

The Beast and the Lamb

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[0 : 00] Well, it's great to be with you. So we're looking at Revelation 13, 14 and up to 15, 4 today. But before we start, let's commit this time to the Lord in prayer.

Gracious Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for these chapters in the book of Revelation, Revelation 13, 14 and 15. Grant us wisdom, grant us grace and grant us your Holy Spirit as we tackle these chapters of the Bible.

Heavenly Father, these chapters are really quite important but difficult for us to understand. So we need your wisdom and grace to see what they really say and indeed to apply it to our hearts.

May we know what the Spirit is saying to the churches. For Jesus' name's sake. Amen. In any sphere of life, to endure and to persevere is absolutely critical.

And certainly if you're interested in sports, for instance, say the famous Singaporean swimmer, Joseph Schooling, what does he have to do?

[1 : 26] He has to be disciplined and trained and endure day after day after day in order to actually go for the gold medal and win it.

And that's true of anything in life. Even if you go to politics, at the moment we've got a general election campaign going on in the United States of America.

But both candidates basically have to be disciplined and persevere and endure until election day. That's true in politics. It's true indeed in our lives as well, in our work lives.

Again, we have to go through everything. We have to endure, don't we? We have to go in on Monday morning or these days, I guess, zoom in on Monday mornings.

And we have to endure the week of work until we get to Friday evening. And the same is true of every other thing in life, whether it's education, whether it's work, whether it's relationships.

[2 : 31] It's true. We need to persevere and endure in any lifestyle or work focus that we have.

And the same is actually true of the Christian life. The New Testament talks about quite graphically and encouragingly and indeed challengingly about the necessity to endure, to persevere in the faith until the Lord Jesus Christ actually returns.

And this theme of perseverance or endurance of the people of God is key to understanding the book of Revelation. We're going to be doing on a different occasion how to read the book of Revelation as a whole.

So we won't be focusing on that now. But just to fill it, basically, the big picture of the book of Revelation.

John has seen a great vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter one. John's in prison or in captivity on the island of Patmos because he's a faithful witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 52] And he is writing to churches where there has been a degree of compromise and worry and weariness with the Christian life. And he urges them to endure.

Now, this section of the book of Revelation actually starts in chapter 12. And if you look in your Bibles, and it would be really good if you would have your Bibles open, you will see that chapter 12 is this extraordinary, wonderful, but strange chapter about a dragon and a woman.

And the woman is pregnant and she gives birth to a child. That child is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the woman is indeed the people of God.

But against the woman is this terrible graphic picture of a red dragon. But the amazing thing about this is that this is not a mythical beast.

This is not merely a symbol. But actually, this great, terrible red dragon has a real identity.

[5 : 07] In chapter 12, verse 9. The great dragon was hurled down. That ancient snake called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray.

So we told the identity of the great red dragon. It is Satan. It is the accuser of God's people. It is the devil, which literally means slanderer or deceiver.

I.e. the fountain of all evil and opposition to the purposes of God. That's basically the picture of chapter 12 of the book of Revelation.

But then we need to think, how does Satan, the devil, actually influence and try to persecute and focus on the people of God in order to destroy them?

Well, that's the basic theme of chapters 13 and 14. And I'd like to put up now, basically, my PowerPoint so that we can have a look at that.

[6 : 21] Okay, great. So, let's have a look at these great chapters. And I want to start by looking at chapter 13.

And my first point is, Endure because of the mock trinity. Endure because of the mock trinity.

What John is trying to say, Persevere in faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ, despite the persecution and the deception of evil powers.

Have a look at chapter 13, verse 10. It's a key verse. I think it's John's purpose verse in this chapter.

If anyone is to go into captivity, John says, into captivity, they will go. That is the people of God, Christians. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword, they will be killed.

[7 : 25] That is, Christians who will be martyred. And then, this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

What is John actually talking about? Well, he's talking about the opposition from an unholy trinity, a mock trinity, a corrupt trinity, an evil trinity.

We've seen, actually, so to speak, the first member of that unholy or mock trinity already, the red dragon, Satan himself.

He sort of mimics and parodies the role of God, the Father. It's rather like, you know, those cartoons which actually exaggerate and corrupt the features of the person being portrayed.

Here, actually, the dragon tries to be God the Father. Look at chapter 13, verse 1.

[8 : 33] The dragon, that's the devil, stood on the shore of the sea. So he's the first member of this mock trinity. But then there is a second member of the mock trinity.

Have a look at the rest of the verse and the following verses. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on its horns.

And on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a dragon. The dragon, notice this, gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound. But the fatal wound had been healed. This first beast then mimics the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity.

He is, according to this first beast, claims to be a great king. Indeed, invested with the authority of the dragon himself.

[9 : 44] This first beast actually has a fatal wound which seems to have been healed. Rather like a mimic and mocking of the cross and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this first beast then is worshipped. Look at the rest of it. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast.

And they also worshipped the beast and asked, who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it? Echoes of actually the praise given to God in the book of Exodus.

So you've got now the dragon who corrupts is a corrupt representation of God the Father.

And the first beast who is the corrupt representation of the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is a third beast as well.

[10 : 50] And have a look at verse 11. Then I saw a second beast coming out. Sorry, the third member of this mock trinity, a second beast.

Coming out of the lamb. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf. And made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.

Whose fatal horn, wound had been healed. And it performed great signs. Even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth. In full view of the people. So this is the third member of this evil trinity.

The mock trinity. And that is the second beast. Which actually has spiritual power. So in one sense, this second beast, the third member of the mock trinity.

Is a corrupt form. An evil form of the Holy Spirit. An unholy spirit. But that unholy spirit works through religion.

[11 : 55] And false religion in particular. So this second beast is actually also false religion. False spirituality.

And a false prophet. Inspired by this corrupt and evil spirit. Able to do great signs and miracles. In order to deceive.

So what we see here is something utterly extraordinary. The mock trinity basically deceives and persecutes the people of God.

Well, we can see the persecution very, very clearly. Have a look at verse 7 of chapter 13. For it was given power to wage war against God's holy people.

And to conquer them. But then have a look at verses 11 to 14 again. And look at 13.

[13 : 00] It performed great signs. The second beast. Causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth. In full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform.

It deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Do you see? That's the way the mock trinity actually works. By persecution. By attempting to oppress, tyrannize and murder the people of God.

And also to deceive the people of the world into false worship. And actually to deceive the people of God into compromise.

So look at verse 15. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast. So there is a supernatural power there.

[14 : 04] So that the image could speak and cause all who refuse to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or in their foreheads.

So that's the way it works. By insisting that only the beast can be worshipped, it actually forces or tries to persuade the people of God to compromise.

And you could understand that in the context of John and the Roman Empire. You see, it's not as if Christianity were illegal at the time of the Roman Empire, when John was writing the book of Revelation, John the Apostle.

Rather, it was, well, you can worship anything you like, but once a year, you must give homage and political allegiance and loyalty to the emperor and his institutions.

If you don't, you'll be killed. And that's exactly the problems we have today, isn't it?

[15 : 24] That's exactly the issues we face today. Some time ago, I was watching a film called Gaslight.

And it's actually from this film. There's quite an old film from the 1940s that we get now the term gaslighting, which has become quite popular in counseling circles.

Well, the film Gaslight talks about a man who marries a woman deceptively in order to actually go into the house that he's bought in order to steal jewels that were left to the wife by her aunt, whom this man has actually murdered.

And he tries to deceive her that she is going mad because the gaslights keep flickering. And basically, the husband insists, no, no, no, it's your mind.

You're seeing things. You're going mad. He tries to deceive. And at the end, he tries to kill her. Gaslight and gaslighting.

[16 : 44] And that is precisely the way evil today operates. Through deception? Oh, come on.

It's not going to do you any harm if you actually will pay attention to other religions for a season, a time, a little bit.

You don't have to leave your own religion, but just compromise a little bit. Say that there are many paths to God. That's all we want you to do.

That's deception. But the second thing is basically, well, persecution.

If you don't do as we say, you will be martyred or put in prison or something like that.

[17 : 42] Now, how can we apply that and think about it for ourselves?

Well, we certainly face the dangers and the temptations both of compromise through deception and, indeed, persecution as well.

And John wants us to endure, as he says. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

Put it this way. If Christianity were to be made illegal soon, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

If Christianity were to be made illegal soon, If Christianity were to be made illegal sometime in the future, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

[18 : 51] That's the question, isn't it? You might say, well, that is worrying.

And the opposition of the mock trinity is worrying, both in terms of deception and false teaching, and in terms of persecution as well.

But what will happen to us if we don't endure? That's a very good question. And John wants to go into that. And that brings us to our second point.

Endure because of the coming judgment. Endure because of the coming judgment. John wants us to persevere, to obey, to be faithful, because the last judgment, the coming judgment, will result in a terrible hell for all unbelievers, and for all those who do not endure.

Have a look, please, now. We're going now to chapter 14, verses 6. We'll come back to chapter 14, verses 1 to 5 in a minute.

[20 : 20] There are, of course, just as an aside, there are some big details which actually has raised a lot of controversy, and that is, of course, chapter 13, verse 18, and the number of the beast, 666.

Well, if you're interested in that, the handout that I have prepared has a section on 666. But to focus on now chapter 14, I want to focus on that middle section from verse 6 onwards, and then we'll come back to the first few verses, and then chapter 15 in our third point.

Have a look, please, at chapter 14, verse 12, almost the same as chapter 13, verse 10. This calls for the patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

Do you see that? That is basically John's purpose statement. And that's the application he actually wants to bring to all of us. Endure. Persevere.

Keep God's commandments. That is, of course, the commandments of the gospel, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and to live transformed godly lives by the power of grace and the Holy Spirit, and continue in that faith until our deaths.

[21 : 50] That's basically what John means. But he wants to actually focus that in verse 7 of chapter 14. Have a look at that.

The angel says in a loud voice, Fear God and give him the glory. Why? Why should we endure by fearing God and giving him the glory?

Because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water, i.e. the creator. The creator of all humanity.

But there is that second reason. Because the hour of his judgment has actually come.

And then we get two images which are as frightening and troubling as any in the entire Bible. First of all, chapter 14, verse 9.

[22 : 53] A third angel, this is a vision that John sees in heaven, followed them and said in a loud voice, If anyone worships the beast and its image, that's, of course, the second person of the mock trinity, receives a mark on their forehead, and they too, what's the consequence of this idolatrous worship of political power, which is the first beast, by the way.

The first beast, the one who mimics the Lord Jesus Christ, is kingdom, because Jesus is a king. And so the first beast is actually political power and authority.

The second beast is religious power and authority. But notice what it says. If anyone worships, and by that he means if anyone compromises by offering homage, loyalty, allegiance to the political system of the Roman Empire and its image receives and receives its mark on the forehead or on the hand, which basically means a form of loyalty, they too will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of wrath.

They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the angels and of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the smoke of their torment will go up, will rise up forever and ever.

There will be, he says in verse 11, there will be no rest, day or night, for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.

[24 : 49] That is, the one who compromises. And this is what it precisely calls for the patient endurance on the part of God's people.

Don't compromise is the message. Keep on enduring. Otherwise, the consequence will be the horrors of hell itself and the wrath of God.

Why? Because there's only one God, the creator. And by worshipping other things or compromising with other things, that we have taken away the rights of our creator.

Now that's frightening stuff, but actually in verse 14 and onwards, the images become even more terrible.

First of all, there's a good image. Look at verse 14 of chapter 14, please. I looked and there before me was a white cloud and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

[25 : 58] Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the clouds, take your sickle and reap because the time to reap has come.

The harvest on the earth is ripe. So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth and the earth was harvested. There's a harvest coming.

That's a good harvest actually here. It's the son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who harvests his people. The great harvest has come. The people have been saved.

And that's why in verse 13, John hears the voice from heaven who says, write this, blessed are the dead who will die for in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the spirit, they will rest from their labor for their deeds follow them.

There is a harvest and there is rest for all those who persevere and endure to the end in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's part of the judgment.

[27 : 00] But there is a darker side to the judgment. Have a look, please, at verse 17. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven and he too had a sharp sickle.

Still another angel who had charge of the fire came from the altar and called in a loud voice who had a sharp sickle.

Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine because its grapes are ripe. Then the angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grape and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

They were trampled in the winepress outside the city and the blood flowed from the press, rising as high as the horse's bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia, i.e. about 300 kilometers.

this is perhaps the most terrible image of hell in the entire Bible.

[28 : 07] The image is something like this. It's from a society where there were vineyards and every October the grapes were gathered in in the grape harvest and then what happened is that all the grapes were put into this vast vat and then the men trod on the grapes to get the juice out.

They crushed the grapes and of course with the and then the juice flowed out of the vat and was then stored and became wine.

but here actually the winepress of the wrath of God is not fruit like grapes but human beings.

That is the horrific picture of the last judgment of what will happen and what flows out is blood.

So much blood that John says that he sees it it goes on for about 300 kilometers. That is a chilling and horrific picture of what will happen at the last judgment to those who do not endure in the faith and who reject our Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 48] I remember many many years ago when I was in England as a young Christian when I was struggling with all these issues of temptation and worry and concern and thinking you know the Christian faith is just too difficult it's just too too much to be a Christian there's the daily struggle against sin there's the persecution from unbelievers there's ridicule and questions and I can't take it anymore and I was thinking you know as we all do at times should we actually give up it's just too difficult in our time and age to be a Christian and I heard a talk about hell and it was deeply deeply frightening and at the end the the preachers said you know you might say to me basically oh you're just trying to frighten us with this picture of hell and he said yes

I am be afraid be very very afraid you see we might think that this is this shows something that's harsh something that's cruel something that's really really horrible how can a God of love send people to hell we might say but the intention of John through the Holy Spirit in putting this picture is actually for our good and actually a challenge to us to escape hell itself basically the message is something like this look endure because hell and the last judgment is so so terrible that you really do not want to go there we're warning you

John is saying about this don't go there now think about it this way that suppose if you saw somebody walking towards a cliff edge and you know when I was in England I used to live on the south coast of England near to the seaside and there were lots of cliffs and the cliffs were magnificent and you could get wonderful views from the cliff top over the sea but of course you don't want to go too close to the cliff edge what John is warning the people of God here is this shouting to them and saying stop there is a cliff edge coming don't go any further don't compromise rather endure and John has a point doesn't it okay life might be hard for us

Christians today it is hard for us Christians today endurance is difficult but what is better say 40 or 50 years of hardship and persecution and suffering or an eternity in hell that is the somber point that John I think is making endurance for a short time is so so much better than the alternative but John wants to motivate us not merely by talking about hell and the possibility of what happens if we do not endure but he wants to end by talking about the positive side the beauty the glory of heaven itself and redemption and so this brings us to our third and our last point endure because of the coming victory in

Christ endure because of the coming victory in Christ what John is saying is persevere endure suffering in this life in order to overcome in order to triumph and to be victorious with Jesus Christ through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ for all eternity and so let's go back to chapter 14 verse 5 because basically chapter 14 verses 1 to 5 ties in with chapter 15 verses 1 to 4 so I'm going to look at those two passages really together look at this wonderful vision that basically John sees in chapter 14 and then I looked and there before me was the lamb that's the Lord Jesus

[35 : 43] Christ standing on Mount Zion that is of course the holy place in Jerusalem and with him 144,000 who had his name and his father's name written on the forehead unlike those named by the mock trinity and the mark they have on their foreheads these are God's people who have the father's name and the Lord Jesus Christ name and by the way the 144,000 well you can find out a little bit more about that in the handout but let's go on with this exciting story and I heard in verse 2 a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters like the peal of thunder the sound I heard was like the harp is playing their throne and they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders isn't that utterly amazing the songs and the music of heaven itself

I don't know what music you like I enjoy very much choral music like the great music of Bach who was a great Christian and wanted to glorify God but wouldn't it be wonderful if we could hear and join in the music of heaven itself and rejoice in the beauty and the glory and the magnificence of that music well look at verse 3 who are the ones who can sing this glorious music and they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders no one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth that is us that is the people of God that is Christians and those in verse 4 those who live a Christian life who live a transformed life look at them they do these are those who do not defile themselves and in verse 5 no lie was found in their mouth they are blameless not because they're sinless but because they have an integrity in their confession they are faithful they endure now if that is a wonderful image well that wonderful image goes even further in chapter 15 turn with me please to chapter 15 of the book of Revelation verses 1 and 2 in particular and I saw in heaven that's John again he sees glorious heavenly realities another great and marvelous sign seven angels with the seven last plagues last because with them

God's wrath is completed and I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire standing beside the sea remember this is a symbolic scene in heaven those who have been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its names do you see that these are the people of God who have overcome who have beaten basically the mock trinity those who have been victorious over the beast and its image Satan the dragon the first beast and the second beast this mock evil trinity will be defeated by us and how is the mock trinity the evil trinity to be defeated well through endurance do you see that how who is it who's going to be victorious those who endure to the end even if it cost them their lives in this age the martyrs the witnesses those who go on and continue until the end of their lives they are the ones are victorious and then in heaven we see the heavenly music and we hear it look at verse 3 and verse 4 and they sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb great and marvelous are your deeds Lord God Almighty just and true are your ways king of the nations who will not fear you Lord and bring glory to your name for you alone are holy all nations will come and worship before you for your righteous acts have been revealed an echo of the song of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 32 now we all enjoy don't we

singing in church and one of the difficult things about the current situation where we're not allowed to meet physically in our church buildings is the lack of personal singing within the church yes I know we can sing on zoom and things like that but it's not quite the same we miss it but one day that singing that glorious magnificent music that musical worship will be perfected in the heavenly places itself and we will sing well the songs of

Moses and the songs of Jesus Christ we will sing the whole Bible and it will be the most magnificent thing ever why because we've actually overcome well earlier in the book of Revelation especially the messages to the seven churches the letters to the seven churches Jesus Christ actually says overcome be victorious go on until death and you'll win and it is actually a funny ironic concept of victory it's not like the world's concept of victory you know where you crush your enemies where you exterminate where you crawl over people where you get promotions where you get money where you where armies destroy other nations no it's not that sort of victory it's a victory through the death of the lamb itself and following the lamb even through suffering and death and so here then is the ultimate encouragement to endure we will overcome and we will win in Jesus

[42 : 48] Christ when I was a young Christian I was of course very puzzled by the book of revelation because it is of course a difficult and complex book but then I heard something which has stuck with me all these years somebody said I don't understand the book of revelation but I think it says we're on the winning side that's a great summary of the book of revelation isn't it I don't understand fully the book of revelation but I think it says we're on the winning side and that is our ultimate encouragement to endure and to persevere because we are on the winning side and that means we can look forward to a great day a day well well we won't need zoom on that great day no we will be there in person in the heavenly places we will see the lamb upon the throne and then we together with all the peoples of God

Old Testament and New Testament Jew and Gentile from every tribe language nation and race we will all raise our voices and sing in glorious praise and glory to the true Trinity God the Father our Lord Jesus Christ God the Son and God the Holy Spirit let's look forward and endure for that day let's pray heavenly Father we thank you for these magnificent chapters of the book of Revelation we thank you that through our Lord Jesus Christ we are on the winning side we have the victory in our Lord and our King we thank you that he died for our sins we thank you that he has redeemed us we thank you that we have the Holy

Spirit and heavenly Father at this time when we face the opposition both in terms of persecution and in terms of deception of the mock Trinity help us grant us the strength the power and the grace to endure to persevere through thick and thin so that on the great and final day we might sing behold the Lamb behold the Lamb for his name's sake Amen