

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Chapters 13-15

Keys To Chapter Thirteen:

1. Chapter thirteen continues the presentation of the main players in the drama of Revelation by introducing both the Roman Empire and those who promote emperor worship.
2. The **sea beast** represents the Roman Empire (vv. 1-10).
3. John mentions the beast and then a leopard, a bear, and a lion (vv. 1-2).
4. Daniel had a similar vision, but in reverse order (Dan. 7:3-7).
5. Daniel saw the succession of world empires from Babylon to Persia to Greece to Rome.
6. John saw Rome first, and then the three preceding empires whose strength Rome had absorbed.
7. Daniel saw from Babylon forward to Rome; John saw from Rome backward to Babylon.
8. The sea beast, Rome, had ten horns and seven heads (v.1).
9. Note that Satan was described as a dragon that looked just like the sea beast we have just identified as Rome (12:3).
10. Satan is the force behind Rome—the ten horns represent kings that will join with Rome to defeat the church (17:12); the seven heads represent both the hills on which Rome was built and key Roman emperors (17:9-10).
11. Particular attention is given to one of the heads, emperors, that seemed to have been killed, yet lived again—a false or counterfeit resurrection (vv. 3-9).
12. The symbolism here draws from what is called the *Nero Redivivus Myth*—a popular myth that developed in Rome after Nero's death to the effect that Nero was alive and living with Rome's enemies the Parthians. Further, it was said by the Romans that Dometian, due to similar shocking behavior, was *bloody Nero back from the dead*.
13. Therefore, I see the supposed resurrected head as being Dometian as he revived and expanded the persecutions of Nero.
14. In connection with this coming fierce persecution of the church, the saints are given a solemn warning (vv. 9-10).
15. Captivity and punishment are not to be resisted by force of arms (v. 10; cf. Jer. 15:2; 43:11; Matt. 26:52).
16. Next is the **land beast**, representing those who enforce emperor worship (vv. 11-17).
17. The power of the emperor is behind this beast (vv. 11-12).
18. They seem to have power, but it is a deception (vv. 13-14).

19. It is Dometian they serve (v. 14).
20. They killed those who did not worship Dometian (v. 15).
21. They give a sign to those who comply with emperor worship that allows them to buy and sell; those who refuse are cut off from such activities (vv. 16-17).
22. The number of the dreaded emperor who brings such persecution is **666** (v. 18).
23. Letters had numerical values in ancient times.
24. A coin minted in the first century had the inscription NRON KSR, the Hebrew spelling of Nero Caesar—N=50, R=200, O=6, N=50, K=100, S=60, R=200, for a total of 666.
25. John was a Jew and many of the early converts to the church in Asia were Jews who were well versed in such apocalyptic matters.
26. Dometian is pictured as Nero come back to life—the interpretation of 666 as Nero seems too appropriate for it to be mere coincidence.

Keys To Chapter Fourteen:

1. This chapter centers on Jesus and His Army of 144,000 (vv. 1-5).
2. I take them to be the martyr army through whom the church would be victorious—those who died for the cause of Christ rather than fought with a sword would be the key to victory (cf. 13:9-10).
3. Their *new song* could only be learned by martyrs (v. 3).
4. They are the *first fruits* of the war (v. 4).
5. The church would give her best to serve the Lamb (v. 4).
6. The conflict was fought so that the Gospel could be preached (vv. 6-7).
7. Through their efforts and the sacrifice of their lives, Babylon the great (Rome) would fall (v. 8).
8. Those who served Rome would suffer the fate of Rome (vv. 8-11).
9. The saints persevered by not bowing to Rome (v. 12).
10. Notice what in context would be a reference to martyrs (v. 13).
11. I take the first reaping of this chapter to be Jesus gathering the martyrs to Himself (vv. 14-16).
12. I take the second reaping to be the punishment of the enemy (vv. 17-20).
13. The saints win, the enemy loses—a theme repeated often.

Keys To Chapter Fifteen:

1. This chapter repeats the theme just witnessed—victory for the saints, defeat for the enemy.
2. Plagues for the enemy (vv. 1, 5-8).
3. Victory for the saints, with the martyrs emphasized (vv. 2-4).
4. Notice the similarity of theme between vv. 5-8 and 11:19.

5. In chapter sixteen we will see each bowl of plagues poured out with the battle at Har-Magedon being the last bowl.