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The Seven Signs

Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

June 27, 2021

Revelation 12-14

I. **Context**

A. Prologue

1. **Revelation 1:7-8** (NASB95) — 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

B. **Theme**

1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
 - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
 - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
 - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place

C. How is this purpose accomplished?

1. **Four visions**
 - a. **“In the Spirit”**
2. **Revelation 1:9-10**
 - a. First vision
 - (1) The glorified Christ
 - (2) The messages to the seven churches
3. **Revelation 4:1-2**
 - a. Second vision
 - (1) The heavenly vision
 - (2) The tribulation
4. **Revelation 17:1-3**
 - a. Third vision
 - (1) The mystery of Babylon
 - (2) Judgment of Babylon
 - (3) Final triumph and consummation
5. **Revelation 21:9-10**
 - a. Fourth vision
 - (1) The New Jerusalem

D. **Structure of the 2nd Vision**

1. **Chapter 4 – Almighty God on His throne**
 - a. He’s the One in charge; sovereign over human history
 - b. He holds the scroll

2. **Chapter 5 – Lion and Lamb**
 - a. He's worthy to break the seals and open the book
 - b. He's earned the authority to control the unfolding of human history as it moves toward its conclusion
 - c. Due to the nature of the book and the seals
 - (1) The seals take place before the contents of the book are opened
 - (2) Tribulation unfolds before redemptive and judicial events come to their conclusion
3. **6.1-8.1 – Seven Seals**
 - a. Four horsemen of the apocalypse
 - b. Martyrs
 - c. Natural catastrophes
 - d. Interlude in Ch 7 between Seals 6-7
 - (1) 144,000
 - (2) Great Multitude
 - e. No plague content in Seal 7 (silence in heaven)
4. **8.2-11.19 – Seven Trumpets**
 - a. Interlude in Chapters 10-11 between Trumpets 6-7
 - (1) Angel's announcement
 - (2) John's commission – Two witnesses
 - (a) Martyrdom and resurrection
 - (b) Those who survive the earthquake, observe the resurrection of the witnesses give glory to God
 - (c) Large scale conversion of Jews?
 - b. No plague content in Trumpet 7
 - (1) 11.15-19 – scene of worship
5. **15.1-16.21 – Seven Bowls of God's wrath**
 - a. Chapter 15 – preparation and worship scene
 - b. Chapter 16 – bowls poured out
- E. **What happens between the 7 Trumpets and the 7 Bowls?** (Chapters 12-14)
 1. Some would say an interlude
 - a. Woman and Dragon
 - b. Beasts of the sea and earth
 - c. Lamb and 144,000 on Zion
 - d. Angelic proclamations
 - e. Son of man and the reapings
 2. What you really have is another cycle of seven
 - a. Seven signs
 - (1) 12.1-6 – Woman and Dragon
 - (2) 12.7-12 – Satan cast out
 - (3) 12.13-17 – War between Satan and Woman
 - (4) 13.1-10 – Beast from the sea
 - (5) 13.11-18 – Beast from the earth
 - (6) 14.1-5 – Lamb and 144,000 on Zion

- (a) Interlude – 14.6-12 – Three angelic announcements
- (7) 14.13-20 – The harvest of the earth
- b. Not as clearly defined as with seals, trumpets, and bowls
- c. Not as chronologically driven as seals, trumpets, and bowls
- d. Seven significant histories
 - (1) Some past, some future
- e. Reveal the nature of the spiritual conflict and the relationship between earthly and heavenly realms
 - (1) Explain the nature of the troubles of the church

II. **Seven Significant Histories**

A. Text – **Woman and Dragon**

1. **Revelation 12:1–6** (NASB95) —
 - a. 1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.
 - b. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.
 - c. 4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.
 - d. 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.
 - e. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.
2. **Woman** – clothed with sun, moon under feet, 12 stars on crown
 - a. Reminiscent of the vision Joseph has of Israel’s family
 - b. Has a certain glory about her
 - c. With child
 - (1) v 5 – revealed as Christ
 - (a) Male
 - (b) Will rule nations with rod of iron
 - (c) Caught up to God and throne (ascension)
3. **Dragon**
 - a. Red, 7 heads and 10 horns
 - (1) Being very difficult to kill
 - (2) Horns imply great strength
 - b. On heads, 7 diadems
 - (1) Authority
 - c. 1/3 stars thrown to earth by tail
 - (1) cf v 9 – fallen angels taken with him

4. Relation between Dragon and woman
 - a. Dragon wants to prevent woman from bearing child
 - (1) cf Herod's desire to kill the Christ child
 - b. Woman flees into wilderness after the child is born and ascends to heaven
 5. Easy to identify these symbols
 - a. **Dragon = Satan (cf 20.2)**
 - b. **Woman = people of God**
 - (1) Beginning – OT saints from which came Messiah
 - (2) Later – believers who are nourished during period of distress for 1260 days
 6. 1260 days = ½ of the 7 years
 - a. 7 years would be the fullness of the tribulation
 - b. 3 ½ years would be the tribulation cut short for the sake of the elect (cf Matthew 24.22, Mark 13.20)
- B. Text – **Satan Cast Out**
1. **Revelation 12:7–12** (NASB95) —
 - a. 7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.
 - b. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
 - c. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, 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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.
 - d. 11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.
 - e. 12 “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”
 2. **War in heaven**
 - a. Satan and angels v. Michael and angels
 - (1) Satan and angels not strong enough
 - (2) Thrown down to earth
 3. **Implications in heaven**
 - a. Great rejoicing that the accuser has been defeated!
 4. **Implications for believers on earth**
 - a. Great distress
 - (1) Overcame by blood of the Lamb and word of testimony
 - (2) Loved not their lives even unto death

5. **Implications for unbelievers on earth**
 - a. Terrible distress
 - (1) Satan thrown down, comes with his own wrath
 - (2) Knows he has only a short time
- C. Text – **War Between Satan and Woman**
1. **Revelation 12:13–17** (NASB95) —
 - a. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.
 - b. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.
 - c. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.
 - d. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.
 - e. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.
 2. **Implications of the prior vision played out**
 - a. Satan persecutes the woman
 - b. Woman is protected, nourished, for time, times, half a time (1260 days, 3 ½ years)
 - (1) Already seen in 1st sign
 - c. Satan tried to destroy the woman; couldn't
 - d. Then persecuted the rest of her offspring
 - (1) Those who keep God's commandments, hold to the testimony of Jesus
 - (2) Pretty clearly, these are Christians (the church!)
 3. How did Satan accomplish his reign of terror?
 - a. Start to see this in the next vision
- D. Text – **Beast from the Sea**
1. **Revelation 13:1–10** (NASB95) —
 - a. 1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.
 - b. 2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.
 - c. 3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; 4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the

- beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"
- d. 5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.
 - e. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.
 - f. 7 It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.
 - g. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.
 - h. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.
 - i. 10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.
2. **Appearance of the beast**
- a. Dragon stands on shore of the sea
 - (1) Frustrated in attempts to destroy the church
 - (2) Places himself in position to call for beasts as instruments of affliction
 - b. **10 horns, 7 heads, 10 crowns**; like leopard, bear, lion
 - (1) Similar to Dragon's appearance
 - (2) Directly related to **Daniel 7**
 - (a) 4 beasts – 1st 3, lion, bear, leopard
 - i) 4 kingdoms of the earth
 - (b) 4th beast – terrifying, different, 10 horns
 - i) Another little horn, spoke boastfully, displaced 3 horns; waged war against saints; defeated them until judged by Ancient of Days
 - ii) 4 kingdoms, different
 - iii) 10 horns are 10 kings from kingdom
 - iv) Other horn is another king, subdues 3 kings; saints handed over for 3 ½ times
 - (c) Eventually, power and authority of beasts is taken away, given to saints
 - (3) John's vision collapses the 4 beasts into 1 with all the wicked characteristics of Daniel's
 - (a) 10 horns and 7 heads are each kings of the kingdom
 - (4) Kingdoms of the world are members of the kingdom of Satan; satanic in origin
 - c. **Blasphemous names**
 - (1) Seeks to supplant God

- d. Dragon gave beast power, throne, great authority
- e. One of heads wounded, healed
 - (1) Ruler may be killed, seem to end a kingdom's reign, but only temporarily
- f. Whole world astonished, followed the beast; worshiped dragon and beast
 - (1) Impressed by extraordinary military power

3. **Activity of the beast**

- a. **Proud words, blasphemies, exercise authority for 42 months**
 - (1) Again, takes the place of God
 - (2) Authority for affliction of saints
 - (3) Authority over tribes, peoples, languages, nations
- b. **Inhabitants of earth worship beast**
 - (1) = unbelievers
 - (2) Verified as those whose names are not written in Lamb's book of life
- c. **Warning of certainty of suffering of saints**
 - (1) Patient endurance called for
 - (2) But even in martyrdom, victory belongs to saints (12.11)

E. Text – **Beast from the Earth**

1. **Revelation 13:11–18** (NASB95) —

- a. 11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.
- b. 12 He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.
- c. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.
- d. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.
- e. 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.
- f. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.
- g. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

2. **Two horns like lamb**

- a. Parody of God, Christ???

- b. Religious leadership, as opposed to secular leadership in 1st beast
 - 3. **Exercised authority** of 1st beast, **led worship of 1st beast**
 - a. Religious leader lead people to worship secular government (statism)
 - 4. **Great and miraculous signs** (fire from heaven)
 - a. Purpose is to deceive the inhabitants of earth (unbelievers)
 - 5. **Image in honor of 1st beast, made to speak**
 - 6. Caused death of those who refused to worship 1st beast
 - a. **Martyrs**
 - 7. Established **the mark of the beast**
 - a. Religious significance
 - b. Economic significance
 - 8. **Number of beast is the mark**
 - a. Man's number – 666
 - b. Various ways to number names in Hebrew
 - c. Symbolic number?
 - (1) Messiah = 888
 - (2) Perfection = 777
 - (3) Man's number = 666
 - (a) Never quite good enough
 - (b) Falls short of the glory of God
 - d. Perhaps its religious significance is that it represents humanism
- F. Text – **Lamb and 144,000 on Zion**
- 1. **Revelation 14:1–5** (NASB95) —
 - a. 1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.
 - b. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.
 - c. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.
 - d. 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.
 - e. 5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.
 - 2. **Lamb standing on Mt. Zion**
 - a. Obviously Christ of Chapter 5
 - b. Last seen standing before the throne – 7.9
 - c. Cf dragon standing on shore of the sea
 - (1) Over all of earth, invoking two beasts
 - d. Mt. Zion – place of eschatological victory and deliverance

- (1) **Joel 2:32** (NASB95) — 32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”
- (2) **Hebrews 12:22** (NASB95) — 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels...
- e. Mt. Zion is the heavenly city which comes down
- f. Purpose is salvific – save those sealed from earth
- 3. **144,000**
 - a. Whole body of saints, believing Israel and church
 - (1) cf Chapter 7
 - b. **Lamb’s and Father’s name**
 - (1) cf mark of beast
- 4. **Sound from heaven**
 - a. 3 types
 - (1) Roar of rushing waters
 - (a) cf glorified Christ – 1.15
 - (2) Peal of thunder
 - (a) cf 4 living creatures – 6.1
 - (3) Harpists
 - (a) “Like” – not just loud, but beautiful, melodious
 - b. Sounds emanate from presence of God
 - (1) **Christ, angels (living creatures), musicians (saints)**
- 5. **New song**
 - a. Only redeemed could learn song
- 6. **Fidelity of 144,000**
 - a. “Did not defile themselves with women... kept themselves chaste” (parthenos = virgin)
 - b. Nothing to do with sexuality per se
 - (1) As if sex within marriage somehow defiling
 - (2) Speaks of men as virgins!
 - c. Issue is spiritual chasteness
 - (1) **2 Corinthians 11:2** (NASB95) — 2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.
 - (2) Only place “virgin” is used of other than females
 - (3) Meaning is spiritual virginity as bride of Christ
 - d. 144,000 not seduced in the adulterous, idolatrous worship of beast
 - e. Instead, they follow the Lamb, the bridegroom
- 7. **Ownership of 144,000**
 - a. **Purchased** (redeemed) **from among men**
 - (1) Used to belong to earth (inhabitants of the earth)
 - (2) Now belong to Christ

- b. **Firstfruits**
 - (1) cf **James 1:18** (NASB95) — 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.
 - (2) Contrast is with those who dwell on the earth
- 8. **Character of 144,000**
 - a. **No lie**
 - (1) Fundamental transparency; no hidden sin
 - b. **Blameless**
 - (1) Clothed in righteousness of Christ
- G. Text – **Three Angelic Announcements**
 - 1. **Revelation 14:6–12** (NASB95) —
 - a. 6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”
 - b. 8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is **Babylon** the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”
 - c. 9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone **worships the beast** and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
 - d. 11 “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”
 - e. 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.
 - 2. Announcements prophesy the end or **culmination of the histories**
 - a. Gospel continues to be proclaimed in midst of tribulation
 - (1) Never too late for repentance – even though no one does!
 - b. **Babylon is fallen**
 - (1) Proleptic announcement
 - (2) Babylon – characterization of enemies of God and of His people
 - (3) Immediate reference to Rome
 - (4) Includes Satan and the Beasts
 - c. **Destiny of unredeemed humanity**
 - 3. The announcements summarize the destinies of key histories
- H. Text – **The Harvest of the Earth**

1. **Revelation 14:13–20** (NASB95) —
 - a. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”
 - b. 14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.
 - c. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because **the harvest of the earth** is ripe.”
 - d. 16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.
 - e. 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.
 - f. 18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from **the vine of the earth**, because her grapes are ripe.”
 - g. 19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.
 - h. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.
2. **Reaping of the earth**
 - a. Description of the reaper
 - (1) **White cloud** – associated with the things of God
 - (2) **Son of man**
 - (a) cf Ch 1 – glorified Christ
 - (b) cf Daniel 7
 - (3) **Crown of gold** = triumph in contest
 - (4) **Sickle** = instrument of harvest, here and elsewhere
 - b. Angel of annunciation
 - (1) Time is ripe – God’s sovereign plan has reached its climax
 - c. Harvest usually used in NT for both redeemed and unredeemed
 - (1) Here seems to indicate redeemed only by contrast with second harvest
3. **Reaping of grapes**
 - a. Angels of the harvest
 - b. Grapes to be reaped
 - (1) cf grain to be reaped in prior paragraph
 - c. **Winepress of God’s wrath**
 - (1) Continue in metaphor used in previous example

- d. Blood flow
 - (1) Approximate length of Palestine
 - (2) Depth of 4 feet
- e. Absolute and radical nature of the judgment of God!

III. Applications

- A. What happens on earth is part of a heavenly drama
 - 1. Hard to figure whether the first sign is in heaven or on earth
 - 2. Best to imagine an interplay between the two
- B. What we do on earth has heavenly implications
 - 1. Those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony cause heaven to rejoice; indeed, those populate heaven!
- C. God's people are always protected
 - 1. Even in the context of great affliction, even death, there is still protection
- D. Satan's afflictions are not due to his power, but due to his defeat!
 - 1. He is powerful; that's not the reason for this affliction
 - 2. He is angry because he's lost a heavenly battle and was thrown to earth
 - 3. He is even more angry because he was unable to prevent the birth of the Christ child
 - 4. He takes out his anger on the church
 - a. Has some measure of success physically
 - b. Has no measure of success spiritually
 - c. That really frustrates him
 - 5. He knows he has only a short time
 - a. So he afflicts those who dwell on the earth!
- E. Satan's plans are always frustrated
 - 1. He couldn't defeat Michael and his angels
 - 2. He couldn't stop the birth of the Christ child
 - 3. He couldn't even devour the woman (saints, church)
 - a. Even when he killed them, they overcame!
- F. Satan's chief instruments are both civil and religious
 - 1. 1st beast = civil; 2nd beast = religious
 - 2. He attacks on two fronts, both of which seek to displace God
 - 3. The two fronts work together to supplant God
 - a. The religious lead to worship the secular state
 - 4. The secular instrument is statism
 - a. May have a specific ruler in mind
 - b. But we live in an age in which people worship the state
 - 5. The religious instrument is humanism
 - a. Worship of man is the chief religion of our age
- G. Overcoming requires the perseverance of the saints
 - 1. Must be redeemed; purchased, belong to God
 - 2. Must be faithful to bridegroom, spiritually chaste
 - 3. Must be transparent before God, blameless
- H. There are only two kinds of harvest – grain or grapes
 - 1. One is for the redeemed, overcomers

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2. The other involves the winepress of God's wrath