

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 30 - Chapters 13 & 14

We've spent a lot of time in Revelation 13, but we'll finally conclude it today and get into chapter 14. Chapter 13 is so very full of the dramatic events and mysterious symbols that dominate Christian thought about the coming apocalypse that it has required a considerable amount of our time. And there is little more dramatic than the matter of the Anti-Christ demanding and enforcing that everyone in the world take a mark on the hand or forehead otherwise they will not be able to buy or sell. Thus acquiring the basics of life become impossible for those who refuse the so-called mark of the Beast. Let me say upfront (because I have no doubt I'll get questions and emails about it) that not every last person living in every last remote place on earth will find themselves in this predicament. Many places still exist that buying and selling is a matter of bartering; they don't even have what we would call "cash". And the populations there are so small and so inconsequential to someone who wants world control that they will likely escape such an edict. But for everyone else.... the 99.9%.... this mark will be needed for survival. In the Bible, terms like "all" and "everyone in the world" are not absolutes; they are approximates. Those terms are used similarly to how we use them today; that is, we mean the vast majority... just short of unanimous.... but not every last human being or thing without exception.

Let's re-read the last few verses of chapter 13.

RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 13:16 -end

Last week we discussed that because this is Satan behind the Anti-Christ's edict, then underlying his plan to retain power over the earth is deceit and mockery of God. Thus the mark that he demands upon the world's population is a counterfeit of the mark (the seal) that God put upon the foreheads of His 144,000 witnesses back in Revelation chapter 7. But it is also making a mockery of God's command in Deuteronomy 6 to teach the Torah (which Revelation 13 refers to as "the covenant") to your children, to put God's laws in your heart, and to tie them upon your hand and upon your forehead. God wants us to do these things either in actuality or symbolically, because He wants to be the continual center of our lives. Naturally, Satan wants to replace God as the center of our lives so he wants his mark upon us as a reminder of his deluded glory and greatness and his authority over us.

While in our era the elite, the ruling class, and the wealthiest among us usually live by a different set of rules than the rest of us, verse 16 tells us that even the great and rich will be forced to wear the mark of the Beast. Why? Because while on the surface the mark is a means of control on our finances and livelihoods, underlying it all is that it is a mark of spiritual allegiance to Satan and therefore a rejection of God Almighty. So no one can refuse the mark and live.

Then verse 18 speaks about perhaps one of the most debated passages in the entire New

Testament: the meaning of the number 666. So we'll dive into that question and see what we can conclude. To begin, it is important that we get the overall picture that is called for with the first words of this verse that say: "This is where wisdom is needed". Wisdom is, biblically speaking, godly. That is, the source of true wisdom is always divine. So we can conclude from this that only God Worshippers are going to have the wisdom to not be taken in by the lies and awesome exhibition of power and knowledge that the Anti-Christ and his evil followers will put on worldwide display. To all others it will seem like a no-brainer to follow this Messianic figure who has abilities and intelligence and leadership like no one in history ever has.

Let me give you an illustration of this. As a person whose corporate life involved the world of High Tech, I can appreciate the learnedness, intelligence, and creative ideas that engineers, scientists and mathematicians have put forth that has dramatically changed the world we live in. On the other hand, we have (since the era of the Enlightenment of the 18th century) put more and more of our trust into the brain power of our engineers, scientists, and mathematicians. Today, when something is said to be scientifically proven, then all debate is to end. If an "expert" with a PhD. says something is so, then we are to accept his or her word for it and take it as iron clad proof. This has had the exact desired effect that the Enlightenment era academics and philosophers intended: the mysteries of God have been replaced by the assurances of human intellect. No longer is science the discovery of what God has created as it once was; it is the standard to which the Bible must measure up or be discarded as myth, legend, and superstition.

All one has to do is research the persons who write modern critical Bible commentary that our various seminaries teach to future pastors and ministers to find out that relatively few believe in God, let alone in Christ. Rather they approach their Bible research as a scientific study of ancient Jewish literature and history. Faith, the belief in miracles, the acknowledgment of the supernatural, and the concept of infallibility play no role in their lives or in their area of academic discipline. I could go on for hours about scientists in various fields of study who make bold statements of supposed fact about humanity, biology, and the cosmos that in reality don't even rise to the level of sound theories, but their intellect and academic credentials are so valued that to express skepticism to their ideas is tantamount to heresy or worse, stupidity. I tell you all this (which most of you already recognize) because when the image of the Beast speaks, and the Anti-Christ brings about peace among nations that has perhaps never been seen before in history, and he sets forth his team of scientific experts and philosophers to explain why things are now as they are, very few people will be able to avoid being seduced by their intellect and seeming irrefutable facts. We are already well primed and conditioned for such a scenario to occur.

Interestingly, the identification and meaning of the number 666 as it is associated with the Beast, the Anti-Christ, is going to be something that will be misunderstood by all the world's inhabitants except for those who have Godly wisdom: true Believers. When the Anti-Christ appears world experts will explain it as one thing, but true Believers will see it as something else. However let me be clear: as of the year of our Lord 2019, we do NOT yet have enough information, and history has NOT yet reached a milestone, by which we can confidently decipher the intent and purpose of 666 other than to know that it has thoroughly evil, anti-God attributes.

By far the most widespread belief among Bible academics is that 666 comes from biblical gematria. Gematria is the study of numbers that are assigned to letters of an alphabet and the words they form. For instance; most ancient languages did not have numbers separate from their alphabets. Rather a letter represented both a sound and a number. Hebrew operates like that. An Aleph is 1, a Bet is 2, a Gimel is 3, and so on. Ancient Greek was the same. So every word also had a number value arrived at by adding up the individual letter values, and thus especially the religious mystics looked for hidden or secret meaning behind the words by delving into the numbers those words represented. So at the end of verse 17 we read: "...the name of the beast or the number of his name". And those who study and put credence to gematria say that the phrase "the number of his name" means that when you add up the number value of each letter in the Beast's name, it will total 666. Easy enough, right? Not really.

What language are we to use to arrive at the number of his name? Is the spelling of his name to use the Hebrew alphabet? Since it's the New Testament should it be the Greek alphabet? Or maybe Aramaic, which was widespread in John's era? How about the Latin? Or will it be the language of the country from which the Anti-Christ emerges? Many translators today act as though it must be English. German translators of decades ago naturally figured it would be German. Even though English, German, and most other Western languages use entirely different words, most use a common 26 letter alphabet. So which of these are we to choose since it will of course change the number value of each word? Do you see the problem?

Certain forms of Nero's name can arrive at the number 666 depending on the language used. Other academics have shown how Napoleon's and Hitler's names can be manipulated to add up to 666.... again with language playing the key role.

Now I'm sure most Hebrew Roots folks say of course it will be the Hebrew alphabet that will be the one used to arrive at the correct name. Even if that is correct, then which Hebrew alphabet? Because it has changed over the centuries. Therefore I have serious doubts that "the number of his name" points us towards gematria as we think of it today as the means to finding a solution.

Perhaps the 666 is purely symbolic. The number 7 is generally agreed to be a divine number that symbolizes God or godly activities. And the number 6 is said to be the number of man (humans) and human activity. Thus triple 6's represent the evil trio of Satan, the Anti-Christ, and the False Prophet as opposed to triple 7's representing the divine trio of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And indeed, whether it is gematria, symbolism, or something else, verse 18 says that "For it is the number of a person...." Confusing, isn't it?

Charles Feinberg makes this observation that, for now, probably represents about the best we can do.

"It is almost impossible to list the number of suggestions for 666, all the way from Nero in ancient Rome to persons in this day. Probably the most that can be gleaned is that, since seven is the biblical number of completeness, six, which falls short of it, is man's failure at its worst. Man's worship of man is, indeed, spiritual insanity to the highest

degree".

I realize that many intelligent and thoughtful Revelation experts and book authors have come up with all kinds of innovative solutions. This in itself says that we're still short of the needed information and historical perspective that is yet to arrive to come to any sort of concrete and confident conclusion as to the identification of the Anti-Christ as it relates to the number 666. Could one of them be right? Certainly; someone eventually wins a Lottery. This search for the meaning and person of 666 has spawned quite a number of superstitions and taboos, not just within Christianity. I must admit, I probably wouldn't ever locate Seed of Abraham Ministries anywhere where the address began with 666. So the bottom line today is that we just don't know. And we need to have the humility to accept that even though we live in the so-called Information Age we can't always figure out mysteries that God has set before us and this is almost always because it isn't yet time for us to know. For sure, at some point in the End Times, we will be able to know. Likely it will only become apparent with the appearance of the Anti-Christ. But it will be Believers who discern it correctly. It will not come from human intellect; rather as verse 18 so plainly says it will come from wisdom..... godly wisdom.

Let's move on to Revelation chapter 14.

READ REVELATION CHAPTER 14 all

Here is an excellent example of the downside of dividing a Bible book into chapters. We have concluded chapter 13, taken a deep breath, and now we turn the page to chapter 14 with the expectation of starting a new subject. However because of the break at the end of chapter 13 we can miss the connection between its last couple of verses and the first verse of chapter 14. There should have been no pause, and no stop... no chapter break... and that wasn't the way it was originally created.

We have been discussing the Beast, Satan, requiring a mark on the foreheads or hands of everyone in the world. And that the number of the Beast's name is 666. But immediately to start chapter 14 we read of The Lamb standing with the 144,000 who God marked in their foreheads to set them apart for Himself. So we have the contrast of the Beast demanding worship or else death versus God setting apart 144,000 who had voluntarily devoted themselves to Him by their love. We also have God putting a mark on the foreheads of these 144,000 to protect them from evil versus Satan requiring a mark on the foreheads of those who must submit to his evil or they will be denied the basics of life.

We have met all of the characters mentioned in the first verse before so their identification has already been established. The Lamb is Christ, the 144,000 are Believing Israelites (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel), and the Father is of course Yehoveh God. But we also encounter an important term: Mount Zion. Zion is used many times in the Old Testament (some count as many as 155 times), and it is usually used to refer to the true, ideal city of God and at other times to the people living there. The underlying nature of Zion is that it is the name for Jerusalem, or a particular piece of geography within Jerusalem, that God will rule over after it has been redeemed. Psalm 2, which is agreed among Jews and Christians is a messianic Psalm, uses the term Zion in a way that helps us grasp its significance.

^{CJB}Psalm 2:6-8 ⁶ *"I myself have installed my king on Tziyon, my holy mountain."* ⁷ *"I will proclaim the decree: ADONAI said to me, 'You are my son; today I became your father.*

⁸ *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the whole wide world will be your possession.*

Further, in the Old Testament we find the term Mount Zion used 19 times, of which 9 directly connect to the surviving remnant of Israel being delivered and redeemed. The term only appears 7 times in the New Testament, but 5 of those are quotes from Old Testament passages. Interestingly, here in chapter 14 is the only mention of Zion in the entire Book of Revelation. In the New Testament Mount Zion is a place of rejoicing, celebrating, safety and security. The best way for us to look at it is as reflecting the spiritual condition of Jerusalem, and by extension the spiritual condition of the people living there, in the latter part of the End Times, at about the time of the return of Messiah Yeshua.

An important question to ask here is: are the Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mt. Zion in spirit or in physical bodily form? Many Bible academics say it must be in spirit because in their view the 144,000 don't actually represent what chapter 7 says they do (12 named tribes of Israel) but rather they represent the worldwide Church! And of course those many hundreds of millions of gentile Believers could never fit into Jerusalem! But I take the identification of the 144,000 as Believing Israelites literally, and there is no reason to think that they are not standing in Jerusalem (literally and physically) along with a physical Christ in this verse. While I don't want to get into it here, now, clearly Christ (the Lamb) and the 144,000 were in spirit form and in Heaven in chapter 7. But now they have been returned to Earth in physical form. And I assume (without being dogmatic about it) that the physical form they come in will be superior to the physical form they had at their deaths. Some Christian commentators refer to this superior physical form as a "glorified" body (a term that is as good as any to describe what we currently cannot describe with anything more than speculation).

If the Lamb and the 144,000 were not actually standing on Mount Zion in some physical form, then what we read in the remainder of the chapter makes little sense and so all we have left to interpret its meaning is allegory. And that means we can make nearly anything out of it that our imaginations can produce. While verse 1 is a scene taking place on planet Earth, verse 2 is taking place in Heaven as John says the sounds he hears are coming from Heaven. There are 3 sets of sounds that John speaks of. First is the sound of rushing waters; second is the sound of peals of thunder; and third is that of harpists playing their harps. In the first chapter of Revelation the Son was said to have a voice like rushing waters, and later the Father had a voice like peals of thunder. The 24 Levite Elders played harps. So we have a concert of joyful noise coming down from Heaven celebrating (and perhaps announcing) the return of Christ and the 144,000 to a redeemed Jerusalem (Mount Zion). However let's not jump to conclusions as to who, exactly, in Heaven was singing and playing; for one reason, the term "like" is placed before the description of each sound.

Verse 3 says the song that was being sung was a "new song". When we hear of "new songs" in the Bible, they are victory songs concerning momentous events along the timeline of redemption. We heard a new song when Moses led the fleeing Israelites across the Red Sea

in Exodus 15. New songs are sung in several Psalms including 33, 40, 96 and others. In Revelation chapter 5 there was a new song for the Lamb who was worthy to open the scroll with 7 seals, and another song for the new overcomers and conquerors in Revelation chapter 7. Now with this new song of Revelation chapter 14, and the reappearance of Christ on earth, yet another critical milestone of redemption has arrived.

Whoever was making those sounds were making them before the throne (of God), and before the 4 Living Beings, and before the Elders. So none of these were making those sounds, but rather other spiritual beings were the source. Even more, notice that although we're told that there was a new song, unlike the other new songs in the Bible where we're given their content, in this case we're not; the song itself is a mystery. And verse 3 says that only the 144,000 were able to discern it.

Verses 3 through 5 give us a partial description, or perhaps better a list of attributes, of this group of 144,000. First, they have been ransomed from the world. Second, they have not defiled themselves with women. Third, they are virgins. Fourth, they follow the Lamb (Christ) where ever He goes; Fifth, they have been ransomed from among human kind as firstfruits for God. Sixth, no lie was found on their lips. And seventh, they are without defect.

The first thing to notice is exactly 7 attributes are listed and 7 is the ideal number and the number of wholeness and completion. So these 144,000, even though they are human, are now whole and perfected in the Father's eyes. While we Believers who are alive are to strive for perfection, and (if we allow it) we will go through a process of being perfected, we will never achieve wholeness or perfection on this earth because we still wear these corruptible bodies of flesh. But these 144,000 left those corruptible bodies behind when they died and went to Heaven, but have now returned to Zion in incorruptible bodies.

The first attribute, which is being ransomed from the world says simply they are Believers. They trusted and acted in faith, believing that the blood shed by Yeshua redeemed them. The second attribute is a more difficult one to discern. What does it mean that they were not defiled by women? In no way does contact with a woman defile a male unless it is illicit contact. And besides, in that case both male and female become defiled. I won't go through the list of possibilities that a number of scholars offer, but rather I'll offer the explanation that I feel confident in. For those who follow Torah Class and Seed of Abraham Fellowship, you know that I have spoken on many occasions about Holy War, and that the coming War of Armageddon is but the continuation of the Holy War that was initiated by God when He fought Pharaoh for the possession of God's chosen people: the Israelites. Thus when Israel went into the Land of Canaan, it would involve a Holy War for the land and so a number of Holy War rules were set down by the Lord. One of the most interesting rules was the Law of Herem (the Law of the Ban) whereby the spoils of Holy War belonged to God, and not to the Israelites themselves. The spoils were often turned over to God by destroying those confiscated objects, even including people. But a second fascinating Holy War rule involved the soldiers. Deuteronomy 20 and 23 give us these rules and regulations. The Prophet Samuel adds a few more in 1Samuel 21 and 2Samuel 11. A couple of these rules that directly impact this statement about the 144,000 having not been defiled by women are spoken by Samuel.

In this first example, David is on the run from King Saul and he arrives at the Tabernacle needing food for his men, and gets into a conversation with the priest on duty.

^{CJB}1 Sam. 21:5-6 ⁵ The cohen answered David, "I don't have any regular bread; however, there is consecrated bread- but only if the guards have abstained from women. ⁶ David answered the cohen, "Of course women have been kept away from us, as on previous campaigns. Whenever I go out on campaign, the men's gear is clean, even if it's an ordinary trip. How much more, then, today, when they will be putting something consecrated in their packs!"

The second statement in Samuel has to do with King David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba, married at the time to Uriyah who was perhaps David's greatest, most loyal general.

^{CJB}2 Samuel 11:9-11 ⁹ But Uriyah slept at the door of the king's palace with all the servants of his lord and didn't go down to his house. ¹⁰ When they told David, "Uriyah didn't go down to his house," David said to Uriyah, "Haven't you just arrived from a journey? Why didn't you go down to your house?"

¹¹ Uriyah answered David, "The ark, Isra'el and Y'hudah stay in tents; and my lord Yo'av and the servants of my lord are camping in the countryside. So should I go into my house to eat and drink and go to bed with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

So a Hebrew soldier anticipating battle was not to have intimate relations with his wife the night before the battle, and depending on the situation, maybe up to several days before the battle. It is not that the women were ritually unclean; rather it is that since there was a divine command against having sexual relations with a woman before battle then to disobey it would mean that soldier defiled himself with a woman. But for a few notable exceptions, all the wars that Israel fought were Holy Wars.

This then explains the third attribute of the 144,000, that they were "virgins". The first thing we think of when we hear the term virgin is of a female who has not had intimate relations with a man. Although the term applies just as well to a man who has never had intimate relations with a woman. However the term has other uses as well. First and foremost it is used in the Bible to mean ritually pure. So these 144,000 are ritually pure soldiers....virgins... for Christ.

The fourth attribute of following Christ wherever He goes reminds us of the 4 Living Beings in Heaven that follow God wherever He goes. So these 144,000 are soldiers meant not only to fight but to protect.

The fifth attribute of being the firstfruits among humanity for God has to be taken in a similar sense as Paul meant it when in Romans 16 and 1 Corinthians 16 he uses the term to mean the first to join the assembly of Christ followers. The Law of Moses requires that the firstfruits of all produce must be given to God. Jeremiah 2 says the Israel is the firstfruits for God.

^{CJB}Jeremiah 2:1 The word of ADONAI came to me: ² "Go and shout in the ears of

Yerushalayim that this is what ADONAI says: 'I remember your devotion when you were young; how, as a bride, you loved me; how you followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.

³ "Isra'el is set aside for ADONAI, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devour him will incur guilt; evil will befall them," says ADONAI.

Israel as firstfruits fits perfectly with the 144,000 who are said to be from the 12 tribes of Israel.

Their sixth attribute is that they do not lie. Or better, considering the context, they express no deceit or falsehood. This needs to be taken as connected to the seventh attribute, which is that they are without defect; or better, they are unblemished. In Isaiah 53, one of the most astounding prophecies that speaks of the Messiah and His arrest and death, in verse 9 we hear this:

^{CJB} Isaiah 53:8-9 ⁸ After forcible arrest and sentencing, he was taken away; and none of his generation protested his being cut off from the land of the living for the crimes of my people, who deserved the punishment themselves. ⁹ He was given a grave among the wicked; in his death he was with a rich man. Although he had done no violence and had said nothing deceptive,

When this passage speaks of Christ not being deceptive, it is highly likely that it means it in terms of not giving people false prophecies or teachings because we find this same notion spoken among the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. Thus there is a close relationship between uttering no false prophecy (no false teaching) and being unblemished. Being unblemished is a term directly related to the Levitical Laws concerning ritual sacrifice. Neither could a blemished priest offer a sacrifice nor could a blemished offering be used. Thus the relationship between the sixth and seventh attributes of the 144,000 most likely is that because they spoke no false prophecies they did not become ritually blemished (by acting wickedly against the covenant as explained in Daniel 11). So this information adds to the great length this passage went to in order to depict the 144,000 that have just arrived on earth, at Mount Zion with their Leader, the Lamb, as being whole, complete, and ritually pure according to the Law.

We'll pick up with verse 6 of Revelation 14 next week.