

# Seven Great Signs

General George S. Patton said, “You shouldn’t underestimate an enemy, but it is just as fatal to overestimate him.”<sup>1</sup> His point is that, when in battle, we need to have an accurate assessment of who it is that we’re fighting. Underestimating the enemy means that you won’t be adequately prepared to do battle against them, which could prove fatal. Overestimating the enemy means that you give them more power than they actually possess, and that could lead to unnecessary surrender.

We see this underestimating and overestimating the enemy in the Old Testament story of David and Goliath. The Israelites, under the leadership of King Saul, were facing off against the Philistines, who had as their secret weapon a giant named Goliath. Goliath challenged the Israelites to send one man to stand against him, but “when Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid” (1 Samuel 17:11). They saw Goliath’s size and assumed that he was stronger than any man they could send against him. They were convinced that they couldn’t possibly win, so they refused to even try. They overestimated Goliath’s strength and ability.

Goliath, on the other hand, underestimated his enemy. He saw the frightened Israelite army and assumed there was no way they could beat him. So, he arrogantly issued the challenge that would lead to his downfall.

Only David had an accurate assessment of the enemy. He knew that Goliath was not invincible. David also knew who he had fighting for him on his side. He told Saul, “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). David knew the limited power of his enemy, and he also knew the unlimited power of his God.

We, as Christians, are also in a battle, one that we may not always be aware of but that we actually fight every day. We have a very real enemy that is seeking to destroy us. Like the Israelite army, we may overestimate that enemy. We may live in fear of what Satan and his demons can do to us. We may believe that we aren’t strong enough to stand against him. Or, we may be like Goliath. We may underestimate our enemy. We may not think of Satan as a real, dangerous threat, so we don’t prepare ourselves adequately for the fight.

As we move into our study of Revelation chapters 12 to 14, we’re going to get an accurate description of our enemy and the war that we’re fighting. According to Nancy Guthrie, in these chapters, “the curtain is drawn back for us so that we can see the unseen reality of a war that took place in heaven, and a war taking place right now in this world and in your life, whether

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<sup>1</sup><https://quotestats.com/topic/underestimate-enemy-quotes/>

you realize it or not. You see, you have an enemy who is engaged in a war for your soul.”<sup>2</sup> We are at war! We need to know our enemy and his tactics so we can stand firm against him and patiently endure his attacks.

In the past few lessons, we studied the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. This section can also be divided into seven parts, but it’s a little harder to break down, because the sections aren’t numbered. Each author divides it a little differently, but we’re just going to follow the flow of the text and the transitions that John uses from one section to another.

## The Woman and the Dragon (12:1-6)

What we have in this passage is actually an overview of the storyline of the Old Testament. The Old Testament can be hard to understand, and we may not always be able to follow the flow of the story. However, the basic story can be condensed into these few verses.

First, we see this woman, “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (v.1). This woman represents the nation of Israel, God’s covenant community. The imagery of the sun, moon, and stars should bring to mind the dream that Joseph had in Genesis, where the sun, moon, and stars bowed down to him (Genesis 37:9-11). It was from Joseph’s family that the Messiah would come. The woman has on her crown twelve stars, which also represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

We see that this woman is about to give birth to a child. We might immediately think of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, the Messiah. However, this woman represents more than just Mary.

Think back to Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they plunged the entire world and all of their offspring into sin and death. As a result, they had to stand in judgment before God. In Genesis 3:15, we see the most devastating consequence of their sin. God says, speaking to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This one verse explains everything! It explains why the world is the way it is. It explains why we’re engaged in this spiritual war that we’re talking about. The serpent, of course, is Satan. The offspring of the woman in broad terms refers to all of God’s people. In much more narrow terms, it refers to Christ. He is the one whose heel Satan will bruise, referring to His crucifixion. But Jesus is also the one who will crush Satan’s head.

The Fall of Adam and Eve was the start of an epic spiritual war that’s been going on ever since. The stories of the Old Testament that we’re all so familiar with (and even the ones we’re not familiar with) are actually accounts of battles that have taken place during this war. You see, Satan is not omniscient. He knew that the woman would have an offspring who would crush him, but Satan didn’t know who that would be. Every male child ever born to the Israelites was a

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<sup>2</sup>Guthrie, Nancy. *Blessed: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Revelation*, 144.

threat to Satan. So, throughout Israel's history, Satan has tried to eliminate the Israelites, because if he destroyed them then they could not produce this offspring.

*What Old Testament stories come to mind where we see Satan trying to destroy the promised offspring of the woman?*

This imagery, then, in Revelation of the woman about to give birth refers to the anticipation and the expectation of the coming Messiah from within God's covenant people. The child this woman is about to bear is the same offspring promised in Genesis 3:15. Thus, the woman could be any of the women from the ancestry of Christ...Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Ruth, Bathsheba, and, of course, Mary. They were all eagerly waiting for the Messiah, and none of them (except Mary) knew if their son would finally be the ONE.

Satan is also waiting eagerly for the birth of the Messiah so he can devour Him. It's interesting that in Genesis Satan took the form of a serpent, and here he's depicted as a serpent, a dragon. He's described as having seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems. The multiple heads and horns represent the different manifestations of Satan's power on earth. His power can be seen in many ways, through different people and events.<sup>3</sup> Satan is also wearing crowns, but they represent his usurped authority here on earth. He has no real right to reign.

We read that the dragon uses his tail to sweep down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to earth. There's a slight difference of opinion as to what this might mean. Poythress sees it as an attack on God's rule and order, and even an attack against heaven itself.<sup>4</sup> Greg Beale views it as an attack against the Israelite people, which is in keeping with our discussion about Satan trying to wipe the Israelites prior to the Messiah being born.<sup>5</sup>

We see, however, that Satan was unsuccessful in his attempt to prevent the birth of the Messiah. The woman did, in fact, give birth to a son, one who would rule the nations with an iron rod, which refers to the birth of Jesus. This son was caught up into heaven, to God and his throne. That's talking about the ascension of Christ after His death and resurrection.

So, to recap, God promises that a future offspring of the woman, a Messiah, will destroy Satan. Satan tries to annihilate the Israelites to prevent the Messiah from being born, but he's unsuccessful. Jesus is born, so Satan tries to attack Jesus Himself.

*In what ways does Satan attack Jesus?*

Remember Herod's plot to kill all the baby boys? Who do you think influenced that decision? Then, there's the temptation of Christ. If Satan could just get Jesus to abandon His plan to die for the people, then Satan would win. Jesus doesn't fall for it though. So, Satan works through the religious leaders to have Jesus put to death. Surely, that will end things. Satan couldn't have known that Jesus would come back to life. Remember, Satan is not omniscient. I'm sure the

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<sup>3</sup>Poythress, Vern. *The Returning King*, 135.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>5</sup>Beale, Greg. *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 247.

resurrection was a surprise to him. He underestimated his enemy. Jesus did rise again, securing an eternal victory over Satan.

We see from our passage in Revelation, however, that Satan just won't give up. Jesus is now in heaven, out of Satan's reach. So, he turns his attention back to the woman, the people of God. The woman flees to the wilderness, which should bring to mind the Israelites journey after being freed from slavery. The wilderness was where God sent the people after He freed them from slavery, while He was preparing them for the Promised Land. That was a time of trial and refinement for the people. The wilderness might be compared to our lives here on earth. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just take us to heaven once we're saved? Why does He leave us here? In part, it's to refine us and prepare for our Promised Land, our future home in heaven.

While the woman was in the wilderness, though, she was nourished by God, just as the Israelites were protected by God in their wilderness experience. It shows God's provision and protection for His people. So, yes, we have to stay in this sometimes cruel and hostile world. We have to engage in this war, where Satan and his demons are on the attack. But we know that God is with us every moment, and He will protect those who are sealed with the blood of Christ. We've talked about that. We've seen the judgment that is being poured out on the earth. We've seen the tactics of Satan to tempt and deceive people. But we've also seen that God's people will be safe. That doesn't mean that we won't be wounded in battle, but we know that are on the winning side. The war may even claim our lives, but we know that one day the war will be over. We will be victorious, and we will celebrate in heaven for an eternity, praising our God and our Lamb.

### Satan Thrown out of Heaven (12:7-17)

This talk of victory actually brings us right our next section. If you're in church any length of time, you'll probably hear it said that Jesus defeated Satan on the cross, that Jesus has already won the war. You may believe it, but looking around you don't necessarily see the evidence of it, right? Looking that the evil in the world, the immorality and sinfulness, does it seem like Satan has been defeated? Not to me, it doesn't.

So, what does it mean that Satan has already been defeated? That's what this passage is showing us. First, it shows that the battle took place in heaven, not on earth. It's a spiritual battle, so it's not something that we see the effects of clearly. This passage, however, gives us a glimpse of what took place in heaven when Jesus died on the cross.

Prior to Jesus' death, Satan was obviously allowed into heaven for the purpose of accusing the people of God, according to verse 10. We see that in Job, as well, when Satan tried to convince God that Job was not as faithful as he seemed. However, when Jesus was crucified, there obviously arose a battle in heaven between the archangel Michael and his followers against Satan and his followers. Satan put up a fight, but we see that "he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down" (v.8b-9a).

The death of Christ put an end to Satan's right to stand before God as the accuser. Satan no longer has any influence in heaven. He was thrown down to earth where he has great influence, however, as we saw in the vision of the seven trumpets in the last lesson. Satan and his demons have been granted authority by God to tempt and deceive people on earth.

Christ's victory is not only seen in the ejection of Satan from heaven, but also in the proclamation of this loud voice saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God" (v.10). This shows clearly the results of Christ's death...our salvation was secured, God's kingdom was inaugurated on earth, and the accuser was defeated.

We see, though, that it wasn't just Christ who conquered Satan. The saints have conquered Satan as well through the blood of Christ. For those who overestimate this enemy, we can take comfort in knowing that we have the power to conquer Satan in this spiritual war that we're fighting. We can resist his temptations and see through the deception that he spreads. It may not be easy. It may even result in death. But like the saints in Revelation 12:11, we should love not our lives even unto death.

This victory of Christ is a source of great rejoicing to those in heaven, but it's a source of woe to those who dwell on the earth, because Satan has been unleashed against them, as we see in verse 12. Satan knows his time is short, but he still doesn't give up. You might say he's in his death throes, and that he's trying to take as many people down with him as he can, as we see in the next verses.

Satan again pursues the woman. However, "the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time" (v.14). Again, we see the woman, representing the people of God, being taken up into the wilderness. We've already discussed what that means. The wilderness is a place of trial and preparation, but also a place of protection for God's people. Earlier, we saw that the woman was in the wilderness for 1260 days, while here we see a time, times, and half a time. That's actually the same time period. We see it as 3 ½ years in other places, but as we've said in previous lessons, it symbolically refers to the time between the ascension and the return of Christ. So, while the church is engaged in battle while we wait on the return of Christ, He will nourish us and protect us during that time.

Satan tries to destroy the woman with a stream of water from his mouth. This could refer to the deceit that flows from the mouth of Satan, by which he tries to destroy the church. When that fails, he takes more drastic measures in the form of persecution, making war on "the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (v.17). Taking a stand for Christ will attract the attention of the enemy. Satan doesn't worry about nominal Christians, those who claim Christ, but live like the world. Those people are no threat to him. It's the true believers, those who are living passionately for God and testifying

about Christ, that are Satan's true threat. We'll see in the next couple of sections Satan's tactics in dealing with that threat.

## The First Beast (13:1-10)

In chapter 13, we're going to see Satan call forth two beasts. I believe I've mentioned previously that Satan is attempting to create this counterfeit kingdom here on earth to rival the kingdom of God. What we see with these two beasts is that Satan is also attempting to create a counterfeit trinity. He's setting himself up as "God," the beast from the sea in verses 1-10 is a counterfeit form of Christ, and the beast of the earth in verse 11-18 is a counterfeit form of the Holy Spirit. We'll discuss that more as we go.

The first beast rises from the sea, with ten horns, seven heads, and ten diadems just like the dragon from chapter 12. The beast is like a leopard, but it has a bear's feet and a lion's mouth. This is an allusion to Daniel 7:1-8, where Daniel wrote about four beasts that represent four different consecutive world powers: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.<sup>6</sup> The first century audience would have likely connected this beast of Revelation with the Roman Empire, but it can also represent any government that is hostile to God. We see that Satan gives this beast his authority, which indicates that some governmental leaders are under the direct influence of Satan.

*Can you think of any world leaders that acted as if they were under Satanic influence?*

The sad thing is, in spite of its grotesque appearance, people are impressed by the beast. They marvel at it. They are blinded to the true nature of this beast. How can demonic government systems get people to follow their evil agenda? With lies and propaganda. Hitler, for instance, pretty much brainwashed people and lied to them about what was really taking place. He somehow made this atrocious act of genocide seem like a good thing.

There are many governments, though, that are not directly attacking Christians or openly killing them (although some do). They are persecuting believers in more subtle ways.

*What are some of the subtle ways that governments or societies persecute Christians?*

One way is with ideas of political correctness and tolerance and so on. Many people think those ideas are right and good, and go along with it, not realizing the truth behind it all. They even choose to worship the beast and dragon, saying "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" (Revelation 13:4).

We see again here Satan's tactics of deceit and persecution. He deceives people through "blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven" (v.6). This idea of Satan luring people away through false teaching is a recurring theme of Revelation. We saw it in the seven churches and we saw it last time with the blowing of the sixth trumpet. Satan's persecution of the church is also recurring, as we saw in the seven

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<sup>6</sup>Guthrie, 151-152.

churches and seals and trumpets. We see here in chapter 13 that the beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them (v.7).

We read in the end of verse 7 and in verse 8, “Authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”

Notice what it says. Authority was given to the beast over every nation, tribe, tongue, and language. I don’t think that means that one reigning figure will rise up to rule over all the nations. I think it just shows the universal reach of Satan’s influence. If this beast represents governmental systems that oppose God, then this shows that there’s no nation immune to having Satanic influence in their government. We’re seeing that here in America. We’ve prided ourselves since our birth as a country of being a Christian nation, and I’m sure people thought this kind of thing could never happen here. Yet look where we’ve come in just a few short years. Things are in a state that I never could have imagined. So, Satan’s power is universal and no nation is exempt.

Also, we read that all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast. We’ve noticed that when the text refers to those “who dwell on the earth,” it represents unbelievers, those outside of Christ. These are very important verses because they show that there are only two choices that you can make. Everyone who is not in Christ will worship the beast. Everyone whose name is not already, from the foundation of the world, written in the book of life will worship the beast. It doesn’t get any clearer than that. You will worship Christ or you will worship the beast. Vern Poythress states it this way, “The necessity for decision is set out in black and white. One must give ultimate allegiance either to Christ or to the beast. One cannot be neutral.”<sup>7</sup>

Then, in verse ten, we read, “If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.” Again, the beast is making war against us. We are under attack. But we can endure. We can be faithful to the very end, whether that end comes at an old age surrounded by loving family, or whether the end comes at the end of a sword as we’re slain for our commitment to Christ.

I’ve mentioned that this first beast is a counterfeit Christ, so let’s look briefly at some ways in which the beast mimics Christ:

The First Beast	Jesus Christ
Reflects the image of the dragon (v.1)	Reflects the image of the Father (Col. 1:15)
Has 10 diadems (v.1)	Has many crowns (Rev. 19:12)
Given power and authority by the dragon (v.2)	Given power and authority by the Father (John 5:21-23)

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<sup>7</sup>Poythress, 142.

Has a mortal wound that was healed (v.3)	Resurrected from a mortal wound (Luke 24:5-7; John 20:27)
People worship both the dragon and the beast (v.4)	People worship both the Father and Jesus (John 5:23)
The beast attracts worship of the whole world (v.8)	The whole world should worship Jesus alone

### The Second Beast (13:11-18)

Now we come to the second beast, who rises from the earth. Where the first beast’s power and influence are political, this beast’s power and influence are religious. We see that it has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, which is an allusion to Daniel 8:3. The fact that it speaks like the dragon shows that its authority comes from the dragon, or from Satan, but like Satan, the beast speaks lies. Nancy Guthrie describes the influence of this beat’s lies this way:

His lies produce false religion. And not jut religion as we might define it, but also the political and social ideologies that have essentially become a religion to so many. We are surrounded by the voice of this beast in government, media, and entertainment that touts progress beyond the narrow thinking of the Bible, the God of the Bible, its message of salvation and judgment, and its call to holy living.<sup>8</sup>

This second beast diverts worship away from God by promoting worship of the dragon and the first beast. It even enables people to do signs and wonders to deceive people into thinking that this is legitimate religion (13:12-14). This could refer to cheap magic tricks that fool people, but it could also refer to demonic power enabling people to do what seem like miracles.

*In this day and age, how might this beast cause people to do signs and wonders and false miracles?*

I immediately thought of so-called faith healers. People come to them in a wheelchair and leave running across the stage. I would guess that most of that is fake, but it fools people into thinking that these are men of God. I also think of things like voodoo or black magic.

I believe that Satan does give people what seems like magical power to do crazy things. We see evidence of that in the Bible. Think about the Egyptian priests who were able to mimic some of the signs that Moses did. One example is in Exodus 7:10-12:

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharoah and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharoah and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs.

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<sup>8</sup>Guthrie, 156.



Was this just some magic trick or illusion that made the staffs appear to become serpents, or did these sorcerers tap in to some demonic power to actually turn the staffs into snakes? I don't know for sure, but it is possible that Satan enabled them to do this.

There's also an example in the New Testament, in Acts, where a slave girl had a spirit of divination. She made her owners rich by telling fortunes. However, when she encountered Paul and his companions, she began to follow them, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." It's interesting that the demon in her recognized these men and made that statement. Maybe it was meant in a sarcastic way, because it annoyed Paul. He turned around and commanded the demon to leave her, which it did. That's another example of demons giving people supernatural power. That may be what we read about in Revelation, when we see the second beast giving people power to do signs and wonders.

However, this beast's influence may be more subtle than miraculous signs. Nancy Guthrie describes it this way:

Whenever a pulpit is used to point to the state as our hope and salvation rather than Christ alone as our hope and salvation, we're hearing the voice of this beast. Whenever a pulpit is used to encourage compromise with culture so that our Christianity will be accepted or even applauded, we're hearing the voice of this beast.<sup>9</sup>

*Where have you seen this type of thing taking place today?*

We're seeing this more and more, aren't we, as pastors and religious leaders are shifting away from a firm stand on God's truth to a more culturally accepted version of the gospel, which of course is no gospel at all.

The people are deceived, and they believe the lies that this beast spreads. But, it's a trap, because those who follow the beast find themselves marked by the beast, as we see in Revelation 13:16-17. Now, this is probably the most controversial passage of Revelation. There are people living in genuine fear that one day soon they will have to have some kind chip implanted or mark placed on them to simply be able to buy food. I don't want to make light of their fear, but that's an extremely literal interpretation of this passage. The interpretive approach that we're taking is highly symbolic, so I don't think that we need to worry about having a chip implanted.

We've already seen in Revelation 7:3 people being marked on their forehead. In that case, the marking was symbolic to show those that were sealed by the blood of Christ. The mark of the beast in chapter 13 is also symbolic, showing that these people belong to Satan. We talked about how there are only two choices, following Christ or following Satan. I think that's being reiterated here. Either you will have the mark of Christ or the mark of the beast. There is no other option.

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<sup>9</sup>Guthrie, 156.

When it talks about not being able to buy or sell without the mark, it's indicating the social and economic pressure that people can be under unless they conform to the world. We saw that in the letters to the seven churches. People were not able to conduct business unless they followed the pagan rituals or worshiped the emperor.

*How might people in today's society face social or economic if they don't follow the beast, or the ways of the world?*

Even today in some areas, Christians may lose their jobs for standing up for their faith, or they may not be hired because of it. We've started to see things like this more and more, and I'm it will only get worse in the coming days.

Finally, it says that the number of the beast is 666. We know that the number of completion and perfection is seven. We also talked about how something raised to the third degree shows that characteristic to the highest degree. So, if a number were to be ascribed to God, it would be 777, or perfection to the highest degree. Satan is trying to be like God, but by giving him the number 666, it shows that he will always fall short. It shows that Satan's imperfection is to the highest degree.

Let's look briefly at how this second beast mimics the Holy Spirit:

The Second Beast	The Holy Spirit
Has authority from the dragon	Has authority from God (John 16:13)
Promotes worship of the dragon and the first beast	Promotes worship of God the Father and God the Son (John 16:14-15)
Enables people to do signs and wonders	Enabled people to do signs and wonders (Acts 2:17-18)
Spreads the lies of the dragon	Spreads the truth of God (John 16:13)
Marks people who belong to the best	Marks people who belong to God (Romans 8:9)

### The 144,000 (14:1-5)

So, as quick summary, we've discussed this war that has been waging ever since the Fall. God promised that the woman's offspring would crush Satan, so Satan tried to eliminate the threat at the source by wiping out the Israelites. That failed, and the Messiah was born. Satan then tried to get rid of Jesus, but failed in that as well. Jesus' death on the cross resulted in a battle in heaven where Satan and his demons were defeated and thrown down to earth. They then turned their attention to destroying the people of God, which explains the spiritual warfare that we find ourselves in. Satan uses political and religious means to persecute and deceive people, drawing their worship away from God and to himself. In this battle, you must choose sides. You are either fighting on the side of Christ or the side of Satan. You cannot be neutral.

As I've said before, if you look at the world around us, it may look like Satan is winning. This description of the dragon and the two beasts can be frightening when we think about the

Satanic influence that's all around us. However, it's at this point that God gives us a reminder that all is not lost for those who belong to Him.

John sees the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion surrounded by 144,000 people sealed with his name and God's name on their foreheads. Symbolically, Mt. Zion represents the place where God dwells, the place where He reigns as king (Isaiah 8:18; 24:23; Psalm 74:2). So, we can find hope and take comfort in the fact that no matter how bad things get here on earth, this is not our final dwelling place. If we are sealed with Christ's name, we will make our eternal home in His dwelling place.

We saw the number 144,00 earlier in chapter 7. We discussed how this is not a literal number. It represents the completion of God's elect. God has chosen and sealed a specific number of people for salvation, and every single one of them will be saved.

Those in Mt. Zion are singing a song of praise to God, but only the 144,000 know the words. This shows that only certain people can participate in this heavenly worship. John gives us the qualifications. They must be pure, having not defiled themselves with a woman (v.4a). This is symbolic. Sexual purity is often equated with spiritual purity. Vern Poythress writes, "Christ's faithful followers keep away from Babylon the prostitute and are loyal to him exclusively, as his pure bride."<sup>10</sup> So, in order to be admitted into heaven, we must not defile ourselves with the world.

The next qualification is that they must follow the Lamb wherever He goes (v.4b). We must be willing to follow Christ, even if it means following Him to our death. We've seen over and over during this study that life on earth will be hard for those who follow Christ, but we are also urged to patiently endure until the end. That's the only way to enter Mt. Zion.

Finally, it says there is no lie in their mouths, for they are blameless (v.5). We cannot fall victim to the lies and deception of the beast. Instead, we must stand firm in the truth of God's Word.

### The Three Angels (14:6-13)

In this next section, we have three angels with three final warnings prior to the second coming of Christ. The first angel is proclaiming the gospel to all who dwell on earth, calling for them to fear God and give Him glory (v.6-7). To combat the false teaching of the beast, this angel proclaims the truth of God's word.

The next angel announces the fall of Babylon, who seduced the nations to immorality (v.8). This shows the futility of worshiping the dragon and the beast, because they and the evil, worldly system they propagate will ultimately be overthrown.

The final angel describes the judgment that awaits those marked by the beast, and it's not at all pleasant. He will "drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the

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<sup>10</sup>Poythress,

presence of the Lamb” (v.10). Many think that in hell, people will be separated from God, but here we see that this punishment is taking place in the presence of the angels and the Lamb. God is omnipresent, meaning that He is present even in hell. The horrible part about hell is that any measure of God’s grace is removed, but God’s wrath will be continually poured out upon those who are there.

We also see the eternal nature of this punishment in verse 11, where we read, “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.” In chapter 14, we see the contrast in the eternal destinies of those marked by Christ and those marked by the beast, those dwelling with God and the Lamb forever in Mt. Zion versus those facing eternal torment in hell.

There’s another call for the endurance of the saints in Revelation 14:12, as well as a blessed statement in 14:13. If we remain faithful and obedient to Christ, even to the point of death, we will be blessed as we find rest from our labors in heaven. Nancy Guthrie says of those who endure, “The battle with the enemy is likely to rage through their lifetime, but it will come to an end. The day will come when they rest and enjoy their reward in the presence of their king.”<sup>11</sup>

### The Great Harvest (14:14-20)

This final section of chapter 14 describes the return of Christ. John sees “a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand” (14:14). This is Jesus coming for the harvest. This harvest imagery is also seen in Matthew 13:24-30, in the parable of the wheat and tares. In this parable, weeds were sown among the wheat. The master tells the servants, “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” The harvest represents the day of judgment when Jesus will sort out those who are in Him from those who are not.

Nancy Guthrie sees verses 14-16 as describing Jesus as gathering His own unto Himself, and verses 17-20 as unbelievers being harvested for judgment. Poythress argues that both refer to the judgment of the wicked, citing Joel 3:12-16 to support that. Either way, we know from the previous portion of this chapter that those in Christ will be gathered to His side in Mt. Zion while those outside of Christ will face judgment. So, in 14:6-11, we see the angels warning that this judgment is coming and urging people to repent. Here in verses 14-20, Christ has returned and the opportunity to repent has passed. It’s too late to turn to Christ at that point.

As with previous sections of Revelation that we’ve studied, this should encourage us to share the gospel with everyone we meet. Again and again, we’re reminded of the terrible judgment awaiting those outside of Christ, and of the horrors that await them in hell. We should want to tell people how they can be saved from that.

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<sup>11</sup>Guthrie, 162.

Also, we as believers should find comfort in these chapters. We are at war with Satan, and that war may cost us a lot, even our lives. However, Christ has already won the victory. We simply must endure until He returns. It may not be easy to resist the temptation of Satan or to stand firm in the truth of God's word when faced with so many lies. It won't be easy to be persecuted for our faith. But "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors" (Revelation 14:13). May it be said of us that we loved not our lives even unto death (Revelation 12:11).