

# Revelation 11:19– 14:20

*A Woman, A Dragon, and Their Seed*

## Introduction

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We do not know how he go there.

But there he is.

Mysteriously he appears.

Into an idyllic garden.

A serpent.

A serpent with a mouth that lies and deceives.

An opponent to God.

A liar about God.

And the two humans cave in.

Eve first.

Then she is joined by her husband.

Together they sin.

And God acts as he must.

And in his punishment he turns first to the serpent.

He promises curse.

He promises enmity between the serpent and the woman.

Between his offspring and hers.

He promises that some male offspring of Eve will crush the  
head of the serpent's offspring even if the offspring of Eve  
strikes his heel.

And so begins a story of two lines.

Two offspring.

Two ends.

But one certain victory.

And today I want you to listen for the echoes of this in our  
passage.

The book of Revelation has them.

It knows about the garden.

It knows about the serpent.

It knows about the woman who will bear a male child.

So, listen for them tonight.

Watch things come together.

Watch God execute his curse and promise.

I will point out some of the connections as we go.

However, I want you to work as well.

I've told you what to look for.

I want you to have your eyes and ears open.

## **Summary of Where We Have Been**

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To begin, let's summarise where we've been so far.

So far, in John's letter to us, he has told us of two 'in the Spirit' experiences.

Let me show you.

Open your Bibles at Revelation 1, verse 10.

Here John tells us that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

On that occasion he was given instructions to write what he sees and to send it to the seven churches.

That is the focus of chapters 2 and 3.

Now turn to chapter 4.

In chapter 4, verse 1, John sees a door open in heaven.

He hears a loud voice speaking like a trumpet.

The voice says...

*'Come up here, and I will show you what **must** take place after this.'*

Then, in verse 2, John tells us about his second 'in the Spirit' experience.

He says...

*<sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. [Revelation 4:2; NIV]*

This 'in the Spirit' experience involves some key events.

First, in chapter 4, there is the revelation of God on his throne.

Then, in chapter 5, there is the revelation of the standing, slain, Lamb.

Then, we have the revelation of the seven seals, which led to the seven trumpets, which included the seven thunders.

We weren't allowed to hear about what was revealed in the seven thunders but were just told about them.

Oh, by the way, there was a small error in the diagram that I gave you on Sunday.

So, I've amended it and included it with the outline you have.

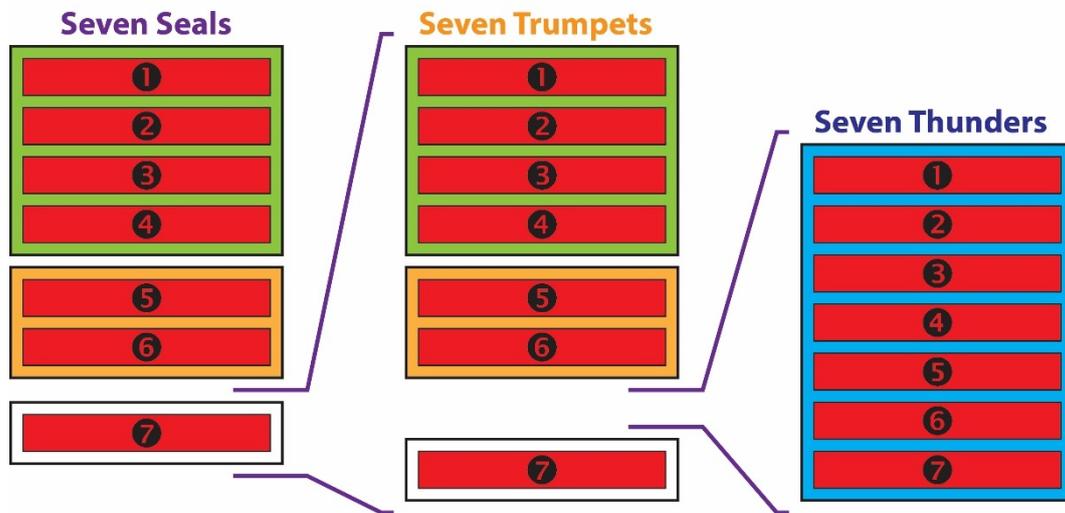
Let me show you.

Take a look at Revelation 8, verse 1.

You will see there that the seven trumpets don't in an interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet as my previous diagram indicated.

Rather, they come as a result of the opening of the seventh seal.

## John's Second 'In the Spirit' Experience



Let's now flip the My own view is that John's second 'In the Spirit' experience ends with verse 19 of chapter 11.

Let's just have a look at the final moments of that.

Look at chapter 11, verse 15.

The seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet.

As soon as it sounds, we hear of a transfer of kingship.

This is a picture of the end of time.

The kingship of the world is transferred from the world to the Lord and to his Messiah, his Christ.

And he will reign for ever and ever.

We find ourselves back in the throne room we were in in chapters 4 and 5.

And the twenty-four elders are there.

And they fall on their faces and worship God.

Notably, they don't specify whether the 'he' that will reign is the Lord or his Messiah.

That's because the two are so bound together.

Together, they are God.

Anyway, the twenty-four elders acknowledge that the time has come...

A time of judging the dead.

A time for rewarding the servants of God, the prophets.

A time for rewarding God's people who revere his name, both great and small.

And a time for destroying those who destroy the earth.

This is a climactic moment.

The end of history as we know it.

This leads us to verse 19.

God's temple in heaven is opened.

The ark of the covenant is seen, the mark of God's presence among his people.

The created order reflects the magnitude of what is going on.

There are flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a severe hailstorm.

Now, John's next 'in the Spirit' experience will not happen until chapter 17, verse 1.

But in between the end of chapter 11 and chapter 17, verse 1, there are three signs.

Let me show them to you.

Look at chapter 12, verse 1.

We are told that a great sign appears in heaven.

It is a woman, clothed with the sun.

This is quickly followed up by another sign.

Look at verse 3.

The sign here is an enormous red dragon.

Now flip over to chapter 15, verse 1.

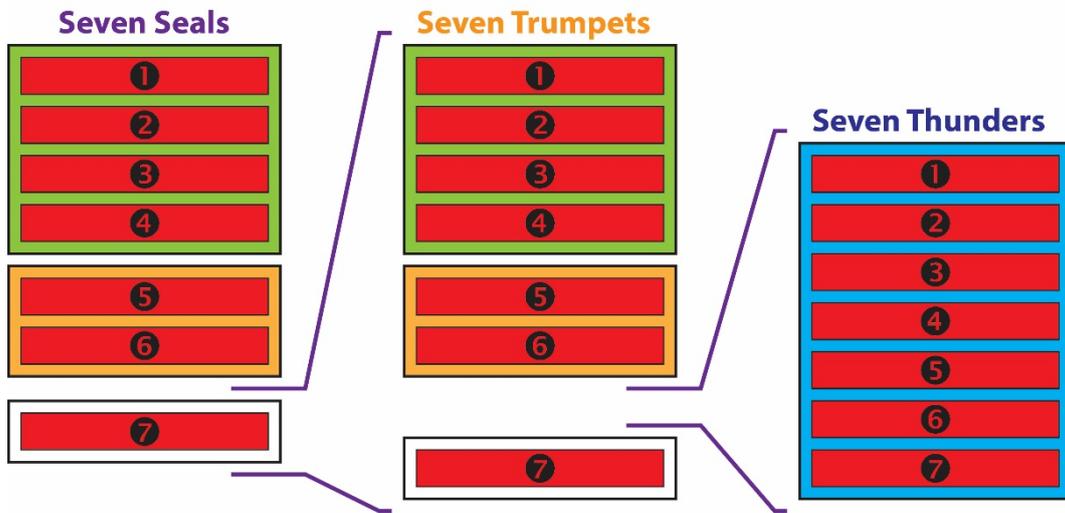
We see another great and marvellous sign, seven angels with the seven last plagues.

Seven bowls.

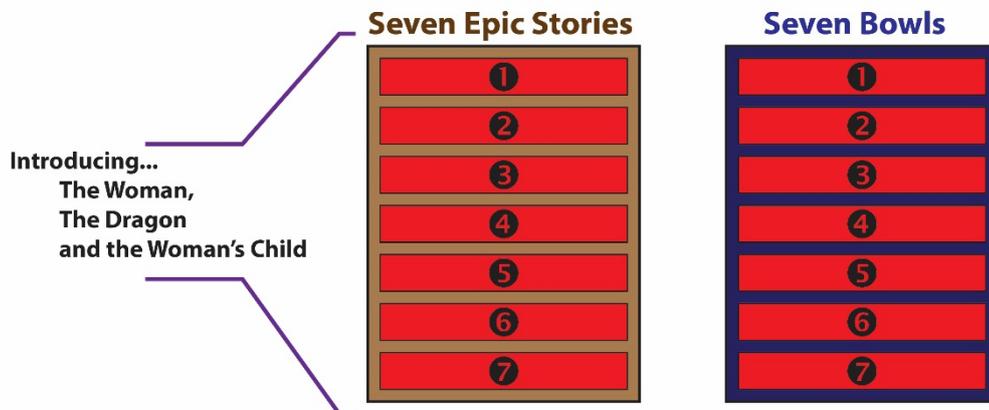
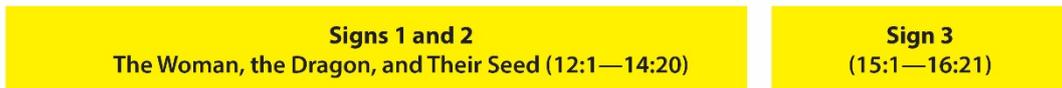
Now, I've put all of this into my diagram.

Please check it out in the outline.

## John's Second 'In the Spirit' Experience



## Three Signs in Heaven



John's second 'in the Spirit' experience runs from chapter 4 to the end of chapter 11.

Then we get an interlude before his next 'in the Spirit' experience.

In that interlude, we have three signs.

The first two signs firstly introduce us to the woman and the dragon and the woman's child.

Then we get seven epic stories about them.

Together, they take up chapters 12 to 14.

Then we come to the third sign.

It contains the seven bowls.

It takes up chapters 15 to 16.

Okay, that's the big picture.

Undoubtedly there will be some further fine tuning to my diagram as we go.

However, hopefully that gives you some way through the detail.

What we are going to do tonight is that we are going to work out way through chapters 12-14.

## **The Woman, the Dragon, and Their Seed**

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### **Introducing the Protagonists (12:1-6)**

Okay, let's get underway.

Before we get to our seven epic stories, we need to be introduced to our protagonists.

That is, we need to be introduced to the major players in the epic stories that are about to unfold.

So, let's check them out.

***The First Great Sign: A Pregnant Woman (vss 1-2)***

As I've indicated, our section for today begins with two signs.

The first great sign is the sign of a woman.

Verse 1 says that she is clothed with the sun.

The moon and the feet are under her feet.

On her head she bears a crown of twelve stars.

But this is not all that we are told about her.

Verse 2 indicates that she is pregnant and about to give birth.

She is caught up in the labour pains of birth.

She is in deep agony.

So, who is this woman?

At first glance, we are naturally tempted to think of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus.

Or we could think of other women from Biblical history who have struggled to give birth.

Women such as Sarah or Hannah.

And I think we are meant to think of such women.

But this passage is clear that it is not the identity of the woman which is important.

What IS important is the crown with its twelve stars.

The twelve stars represent the people of God.

They encapsulate all of God's people who long for God's purposes to be fulfilled.

Their struggle and their pain, is the pain and struggle of all the pious people of God throughout history.

***Another Sign: A Great Red Dragon (vs 3)***

Then, in verse 3, we are introduced to a second sign.

And this sign is the awesomely terrifying one of a great red dragon.

Verse 3 says that he has seven heads, and ten horns, and on each of his heads there is a diadem or crown.

The seven heads and the seven crowns are representative.

Seven is God's number.

Heads represent wisdom.

And crowns represent power and rule.

Here is a beast with pretensions to divine wisdom and power.

Here is a beast of terrifying proportions.

This is made clear in verse 4 when we hear that his tail alone is capable of sweeping away a third of the stars of heaven and casting them to the earth.

So... who is this great red dragon?

He is obviously the enemy of the people of God.

But he is also the enemy of God himself.

Look at verse 9.

There his identity is spelt out for us.

This dragon is...

... the serpent of Genesis 3

... the one who is called the devil.

... Satan, the deceiver of the world.

Our introduction to the protagonists continues in the second half of verse 4.

For the pregnant woman and the great red dragon are thrown into a terrible cosmic conflict.

Now, I want you to notice the focus of the conflict.

On the first level, it is a conflict about the child, isn't it?

The dragon seeks to devour the child.

But that is not the full story.

You see, fundamentally, the conflict is about the purposes of God.

That is what is going on here.

God has a great purpose for the world.

His purpose is tied up with this woman and this child.

And Satan sets himself against this purpose, just as he has always done.

He seeks to stop God's purpose.

To devour it.

To obliterate it.

The next thing that I want you to notice about this conflict is its location.

And our passage makes it clear that it occurs in two places.

On the one hand, it occurs on earth.

On earth, Satan sends his human representatives such as Herod, or the Jewish authorities, or the Roman rulers, or even the disciples of Jesus himself.

And they try to thwart the purpose of God.

Herod might do it by trying to kill every child under two.

The religious authorities might do it out of jealousy over the success of Jesus.

The Romans might crucify Jesus to appease the religious authorities.

Of the disciples might do it by attempting to turn Jesus away from the path of the cross.

So, on the one hand the conflict occurs with real people in real historical situations.

But as real as these people and situations look, there is a deeper reality that is going on.

And this passage lets us into that deeper reality.

It shows us that behind these people and these situations stands an eternal reality.

Behind them there is a cosmic conflict in heaven itself between the people of God and the devil.

Between Satan and God himself.

Now look at verse 5.

Verse 5 tells us that the conflict finds a particular focus in one place, or should I say, in one person, this child.

The male child is clearly Jesus Christ.

He is one who is to rule all the nations of the earth (verse 5), just as God promised David and his descendants in Psalm 2.

He is the one who has been the focus of God's great purposes from before history began.

But now look at the second half of verse 5.

We are told that this child will be snatched up or caught up to God and his throne.

This could be a reference to the resurrection and vindication of Jesus.

Or is probably a reference to the ascension and enthronement of the Messiah, the Christ.

Now, later, we will be told that this will happen after he accomplishes his great purpose.

However, not at the moment.

At the moment, the focus falls on his absence.

It also falls on the woman in verse 6.

She is sheltered in the wilderness for 1260 days.

Now, do you remember this figure from earlier?

1260 days is half of seven years.

It is a full time cut short.

In my view, this time is the time between the ascension of Jesus and the time of his return.

During that period, God protects his church.

But I want you to notice that the place of protection is the wilderness.

The wilderness in the book of Exodus is a place where God protects his people.

But it is also a place of testing and temptation, just as it was for the Lord Jesus.

Friends, here are the truths I want you to grasp from this introductory segment.

If we are Christians, we are in this time between the ascension of Jesus and his return.

We are in a time of testing.

Friends, this means that the Christian life will be faced by constant testing.

A constant need to stand firm.

A constant need to overcome, to be victorious.

But it is also a time when we are under the nurturing care and protection of God.

Both are true.

What's more, the days of this time are limited by him.

### **Epic Story 1: The Dragon (12:7-12)**

So, there are the protagonists and the context.

Now let's look at the first epic story.

It is the story that has the great red dragon as its focus.

It is a story recounted in verses 7-12.

Look at it with me.

The first thing to notice is that we shift focus back to the heavenly realm.

There we meet Michael, the archangel who features in Daniel 10.

He and his angelic host engage with the great red dragon in the heavenly realms.

The dragon puts up a fight.

But it is not good enough.

As a result, he and his host are thrown down.

Now, in my view, this is a 'behind the scenes' view of what was accomplished in the ministry and work of Christ.

We saw glimpses of it in the ministry of Jesus as he cast out demons.

In parts of the Old Testament, we hear of Satan appearing in the heavenly places to accuse his people before God (e.g. Job).

However, not any more.

Now he has been hurled down to earth.

However, there he does what he does.

It's there in verse 9.

He leads astray.

It's there in verse 15.

He spews things out of his mouth, perhaps implying heresies.

It's also there in verse 10.

He accuses the saints.

Anyway, verses 10–12 contain God's overriding pronouncement.

This dragon, this serpent, this devil, Satan, is cast down and his power is curtailed.

However, the warning note is sounded in verse 12.

Although he is defeated in heaven, he is still active on earth.

He is aggressive and furious.

He knows that his time is short.

Friends, this is the story of the great red dragon.

The world we live in is a place of strife and testing and tempting.

He is defeated.

However, he is not yet removed from all influence.

He still marauds around the world like a lion, seeking people to devour.

Friends, this is the world we live in.

Do not forget it.

Satan and his cohort wander the world, strategically working their subtle deceptions.

He is desperate and hateful.

His purpose is to destroy the Christian church.

He will use any means he can.

But, as this passage shows us, he has two particular areas in which you will find him.

First, he can be found in deception.

That is, in false religion.

False wisdom.

False prophets.

Such are rampant in our world, using all means, even the most technologically sophisticated.

I, for my part, wonder whether one of them is the internet and pornography.

It cripples and maims young person after young person.

It drags them away from devotion to Jesus and into blind alleys and destroyed discipleship.

The same could be said for computer gaming.

I constantly see young people with no time for Jesus and no time to battle the devil because they are too busy battling digital enemies online.

The lifeblood is being sucked out of their faith.

The second focus for the devil is listed here as well.

It is accusation.

The devil catches us between the word of God and his word of accusation.

And if our hearts and minds are empty of the word of God, he will have a field day.

Friends, please take in this word.

The devil is not a quiet mouse.

He is a blood red dragon, seeking someone to devour.

And if you are Christian, he has you in his sights.

However, don't despair.

He can be overcome by the word of testimony and the blood of the lamb.

So, love not your lives so much.

Rather, love your Saviour.

Love the Lamb.

Love his gospel, the word of God.

Love testifying about Jesus.

Love his word of Scripture which tells you of the gospel.

## **Epic Story 2: The Woman (12:13–20)**

But let's move on with a little more speed.

Let's turn to our next epic story.

It is in verses 13–20.

It is the story of the woman and her progeny.

Friends, the background to this story is the one we've already heard.

You see, having failed to destroy the Christ, Satan tries to destroy his people.

This is his focus.

And if accusation fails, he has another weapon.

We will see it spelt out more in later chapters.

However, it is outlined here.

It is deceit.

Look at verse 15.

The dragon uses his mouth, even as God uses his word.

But his mouth spews out false water.

But in delightful irony, God the creator helps by causing the mouth of the earth to open and swallow up what the devil had spewed out.

But verse 17 tells us that this is not the end of his wiles.

He will wage war against the rest of the offspring of the woman.

And as we will see, that war will have additional arsenals.

Key among them will be persecution.

### **Epic Story 3: The Beast (13:1-10)**

Let us now turn to epic story 3.

Friends, for Jews, the sea was a place of dark chaotic waters and strange and fearsome creatures.

So, if you wanted to talk about something terrifying, you'd talk about something arising from the deep, dark, chaotic waters of the sea.

Daniel 7, the place in Scripture that talked about beasts arising from out of the sea talked of beasts with terrifying persecuting power.

And so, as readers of Scripture we know what to expect in chapter 13, verse 1, when we see the malevolent dragon standing at the sea meeting a beast arising from the sea.

This beast combines features of the four kingdoms of Daniel 7.

Now, I want you to notice some other things about this beast.

Look at verse 2.

He is delegated power and throne and authority by the dragon.

Look at verse 3.

He has a fatal wound that has healed.

Now verses 3 and 4 together.

People are filled with wonder.

They follow him.

They worship the dragon because of him.

They also worship the beast himself.

Verses 7 and 8 notice that the worshippers come from every tribe, people and nation.

But they also bear his mark.

Look at verses 16 and 17.

Friends, did you hear the similarities to Jesus in the beast from the sea?

This beast has mimicked the ministry and work of the Lord Jesus.

He is a false Messiah.

Now, let me say, that in keeping with what I've already told you about apocalyptic, I'm not sure that we are speaking on just one of these.

No.

I think that even if there might be one climactic one, the pattern of false messiahs will be found throughout history.

This is the work of the devil, the subtle deceiver.

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

Oh, by the way, did you notice that this false messiah persecutes the children of the true Messiah?

Look at verse 7.

He is given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them.

That power will look overwhelming.

Look at verse 10.

*<sup>10</sup>"If anyone is to go into captivity,  
into captivity they will go.*

*If anyone is to be killed with the sword,  
with the sword they will be killed."*

*This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of  
God's people. [Revelation 13:10; NIV]*

#### **Epic Story 4: The False Prophet (13:11–18)**

But there is another element to add to the dragon and his beast from the sea.

Look at verse 11.

**Another** beast arises.

This one comes from the earth rather than the sea.

And, just like the first beast, I think that we are meant to notice what he does.

Let's take a quick survey.

It looks like a lamb.

It speaks like a dragon (verse 11).

It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf.

It makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast whose fatal wound had been healed (verse 12).

It performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven.

Through signs, it persuaded people (verse 14).

It was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast (verse 15).

It forced all people to receive a mark (verse 16).

Friends, who do you know who does these things?

Who glorifies the Son and leads us to worship him as Lord (John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 12:3)?

Who performs signs and wonders as validation (Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Romans 15:19)?

Whose ministry is linked with fire coming from heaven (Acts 2)?

Who is the mechanism for sealing God's people (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)?

Surely the answer is clear.

It is the Spirit.

So, in one sense the first beast from the sea mimics Christ.

The second beast from the earth, mimics the Holy Spirit.

And when combined with the overarching source of the great red dragon, what do you have.

You have a fake trinity.

A fake of the true God.

A mimicry of the true and living God.

Friends, mimicking what is of God...

Masquerading as God...

These are the marks of deceit.

They are at the heart of Satan's work.

But they are so different from God's work, which is full of truth and which leads to freedom.

Jesus warned about such mimicry and falsehood.

He warned about many who would come claiming to be him and deceiving.

He warned about false messiahs and false prophets performing signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect (Mark 13:5-6, 22-23).

Friends, when do these things occur.

Well, again, I've repeated this a few times but it's no harm repeating it again.

In my view, this passage is doing what all apocalyptic does.

It tells us of general patterns and cycles that occur in God's world.

Those patterns and cycles might repeat themselves throughout history.

These particular patterns have been around since the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

They may very well intensify the closer we get to the end.

They may even climax in one particular heightened example of these patterns repeated at the end of time.

However, notice the reference to 1260 days in chapter 12, verse 6.

This is the same as a time, times, and half a time in chapter 12, verse 14.

And it is the same as 42 months in chapter 13, verse 5.

It is the same as the time in which the church bears witness in chapter 11, verse 3.

And all are a way of saying a time cut short.

It may even be a way of talking about the whole time between the death of Jesus to the End.

If that is so, then the war on God's people will be the regular state of play from the death of Jesus to the end.

Oh, it may have pinnacles and heightened moments...

It may even have one escalated intense moment...

However, it is par for the course between the death of Jesus and the end of time.

It is life for believers in Jesus in a world where Satan, the great red dragon, has been thrown down to earth.

He, not the State...

He, not human powers or governments...

He, is the great enemy, the one to fear.

However, if you are sealed, your destiny is secured.

Friends, we'd better move on.

But before we do, I should just mention two things.

First, the mark of the beast is like the seal on the saints.

At its root, it is spiritual rather than physical.

So, we shouldn't go around looking for physical marks.

Second, we should just take a look at the final verse of chapter 13.

There we hear about the number of the beast.

Many attempts have been made to identify the number 666 with key figures in history.

However, that's wrongheaded in my view.

The way to think about it is that the number 7 is the number for completeness or perfection.

The number 3 is a number for things spiritual.

So, God's number would most likely be 777.

However, what is someone was trying to masquerade as God, just as we've seen here in this chapter.

Surely, the ideal number would be a spiritual force that fell short.

A number representing such a person or power might be 666.

It is what we have seen in these two chapters.

A false trinity.

It is what we see repeated throughout history.

Friends, 666 is the number of every Christless attempt at utopia.

It is the number of every attempt by humans to set up or organise the world without Christ.

It is what the world constantly tries to do.

It is what our country tries to do.

It is what our world is trying to do currently.

A perfect world is not possible at the instigation of humans.

For Genesis 3 has told us what is in the heart of humans.

And what is governed by the heart of humans without God will only issue in pain and destruction.

And it will be judged by the true and living God.

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

But let's move on.

I'll do so at pace now.

In chapter 14, verses 1-5, we meet the 144,000 again.

This is their epic story.

They bear the mark of God.

They are in God's presence.

They are pure or chaste.

That is, they have not been unfaithful to the true God.

They have not cavorted with the Babylonian whore that we will meet in the chapters that are to come.

### **Epic Story 6: The Three Gospel Angels (14:6-13)**

Then we come to Epic Story 6.

We meet three angels.

The first has an eternal gospel to proclaim.

It is a gospel of repentance for people from every nation, tribe, language and people.

They are to turn back from false worship of false deities.

They are to worship the God revealed in Scripture, that is, he who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.

The second angel proclaimer announces the corollary.

If true worship is found only in worship of the true God, then it goes to say that false worship of false gods has no future.

Hence, the second angel proclaims the end of Babylon the great.

Worship of her is the opposite of worship of the true God.

It is spiritual adultery, which contrasts with the chastity of the 144,000.

The third angel explains what will happen if the advice of the first angel gospel proclaimer is not listened to.

They will drink the wine of God's fury.

Friends, please listen carefully.

As we approach the end, we must urge people as these angels are urging.

God is longsuffering, not wanting any to perish.

It is why he is holding off the day.

But the day of Christ's coming is coming.

And those who have chosen to isolate themselves from him and all his goodness will receive what they want.

A God who does not separate good from evil is not a God you want to know and worship.

And a God who does not reward good is not a God you want to know and worship.

So, be warned.

Do not cave into the temptations of this world.

But also be encouraged and comforted.

Your reward is sure.

And it will be true rest.

### **Epic Story 7: The Coming of the Son of Man (14:14-20)**

Friends, let us now turn to the final epic story in chapter 14, verses 14-20.

It is the final judgment promised by Jesus.

It is overseen by him ... one like a son of man.

Under the command of God, he swings his sickle over the earth in verse 16.

The things he taught about in his parables is enacted.

Please understand.

It is not popular.

But there is a great divide at the End.

But the place where you will be at that divide is determined by what you decide now.

In the end, there are only two possibilities.

You can stand in the company of the Lamb as one of the 144,000, sealed by him.

Or you can stand as a worshipper of those opposed to God, in which case you will share their destiny.

You can follow the Lamb or worship the beast.

There are only two destinies: life or death; salvation or judgment.

Those who do not worship the Lamb have effectively worshipped the beast.

To ignore Jesus is effectively to have rejected him.

## **Conclusion**

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I want to close by reflecting upon the way God has made us.

You see, the point of the passages that we have read tonight is that we humans are made for worship.

We are so constituted that we must worship.

And if we do not worship the true and living God, then we will buy into an alternative.

Or we will construct a god for ourselves.

Or we will listen to others who will willingly construct one for us.

But such are not gods.

They are the products of human darkened imaginations or of the devil himself.

And they will inevitably reap the consequences.

Friends, please understand what God is doing here.

You see, we have a tendency to play down what is going on in our world.

But not God.

Not his inspired author.

No.

God is telling us to look behind the outer façade of earthly events.

To see behind them eternal truth.

And those eternal truths will have their way because God is their author.

And those eternal truths are that God the author and lover of truth will make them plain in history.

At the last, he will divide truth from falsehood, wheat from weeds.

He will judge all evil and unrighteousness.

He will do away with suffering and death.

Everything imperfect and corruptible shall utterly pass away.

And only the perfect and the holy and that aligned with God will remain.

This is the word of God and it can be trusted.