

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. Today we will introduce Revelation chapters 13-14. Revelation 13 contains the 4th and 5th symbolic picture that reveal the underlying reason of the conflict on earth.

Fourth. The symbolic picture in Revelation 13:1-10 is concerning the beast out of the sea.

One. The beast out of the sea during the long New Testament period (13:1-6).

The “beast coming out of the sea” is a symbol representing *Satan’s antichristian governments and its persecutions*, especially the great world empires (Dan 7:17) with their kings (Dan 7:24) that follow one another throughout the period from the first to the second coming of Christ. Its coming “out of the sea” is a symbol indicating that *such governments come out of the nations of the world that rage and roar in politics and war* (17:15; Isa 17:12).

The beast is described in terms that indicate the form it assumed during the close of the 1st century A.D. This beast has 7 heads and 10 horns with crowns. It is a composite monster of the four beasts described in the book of Daniel, combining a “leopard” that swiftly springs upon its prey, a “bear” that rends and tears and a “lion” that destroys with its powerful mouth (Dan 7:2-8). Because the beast is a composite of Daniel’s beasts, it cannot symbolise any specific empire, but symbolises all antichristian empires with their governments throughout the period from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ, symbolised by the 42 months of his reign (13:5). “The 7 heads” are symbols and refer figuratively to more than actual historical kings. They represent 7 previous successive world empires, which in one way or another have ruled over God’s people, oppressed them, exiled them and opposed God and his people: the Old Babylonian Empire (Gen 11:1-9), the Egyptian Empire (Ex 1:8-11), the Assyrian Empire (2 Ki 15), the Babylonian empire (2 Ki 24), the Medo-Persian Empire (Esther 1,3), the Greek-Seleucid Empire (Dan 8:5-8) and the Roman Empire (17:9). They represent *all the antichristian world empires throughout history*. Its “blasphemous names” are symbols representing *the claims they make that dishonour the God of the Bible*. The rulers and governments demand for themselves divine titles as during the days of the apostle John, when the Roman emperors demanded to be addressed as “lord” and “saviour”.

“The 10 horns with diadems” are symbols representing *the mighty rulers of the world in all areas of life: politics, economics, judiciary, military, education, etc.* together with the arrogant assumptions of their authority (Dan 7:24; Eph 6:12; Rev 17:12). Satan delegates power to the godless nations and their governments in order to persecute the Church. Satan executes his plans through the governments of the world and the rulers are subject to Satan and receive their inspiration from Satan.

“The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority” is a symbol that *Satan himself works through every antichristian institution in the world*. It does not mean that the dragon has incarnated himself in the beast, but rather that he possessed the beast.

“The head that had received a fatal wound and was healed” is also a symbol that represents the mystery that *the beast always seems to rise again after it has been destroyed* until its final embodiment in the final antichristian empire and the final antichrist (cf. 17:7-11). “The whole sinful world was astonished” that the beast kept on reappearing after it had been destroyed (cf. 17:8). The non-Christian world “followed the beast and worshipped the beast”, because they had no idea who could resist this beast (13:4). God allowed the beast to exercise his authority for “42 months”.

The number “42 months” is a symbol and represents *the whole New Testament period* from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ.

Satan gave the beast a mouth to blaspheme God and “to slander the name of God”, that is, to slander God as he has revealed his essential nature in the Bible and in Christ. He also slandered God’s people in God’s tent (dwelling place) on earth and God’s people in heaven. Although God had delegated authority to the governments in the world to govern the world on behalf of God (Rom 13:1-7), the governments often allow themselves to be used as instruments of Satan to persecute Christians.

Two. The beast out of the sea during the very short period before the second coming of Christ (13:7-10).

God is always on the throne (ch. 4). By God’s sovereign permissive will, he allows the beast to do certain things. Just before the 2nd coming of Christ, God has given the beast “authority over every tribe, people, language and nation” (cf. 17:15) and “power to make war against the saints and to conquer them”. This sentence in Revelation 13:7 is exactly the same as the sentence in Revelation 11:7. Therefore, part 3 and 4 of the book of Revelation are parallel. The beast coming out of the Abyss in Revelation 11:7 is the final form of the beast coming out of the sea in Revelation 13:7. The beast or antichrist will dominate the world of non-Christians and the world of non-Christians will worship the beast. This also proves that “the two witnesses” in Revelation ch. 11 are symbols representing the Church consisting of saints, that is, the born-again Christians (14:12).

“The Lamb” is a symbol representing *Christ who was slain on the cross* to make atonement for the sins of those whose names have been written in Christ’s “book of life from the foundation of the earth” (20:11-15; cf. Eph 1:4). During the great tribulation there will still be Christians on earth and they will not worship the beast or antichrist. They will be persecuted and their bodies may even be killed, but no one will be able to destroy their souls (Mt 10:28)! The beast can do no more to Christians than what God permits him to do. This means that not Satan, but God rules supreme even on this present world! God has decided to use the suffering caused by the beast and his allies to test Christians, to purify and sanctify them, to develop their patience and endurance, to spread the kingdom (cf. Acts 8:1-4) and to expose the corruption of this present world. Christians may suffer, but they cannot be deceived by the beast (Mt 24:22,24)!

Fifth. The symbolic picture in Revelation 13:11-18 is concerning the beast out of the earth.

One. The beast out of the earth during the long New Testament period (13:11-18). The “beast coming out of the earth” is a symbol representing *Satan’s antichristian knowledge, its deceptions and its advocates*, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the period from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ. Its coming “out of the earth” is a symbol indicating that such false prophets are *possessed and controlled by the spirit of the Abyss* (9:2; 11:7), *lack heavenly nature and significance* (Phil 3:19) and they are *unspiritual and devious* (Jas 3:14-15). The beast out of the earth represents all people and institutions that advocate antichristian religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences, and that persecute Christians throughout the New Testament period from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ, symbolised by the 42 months of the reign of the beast out of the sea (13:5).

The beast is described in terms that indicate the form it assumed during the close of the 1st century A.D. This beast has “two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon”. The “two horns” are a symbol representing *destructive power in the area of witnessing* (Dt 17:6; Lk 10:1). He is the great false witness or great false prophet (19:20), speaking on behalf of the dragon or Satan and his ally, the beast or antichrist. He witnesses under the guise of a harmless lamb, even of Christ, but in reality is an extremely dangerous liar like Satan. He represents the lie of Satan dressed up like the truth and appears before people as a masquerading angel (Mt 7:15; Jn 8:44; 2 Cor 11:14). “He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast”. Already during the 1st century B.C. the heathen priests supported and upheld the secular power of the state in its persecution of Christians. Heathen religion and heathen politics cooperated with one another in their battle against the Church. This will continue until the 2nd coming of Christ. “He performed great and miraculous signs” (19:20) in order to prove his false teachings and to deceive the masses of people in the world. He even causes people to see fire coming down from heaven, (cf. 1 Ki 18:28). He displays his miracles “in full view of the people”, that is, as a performance in order to strengthen the power of the antichristian government.

“He ordered the inhabitants of the earth to set up an image in honour of the beast”. Already during the 1st century A.D. the priests of the pagan temples ordered the inhabitants of their districts to make statues in honour of their gods, goddesses and even of their emperor (Act 19:23-27). Christians were asked to offer incense to the image of the emperor and say, “Caesar is Lord”. Those who refused were put to death. Wherever and whenever in history the beast out of the sea (the antichrist) appears his antichristian religious persecution also appears. Throughout the New Testament period the beast out of the earth will set up new images of the beast out of the sea. These new images will be false religious systems together with its grand religious buildings and worship that will support the false political systems. He will give breath to the image of the antichrist so that it can speak. This is not ‘a spirit of life’, but ‘the appearance of life through deceit’. He will cause the image of the beast to speak - for example, through the magic of magicians called ventriloquism.

He will also “force everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark”. The unjust and oppressive economic boycott of Christians is also symbolised under the 3rd seal in Revelation 6:5-6, where John saw a black horse with a rider holding a pair of scales. In the Old Testament God’s angel put a mark in the form of a leaning cross (an X) on the foreheads of God’s people. The rest were destroyed (Ez 9:1-11). In the New Testament throughout the period from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ all the followers of Jesus Christ are sealed on their foreheads (7:3) with the name of God or Christ (14:1), but all the followers of the beast are branded with a mark on their foreheads and right hands with the name of the beast (13:16-18). The beast out of the earth does not refer to a particular individual in future history, but is a symbol, because he persecutes Christians throughout the centuries. Wherever and whenever the beast out of the earth appears, the mark of the beast will also be found. The seal in all genuine Christians is *the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth* (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 1 Jn 4:1-6), but the mark branded on all non-Christians is *the spirit of the antichrist, the spirit of falsehood* (1 Jn 4:1-6), the spirit that rejects Christ and persecutes Christians. The mark of the beast is not a single, outward, visible sign that will appear on the foreheads and right hands of wicked people at one particular moment in history. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 teaches that God’s people should bind God’s Word on to their hands and foreheads as a symbol that God’s truth controls their actions and thoughts. Likewise, the followers of the beast or antichrist have received the mark of the beast on their right hands or foreheads as a symbol that *Satan’s lies control their actions and minds*. The more we approach the 2nd coming of Christ, the more this antichristian spirit will become evident and opposition to Christians will increase.

The mark of the beast is described as “the number of his name” and this is “the number of man”, the number 666. Man was created on the 6th day. The number 6 is a symbol of *the limitation and imperfection of man*. The number 7 is a symbol of *the completeness and perfection of the holy God*. The number 666 does not and cannot increase to the number 777. It points to the fact that the beast and his followers will never succeed in their plans, but will always miss their goals and fail! They will experience three times 6, that is, “*failure upon failure upon failure*”. Because the beast glories in “man”, he must fail (Jer 17:5-6). And because his followers also glory in “man”, they too will certainly fail!

Two. The beast out of the earth during the very short period before the second coming of Christ. Throughout the New Testament period there are many antichrists (1 Jn 2:18) and many false prophets (Mt 7:15-20). Their activity will be extreme during the last days (Mt 24:21-25).

REVELATION CHAPTER 14 gives an encouragement to Christians and a final warning to all other people, because the final judgement is coming.

John sees three visions, but not in chronological order, because chronologically the first vision comes last.

First. The symbolic picture in Revelation 14:1-5 is concerning the Church Triumphant after the second coming.

Although the Christian Church is persecuted by the dragon and the two beasts, Christ and Christians will finally triumph! The picture is of the Lamb standing with 144 000 people on Mount Zion. “Mount Zion” is a symbol representing *the place where Christ is* (Ps 125:1; Heb 12:22). “The Lamb” is a symbol of *Jesus Christ*. The number 144 000 is a symbol representing *God’s people from the beginning to the end of the world*. In Revelation 7:1-8 it is symbol of *the Church Militant* at the beginning of its struggle just after the 1st coming and in Revelation 14:1-5 it is a symbol of *the Church Triumphant* at the end of its struggle *after* the 2nd coming of Christ. All God’s genuine people are standing victoriously with Christ just before they descend as the new Jerusalem onto the new earth (cf. ch 21-22). Christians sealed by God will never be brought down by the deception and oppression of the evil world and they will never perish in the final judgement. They will be completely redeemed and completely victorious. Although the dragon and his allies will try every trick to make them unfaithful to Christ, not a single person of the 144 000 will be missing (Jn 17:12)! They had been “redeemed” by the blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:18-19) and they had kept themselves “pure” from the immorality in the world. They are “the firstfruits” in the sense of chosen by God and born again (Js 1:18). They represent all genuine Christians.

Second. The symbolic picture in Revelation 14:6-13 is concerning the three warning angels.

Like in chapter 11:12-13, this symbolic picture takes us back to conditions on earth *before* the final judgement day. The picture is of three angels with one purpose: to warn people with respect to the coming final judgement so that people would turn to God in true faith.

Third. The symbolic picture in Revelation 14:14-20 is concerning the final judgement day.

The final judgement day is described in a twofold picture.

One. Jesus Christ reaps the harvest of Christians at his second coming.

“The son of man” (Dan 7:13) is Christ and he comes on “the clouds” (Mt 24:30). His “golden crown” is a victory wreath and a symbol of his *final and complete victory* at his 2nd coming. “The sharp sickle in his hand” is a sharp vine-knife in the form of a small sickle and is a symbol of *Christ’s function as Judge*. “The angel” is only a messenger from God the Father announcing that the time of the final judgement had arrived. Just as the winnowing fork in Matthew 3:11-12 is a symbol of the instrument used for *the continued harvest* throughout world history, so the sickle is a symbol of the instrument used for *the final harvest of both the saved and the lost* on the final judgement day. “The hour to reap” is a figure of speech expressing the thought that God had determined *a definite moment* for everything, also for *the final harvest* (Mt 24:36). The point of time has arrived that the harvest (of wheat) has become “dry”, that is, “golden and thoroughly ripe” and *ready for the harvest*. The picture is the harvest of the Christians (Mt 13:24-30,36-43). Christ literally “threw” his sickle onto the earth and the earth was *harvested in one moment*. Because the full number of God’s elect have been harvested (Mt 24:30-31; Rom 11:25-26), there is longer any reason to continue the history of this present fallen world. With the 2nd coming of Christ the history of this world ends.

Two. An angel reaps the harvest of the wicked at the second coming.

His “sickle” is a symbol of *judgement*. In the light of “the angel who had charge of the fire from the altar” (6:9-11; 8:3-5) we view the final judgement of the wicked as God’s final answer to the prayers of Christians. God will take revenge (Rom 12:17-19) on all those who have persecuted and oppressed Christians in this world. “The vine of the earth” is a symbol representing *the wicked world, the entire multitude of evil people and their evil devices*. Its “grapes” are a symbol of *the individual unbelievers*. Its grapes had “ripened” or *reached its highest peak*. Both the wheat and grapes had reached the peak of their development at the same time. Both the godly people and the wicked people have reached

their peak and full number at the same time. The hour of the final judgement of the world had struck. Also this angel literally “threw” his sickle onto the earth *to gather the clusters of grapes*, which represent *individual wicked people*, and *the whole grapevine*, which represents *the whole wicked world with all its evil devices* into the great winepress of God’s wrath (Isa 63:1-6), which represents *hell* (Mt 13:41-42). Never again will anything grow out of it! With the final judgement day the godless and wicked world together with its people will be finished forever! “They were trampled in the winepress outside the city” is a symbol signifying that the godless and wicked world with all godless and wicked people will be *destroyed outside the New Jerusalem*. Nothing impure will ever enter the New Jerusalem (21:8,27; 22:15). The horses are pictured as swimming or drowning in the lake of blood that spread in all directions to a distance of 1600 stadia (300 km). It is a picture of *the final battle* at the second coming of Christ in which Christ *symbolically* engaged the dragon, his helpers and their wicked followers in battle and conquered them (16:14,16; 19:14-19; 20:8). The intention of this vision is to impress the readers with the terrible fate of those who have chosen the evil world and continued to live according to their sinful nature. Like all the numbers in the book of Revelation, the number 1600 is probably symbolic. The number 4 is a symbol of the earth and the number 10 is a symbol of completion. Thus the number 1600 (4x4x10x10) is a symbol of *God’s thorough and complete judgement of the whole wicked world!*

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Read Revelation 15-16. Tomorrow we will introduce Revelation 15-16.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.