

IN RESPONSE - THE BEAST (Revelation 13:1-10)

by Dennis Prutow

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Chapters 12 through 14 compose the fourth section of this great book. We reviewed Revelation 12 last December. It reveals the birth of Christ. With Him comes salvation. Revelation 12 also introduces Christ's arch enemy, the dragon. We see the church under siege and under the protection of God. There is titanic spiritual struggle. The two sides of this struggle are expounded in chapters 13 and 14. We see the negative side in chapter 13 with the introduction of two other formal enemies, the beast and the false prophet. We glimpse the positive side with its victory in chapter 14.

We begin with the dragon who makes war with the seed of the woman.

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names (verse 1).

Having raged after the woman in the wilderness, the dragon now stands by the sea. This is the sea of humanity outside of Christ. The dragon, Satan, appears to call forth a beast out of the sea. Beasts of this sort represent political and governmental power manifested in worldly kingdoms. Compare Daniel 7. This beast bears the image of the dragon having seven heads and ten horns. The ten horns and ten diadems indicate the pervasive power of this beast among the kingdoms of men. The seven heads represent the wisdom of the beast. Jesus told His disciples, "Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Verse 2 describes this beast further.

And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

This beast is sly and cunning like a leopard. He has the strength of a bear and is ferocious like a lion. People bow before his roar. When government power speaks, men and women tremble. The devil is also wise. He knows the Bible and theology better than most. He is cunning and deceptive. He imparts his

skill to the beast. We have seen many anti-Christian governmental powers arise in the world. The Babylonian and Greek empires were examples. Rome was another. We can mention Hitler's regime and the atheistic power of the USSR. We also add the deteriorating situation in both Canada and the USA. A college professor visiting from the Ukraine during 1993 challenged our congregation with words similar to these, "Seventy years of atheism in the Soviet Union proved unworkable, why are you moving in the same direction?" Excellent question. The beast is active. Verse 3:

I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast.

This is a parody, an imitation of Christ. Government views itself as a savior. It has a messianic complex. Men and women of the earth stand amazed at the power and wisdom of the beast. The earth is the kingdom of darkness, the domain of the devil. The beast, anti-Christian governmental power, is viewed as the earth's messiah. The people of this kingdom willingly follow the beast. They fight for greater governmental power. Sound familiar? Verse 4:

They worshipped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

The perverted authority behind all anti-Christian governmental power is the devil. We must remember this. Oddly enough, it does not matter whether you are a Republican, Democrat or Independent. Government is not the answer to any national, moral, medical or economic problems. God is the one to whom we should turn. However, the power of government is revered by many.

Since this is the case, verses 5-7 say, There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is those who dwell in heaven. It was

also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

Because anti-Christian government is obsessed with its own power to save, it mounts various assaults on the church and the God of the Bible.

The forty-two months is the same period the woman, the church, is nourished by God in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6). The days of our wilderness wanderings in this world are numbered (Psalm 90:12, 139:16). This period in which God nourishes the church in the wilderness is also a time, times and half a time or three and one half years (Revelation 12:14). This time will be cut off suddenly. The power of the beast, ungodly governmental power, is seen to be dominant only *for a time*.

This is the picture. The result is plain, verse 8.

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

People from every tribe, tongue and nation serve the beast, anti-Christian ungodly government power. Once again, the earth in Revelation is the spiritual world opposed to God. It is composed of the reprobate. They do not have their names in the book of life nor has Christ died for them.

Verses 9-10 warn and encourage.

If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

We must hear the Word of God. First, we will not escape predestined struggle. Second, God's judgments will be executed. Our posture is clear. We must trust God's plans. We must also persevere. We must remember we are privileged to be part of the purposes of God.

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IN RESPONSE - THE FALSE PROPHET (Revelation 13:11-18)

by Dennis Prutow

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon” (Revelation 13:11). This second beast, arising from the earth, is always associated with the dragon and the first beast. This second beast *is* the false prophet. Compare Revelation 16:13.

He is lamb-like in appearance. He seems quiet, gentle, harmless and helpful as he delivers his propaganda. Yet he is dangerous as the dragon. How so? His teachings lead men and women, young people and children away from Christ. He is anti-Christian power found in education, science and the arts. Education, science and the arts were intended by God for building a culture and society obedient to Him. Most colleges and universities were begun by Christians. Modern science got its start with the work of Christian men like Kepler and Pasteur. Formerly, the most cultured art was tied to Scripture whether we speak of music, painting, sculpture or architecture.

Secular education opposes God, denying any need to acknowledge Him in the classroom, making the work of the church exceedingly difficult at best. Secular science is atheistic at base. It sees no need for God nor does it desire God. Those who acknowledge God and pursue science are castigated as supremely unscientific. Christian theists find it difficult to pursue advanced degrees in science if they are outspoken about God. Secular art not only propagates atheism but it supports amoral and aberrant behavior calling it normal. It characterizes Christianity as extremist. Homosexuality is acceptable. Exclusive heterosexual monogamy is bigotry.

What of this second beast?

He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed (verse 12). The first beast, ungodly and anti-Christian governmental power, derives its authority from the dragon and delegates authority to educational, scientific and cultural institutions such as schools, laboratories, museums and libraries. In our society, such institutions are closely allied to government or government

owned and sanctioned. The false prophet leads people in following the beast. After all, government is our messiah.

The actions of the false prophet seem to warrant our devotion. “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men” (verse 13). The works of ungodly education, science and the arts seem miraculous. Lives are changed through good schooling. Advances in science, space exploration and medicine for example, are astounding. The exploration of virtual realities via computer boggle our minds. Special effects in films and on television captivate us. These phenomena seem almost divine in origin. This is the problem.

The false prophet leads many astray by leading them away from God.

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life (verse 14).

Those who dwell on the earth are those opposed to Christ. They are deceived. The wonders performed by the false prophet captivate them. Men and women are to build a culture and society to the glory of God. They are to use government, education, science and the arts as tools to glorify God. Apostasy is the contrary. Schools, scientific enterprises, theaters are built to glorify man. Thus the anti-Christian posture of the devil is imaged in the world. Men and women worship the false Christ of government at the behest of ungodly educators, scientists and artists.

The false prophet breaths life into the institutions built on ungodly principles.

And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed (verse 15).

This breath is the life of the dragon, the devil, who seeks the spiritual demise of his victims. In ancient Rome, worship of Caesar became mandatory. Death was the penalty for calling upon Christ as Lord.

Such a confession was high treason. In today’s culture, those who are not politically correct can suffer serious political and economic sanctions.

The false prophet is ruthless.

And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead (verse 16).

All social and economic categories follow the teachings of the false prophet. They are marked people. The mark of God is the Holy Spirit. Christians have this mark. “You were sealed in Him [Christ] with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). When the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in a person’s life, we clearly see the mark of the Spirit. Similarly, the mark of the beast is the presence of the unholy spirit. He displays himself in the deeds of the flesh. The mark is on their hand and forehead to indicate all they think and do is guided by the devil.

Those involved with devilish schemes form circles of friendship and fellowship. Today we see unions, political parties, social organizations of many sorts. They often involve economic and social privileges. This is one way the false prophet propagandizes the earth. Verse 17 says,

And he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Here we meet the infamous number of the beast. Verse 18,

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

This number refers to the false trinity composed of the dragon, beast and false prophet. This number is 666, a number relating to the exaltation of man who desires to make a name for himself (Genesis 11:4). If a number were assigned to the true Trinity it would be 777.

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IN RESPONSE - PERFECT VICTORY, PART ONE (Revelation 14:1-10)

by Dennis Prutow

Chapter 13 introduced us to the beast, the false prophet and their work. Now we have a view of the church and her victory through Christ. It is a perfect victory from God's perspective. It is a sevenfold victory. We see the first part of this victory in this lesson.

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads (verse 1).

We first met the 144,000 in chapter 7. These are the church of God in all ages. Twelve is the number of the church. Compare Revelation 21. One thousand is ten cubed. The number of perfection, from the human perspective, times ten times ten. A vast number. These are on Mount Zion, another symbol of the church. They also have the mark of God. The Name of God and the Name of the Lamb represent the character of God and of Christ. The church bears the Name and character of God. In this text, I think we have a representation of the church militant. Compare Revelation 7:1-8 and 9-17.

This church has a great work to do. Verse 2.

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

Although on earth, this church has a song from heaven. It is a powerful song. Anyone who has been next to the river at Niagara and has heard the waters rushing toward and over the falls knows in part what this vision portrays. The voice thundered judgment. The voice also sounded the melody of grace. It was the voice of a choir energized by heaven.

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth (verse 3).

In the vision, the 144,000 are people purchased from the domain of the devil, the earth. They are before the throne of God and the company of angels assembled around that throne. We are those

people gathered in worship. We are delegates of heaven laboring in this world. When we assemble for worship we are on the edge of heaven.

This is a new song in that it comes from hearts made new by the Spirit. It is an old song in that it is the old song of redemption. It is at one and the same time, "the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Revelation 15:3).

The vision describes this worshipping church. Verses 4-5.

These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

To be undefiled means chaste with regard to spiritual matters. Adultery is a symbol of idolatry throughout Scripture. Following the Lamb indicates devotion to Him. The first fruits are the part of the harvest belonging to God. This church is full of truth and the Spirit of truth.

We now begin to see the sevenfold victory of the church. We see seven angels, messengers. First, Christ commissions her to preach the everlasting gospel to all creation. Verse 6.

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

This angel is at the highest point of heaven. He is very visible and unavoidable. The message he brings goes to every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Note this message is directed to those who live on the earth. The earth refers to the world, the domain of Satan. The message is directed at extracting people from his clutches.

We must remember the eternal gospel has two sides. We must also remember, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). Wisdom is fearing the wrath of God for sin. Wisdom is trusting Christ to take the awful wrath of God for

your sin. Wisdom is coming to God through Jesus Christ. Wisdom is glorifying God as the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of life. Here is victory. Look at the message of the angel. Verse 7.

And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

The second part of this announcement of victory involves the fall of evil.

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality" (verse 8).

We meet Babylon. This is a fourth enemy of the cross. The others are the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. Babylon is the capital of evil epitomized in that ancient city by the same name. Rome was the Babylon of the first century. Cultures in which the false trinity of the dragon, beast and false prophet thrive are Babylon today. We find her not only by the Euphrates but also by the Potomac. She is doomed. The church is commissioned to announce her doom. This is part of her victory.

The third measure of victory involves the commission to announce the impending doom of the world opposed to Christ.

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand" (verse 9).

The person who follows the beast's thinking and does his bidding is doomed. He will be an eternal memorial to foolishness of apostasy. The saint's victory involves issuing the warning of verse 10.

"He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."

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IN RESPONSE - PERFECT VICTORY, PART TWO (Revelation 14:11-20)

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We are in the midst of the announcement of the third angel in Revelation 14. Verses 11-12 complete this vision.

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

God establishes an eternal memorial as the smoke of judgment ascends perpetually for all the universe to behold. Compare Isaiah 66:24 where the saints of heaven observe the death of hell.

Perseverance is part of the victory of God’s people. Under all forms of stress and pressure they maintain their faith in Christ and follow the commandments of God. Perseverance involves both. “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). This perseverance brings blessing.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them” (verse 13). This second of seven beatitudes divides the sevenfold announcement of victory and is the fourth. Three remain.

Those who persevere are blessed. It is a blessing to die, in the Lord. The phrase “from now on” causes some consternation. Perhaps we should connect these words with the first part of the sentence. “Blessed are the dead from now on.” There will be no change in their state of blessedness. They find rest from the labors and rigors of this life. They took the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:20 quite seriously. “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” The fruit of their lives in Christ follows them. The blessing of heaven awaits all those who keep the faith and exhibit that faith by keeping the commandments.

The scene changes with a vision of the Son of Man reaping His harvest at the end of the age. Verse 14.

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden

crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

This vision reminds us of Daniel 7:13, I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. Christ is on His throne. In Revelation, He wears a crown. He reigns. He has a sharp curved knife fit for cutting shocks of grain or clusters of grapes. He awaits the time of the final harvest.

An angel brings the awaited command. This is the fifth announcement of victory. Verse 15.

And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

Jesus confessed, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36). As the Son of Man, Christ awaits the signal from the Father.

A messenger emerges from the temple with the command of God. Now is the time. The harvest is ripe. The Son of Man takes action. “Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped” (verse 16). The drama is heightened by the simplicity of the narrative. It takes one insertion of the knife and all the earth yields her fruit to the Christ of God.

In this case, it is good fruit. The harvest is ripe from two perspectives. There must be a harvest of God’s people sowed with the seed of God’s Word. The elect people of God are brought in by the everlasting gospel. There must also be a harvest of judgment when the cup of sin is filled by the reprobate of the earth. The description of this harvest follows. Christ reigns. He is the victor. His people share in His work.

The mere appearance of another angel announces the impending harvest of doom. This is the sixth broadcast of victory. Evil is judged. Righteousness reigns. “And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle” (verse 17). As Christ

and the Father are one and as this angel is an extension of the Father’s hand, so he is the hand of Christ weighing in against the evil of the earth.

A final angel caps the sevenfold victory. Verse 18.

Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.”

This is the angel we met in chapter 8 who poured incense on the altar representing the prayers of God’s people who seek judgment. Compare Revelation 6:9-11. In answer to these prayers of the saints, this angel took fire from the altar and cast it upon the earth (Revelation 8:5). Now he calls for the fire of judgment in a different form. “Put in your knife.”

So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God (verse 19).

Judgment is often pictured by a wine press. This is God’s wine press. These words remind us of God’s judgment on Tyre and Sidon. “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great (Joel 3:13).

And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles (verse 20).

Christ died outside the city. There He took the judgment due to others for their sin. There was no escape for Him. There is also no escape for those who are outside of Christ. The Holy City, New Jerusalem, is the ultimate city of refuge for sinners. Those outside perish. Imagine horses struggling in bridle deep blood. Imagine a sea covering the whole land. There is no escape. This is the picture. This is also the ultimate and perfect victory of Christ in which His people share.

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