of the beast that speaks is the final abomination — the false idol that demands worship under threat of death, set up in the place where it ought not to stand.

— *Study ends* —