

Charts: The Third Parenthetical Visions: Chart #15

PREFACE

Read Revelation 13:5-7.

David Guzik remarks that, “Blasphemer’ may be a more accurate title than ‘Antichrist’ for this end-times dictator. As much as anything, this beast is a man who speaks against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.” I would only add to that appraisal that it seems to me that blasphemers—be they against God, or institutions, or man—only betray their own impotence, and perhaps even cowardice. We have all run into people who talk a fierce game, only to cringe and cower away when blows begin to be thrown. The beast may have power over the suffering populace of earth, but he can do nothing but bad-mouth the King and populace of heaven.

Also revealed in this passage—vv5-10—is the lamentable fate of the short-sighted. Throughout history is documented the fate of those who took the seemingly easier path of compliance, even collaboration, rather than resistance. What happened to the women in France who slept with the Nazis? What happened to the Vichy regime that bent the knee to Hitler once the nation was liberated by the Allies?

Here in this passage—and of course throughout the narrative of the Eschaton—that dalliance and friendship with the enemy may bring ease for the moment, but it is a poor trade-off for what one will suffer for eternity.

As to the text itself, what strikes me first of all in this passage is how *passive* it is. The object is “the beast from the sea,” that is, Antichrist. And from everything we have read thus far, this person will be an extraordinarily—even uniquely—powerful individual. Yet this passage is peppered by statements about things being given to him by someone else. That’s passive.

We might expect to read, *He spoke arrogant words and had authority for forty-two months.* That would be a strong, active description of a world-wide ruler. Instead we read “There **was given to him a mouth** speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and **authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.**” In v7 we have a similar situation: “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.**”

I believe this is saying two things—really only one thing, but considered from two directions. First, is that Satan is calling the shots, and *he* can only do what the Lord God permits. Whatever power Antichrist possesses has been given him by Satan and, ultimately, God. Second, from the opposite direction, is that Antichrist is little more than a puppet. He may even *think* he is in charge, but Satan has entered him; the beast does not *possess* anything, but, whatever he was prior to this possession, is now himself possessed by the pure evil of Satan.

Satan will indeed “enter” the beast, just as he did Judas Iscariot.

Luke 22:3 And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

John 13:26–27a Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him.

v5

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

My mom’s sister—to my older brother and me growing up, Auntie Norma—liked to give things to people, to be generous toward family members. But there were invariably strings attached, a *quid pro quo*. I’ll pay for your schooling—if you’ll study this; I’ll give you the money—if you promise to...

Satan works the same way: he likes to give things to people—but there is always the *quid pro quo*. He tried it with Christ Jesus and failed; he will one day try it with Antichrist and succeed.

So Satan, as it were, “creates” the beast, and then he begins giving him things, outfitting him for his service:

- a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies
- authority to act for forty-two months
- to make war with the saints and to overcome them
- authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation

In exchange for this power and authority, of course, is required complete subservience to Satan’s program.

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies,

From our perspective it seems odd that God would grant to Satan and his disciple permission—not to mention the skill—to blaspheme Himself, just as it seems odd to us that Father God for so long suffers the company of that fallen angel in the precincts of heaven. But God is sovereign, so we cannot question His methods; we may scratch our heads and wonder, but we must eventually bow before His superior wisdom and authority—and acknowledge that He knows what His doing.

and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

And apparently God, too, can demand a *quid pro quo*, for He grants to the beast the authority to do his worst—but only so long. There will be a hard-coded cutoff point: when the Messiah returns, there will be countenanced no more of such arrogance and blasphemy. The clock is running, and the mainspring will snap after three and one half years.

v6

And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

We have just come out of (and, sadly, have just begun afresh) a political season. For months there has been a lot of hot air, a lot of nonsense—a lot of lying—flying through the air. And there will always be those who believe it. Daniel's prophecy foresaw the arrogant nature and methods of this dictator:

Daniel 7:8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them... and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

Daniel 7:11 Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking...

Daniel 7:20–21 and... that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them

Daniel 7:25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

MacArthur: Antichrist's arrogance will surpass that of anyone else in human history. He will be Satan's mouthpiece, voicing his master's frustrated rage against God. He will also be the supreme blasphemer in a world filled with blasphemers.

So hardened will sinners' hearts be at that time that God's judgments will elicit not repentance, but more blasphemy. (MacArthur)

This profane slander will be not just directed toward God in general, but toward

- **His name**—that is, everything that represents who He truly is, His qualities and attributes;
- **His tabernacle**—that is, His tent, where He dwells: heaven; and
- **those who dwell with Him**—the holy angels (the ones who just defeated Satan in the recent heavenly war), the redeemed from millennia before, as well as the recently arrived church from earth.

Walvoord: It is evident that blasphemy is not an incidental feature of his kingdom, but one of its main features.

v7

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.

In our last session I noted the organized groups of saints we know will be on the earth at this time: the two witnesses, the 144,000 remnant of Messianic Israel, and the group of Messianic Jews that has recently fled into the wilderness. But there will also certainly be individuals and small groups—much like there are today in Red China—worshiping God and following Christ Jesus privately and secretly. Satan will make war against all these; we can easily imagine his storm troopers beating down doors and shattering windows, just as the SS troops and Nazi mobs destroyed property in Germany in a violent act to root out Jews and send them to concentration camps. It was called “Kristallnacht,” the night of broken glass.

...and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

Back in the day Satan had tried to entice Jesus with the very same carrot.

Read Matthew 4:8-11.

Back in the first century, with the Son of God, it didn't take, but this time the devil will have a willing dupe to accept the role. And who can say when this step will actually occur; I have posited that the making of this “revived Roman Empire” would almost certainly take place gradually, over time, and probably have its beginnings in the years prior even to the Rapture and Tribulation.

There is nothing to preclude the possibility that the world—as well as the church—could have been suffering under this aggressive empire for some time. Meanwhile, perhaps there is a lowly clerk in the organization working his way up the corporate/political ladder. Perhaps the evacuation of the church at the Rapture is the spark that vaults him higher to the top; during the first half of the Tribulation he is scheming and plotting for the top spot of dictator—even as he sweet-talks Israel ([Daniel 9:27](#)) and fools the world into thinking he is its necessary savior.

Once he takes full control at the midpoint, the beast will rule with absolute authority over “every tribe and people and tongue and nation.” That covers every last soul on the earth.

Read Revelation 13:8-10.

v8

As if to drive home the point of v7 further, v8 covers the same ground but in a different way. Verse 7 declares the scope of the beast’s *sovereign and political* rule, while v8 declares the scope of his *religious* rule.

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.

Whereas his political authority knows no bounds, encompassing “every tribe and people and tongue and nation” of the world, the beast’s *religious* authority is limited to those “who dwell on the earth.” At first glance this would seem to include every living human being, but it does not.

Verse 8 employs two means of delineating those who worship the beast from those who do not. The first is the phrase “All who dwell on the earth.” This is repeatedly used in the Revelation to denote unbelievers. Let’s look at just two examples.

Read Revelation 6:9-10.

Here the martyred saints “underneath the altar” are crying out for vengeance and justice to be poured out on “those who dwell on the earth”—meaning those who had slain them. The second example even more obviously describes unbelievers—and notice how it repeats the phrase from 13:7.

Read Revelation 11:9-10.

So in this scene it is clearly those antagonistic toward God and the Messianic message that had been delivered by the two witnesses who are “those who dwell on the earth.” But John reinforces this connection with a more explicit definition:

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.

This is a problematic portion of the verse, which we will address in a moment, but first the obvious. As David Guzik points out, “the idea is that worshiping the beast and having your name in the Book of Life are mutually exclusive.” If your name is listed in the Lamb’s book of life, you will not be worshiping the beast; if you *are* worshiping the beast, your name cannot be listed in that book. As Walvoord states it, “all who are not saved will worship the beast and those who are saved will not worship him.”

That’s the easy part, but the original text is potentially problematic—or at least confusing. The Greek is “whose names have not been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” which is how KJVs and NIVs have it. That is, “from the foundation (or creation) of the world” modifies “the Lamb slain.” The NASBs and ESV reorder the text to have “from the foundation of the world” modify “everyone whose name has not been written...in the book of life...” Walvoord works it around in such a way to include both:

The simplest explanation here seems the best, namely, that their names were written in the book of life from eternity past. This was made possible by anticipation of the future dying of the Lamb on their behalf.

But I think I favor what Guzik comes up with by keeping the order of the original Greek:

The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: This deeply meaningful title for Jesus reminds us that God’s plan of redemption was set in place before He even created the beings who would be redeemed. God wasn’t “surprised” by the fall of Adam or any other evidence of the fallen nature of man. God isn’t making it up as He goes along. It is all going according to plan.

- God the Son had a relationship of love and fellowship with God the Father before the foundation of the world ([John 17:24](#))
- The work of Jesus was ordained before the foundation of the world ([1 Peter 1:20](#))
- God chose His redeemed before the foundation of the world ([Ephesians 1:4](#))

- Names are written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world ([Revelation 17:8](#))
- The kingdom of heaven was prepared for the redeemed before the foundation of the world ([Matthew 25:34](#))

So we are left with a picture of a divided and imbalanced world. Believers, by far the minority, refuse to worship the beast and will probably lose their lives for their faith. Unbelievers, the vast majority of the populace, gladly worship the beast and his father, Satan. And is that so hard to imagine? After the events of this last week is it so hard to picture an active majority that prefers lies over truth; evil over righteousness; deceit over veracity; violence over peace; arrogance, blasphemy, and vulgarisms over civility and grace? It is not a stretch to say that we are now living through a prototype of the society in place during the Great Tribulation.

Just imagine: The world has at long last united behind one religion, a truly ecumenical faith—yet the object of worship in this one-world religion is not even a god. This faith’s “god” is a man. Antichrist.

v9

If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Everywhere this command is seen in Scripture it means that what has just been stated—or, as here, what is about to be stated—is important, and requires spiritual discernment for understanding.

v10

What we are commanded to understand by means of the Spirit is, admittedly, a bit opaque.

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.

The primary question that needs to be answered is this: Does this proverb speak to believers or their persecutors? The answer affects how we interpret this, but since under either answer the two statements are empirically true, I will offer both. In their respective translations most of the more modern versions favor the first, while the KJVs favor the second. The NASB is the most confusing, for it seems to mix the two, although this can be resolved. ([The NASB includes a margin note for “is destined for captivity”: or “leads into captivity.”](#))

For Persecuted Believers

These will be terrible times for followers of Christ. For Christians (Jew or Gentile) “the testing of [one’s] faith” ([James 1:3](#)) will no longer be simply academic; there will be a very real cost to remaining steadfast to one’s faith: death.

Even though on the ground it may not seem so, God remains in control: if God wills for you captivity, then go into captivity; those being pursued and persecuted should not fight back, “with the sword,” for then “with the sword he must be killed” (NASB). Or as the ESV, and NIVs have it, if God wills for you “to be killed with the sword,” then it is going to happen in that way.

The last sentence of the verse seems to reinforce this interpretation: “Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.” This is what it means in these hard times to follow Christ, who “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

For the Persecutors

The KJVs interpret this differently, but that interpretation is true as well.

NKJV: He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

This is clear: If you throw innocent believers in jail, you’ll end up there yourself; if you kill them by the sword, you too will be killed by the sword. There will be justice, there will be retribution. It makes no difference if ultimately God is behind all this. If you have been a willing participant, you will pay the penalty for your crimes against the faithful.

In this case the last sentence has less obvious application. It may be saying something like, *This is what it means to patiently endure for the faith.*

Walvoord: In this ultimate triumph and judgment upon wicked men lie the patience and faith of the saints in their hour of trial. The Scriptures frequently mention this final vindication (Gen. 9:6; Matt. 5:38; 26:52; Rom. 12:19; Gal. 6:7). The same truth which serves as an encouragement to the saints acts as a warning to their persecutors. Their ultimate doom is assured as in this case at the end of their brief period of power.

Matthew 5:38–39 “You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ “But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”

Matthew 26:51–52 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.”

CONCLUSION

Before we move on in our next session to the “beast from the earth” (the false prophet), let’s make sure we have a clear picture of who his boss is, the beast, Antichrist. Over the centuries many fanciful notions have been offered for his identity:

- Evil historical figures such as Nero, Caligula, Adolf Hitler, or Judas Iscariot either reincarnated or resurrected—or even kept alive all these years.
- Not an individual at all, but a *system*, a government, or empire.
- A literal angelic, or otherwise supernatural being, conjured by Satan.

My position is that Antichrist is none of these, but a literal human being who rises to power by Satan’s sanction. He is “supernatural”—as is the false prophet—only in that he is indwelt and given special powers by Satan. Just as in every believer it is all of Christ, the beast’s abilities are all of Satan.

But he is a man by birth.