

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

We return once again this morning to the study of the Word of God and we find ourselves in Revelation chapter 13 verses one through 10. I have entitled my discourse to you this morning “The Rise of the Beast” and as we read this text you will understand why.

Follow along as I read Revelation 13 verses one through 10.

And he stood on the sand of the seashore. And 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. 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. And 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; and 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?"

And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. And it was 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. And 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. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 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.¹

I wish to begin this morning by sharpening your perspective regarding the age in which we live so that you can better understand the things that I believe will soon come upon the earth. There is an old adage that says “nature abhors a vacuum.” And, indeed, we see that wherever there is a vacuum, immediately it is filled with something whether it be water or air or some other form of matter. Because of sin we know that mankind is at enmity with God, he is separated from his life, he languishes under the curse of all creation. And, therefore, our world—to some degree you might say—is experiencing a vacuum, a vacuum of righteous leadership that is essential to our survival.

We also know biblically that Satan is the temporary god of this world, and his diabolical rule of the kingdom of darkness provides for us a stark contrast of the glorious kingdom that will come when our Lord returns. And only a delusional fool would deny that our world is not getting better, but it is getting worse. Indeed, the metastasizing corruption of

¹ Revelation 13:1-10.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

sin is now eating away at the final organs of all of the world's systems. The world has a leadership vacuum and there are many who are trying to fill it.

And it is interesting that the steady deterioration of societies is a real dilemma for the liberal elite, especially in our colleges and universities. Those who remain committed to classic Darwinianism's evolutionary vision that would say that all human progress is ultimately going to trend upward. Well, the fact that that is not happening requires them to do something and that is to resort to social engineering and control, which, I might add as a footnote, is the ultimate motive for this healthcare reform that we see today.

And, of course, this requires the superior wisdom of the liberal elite who must control the populace, whom they consider to be rather ignorant rabble. Mankind is desperate today for a leader with answers, and, therefore, they are predisposed to worship anyone who would offer them some kind of change they can believe in.

Imagine, dear friends, how much worse it will be when the Church is removed, when there are no more Christians, when the Church has been translated into glory, when there is no more salt and light, no more salt to prevent further decay and corruption morally and no more light in the darkness, no more light of the truth of the gospel of Christ.

David Larsen said, and I quote, "Problems on earth seem insurmountable. No human leadership seems competent to address the complexity of the issues. A demographic explosion with moral, social, economic, ecological and political ramifications baffles the think tanks of the world. Human kind's vaunted self sufficiency evaporates in the face of insoluble questions. The Church, notwithstanding her frequent impotence and perennial failure is now gone and the salt and light she has afforded are missing. *Homo Sapiens* are adrift and rudderless," end quote. Dear friends, that is what it will be like when the Church is removed.

The world craves a leader, a political hero. One prominent Belgian diplomat and astute European strategist by the name of Paul Henry Spack put it this way, quote, "We do not want another committee. We have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man be he god or devil, we will receive him," end quote.

Paul Mazur, a prominent European economist banker, commented on this leadership vacuum and he made this prediction. Quote, "The large number of government bureaus that will have their orbits in the atmosphere of our planet cannot be allowed the freedom to compete and collide with one another. So in order to control the diverse bureaucracies required, a politburo will develop and over this group organization there is likely to arise the final and single arbiter, the master of the order, the total dictator," end quote.

It is interesting. We also see the constant turmoil of world religions and, of course, the cultural elite has an answer for this as well and that is to form a one world religion. After all, we need to all just learn to get along. So pluralism is accelerating and examples

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

abound here. I will give you one that I was reading about here recently. This is certainly the agenda of Tony Blair of England. He has the “Tony Blair Faith Foundation” and here is what Blair states. And I quote, “God’s Spirit moves through us and the world at a pace that can never be constricted by any one religious paradigm. Be very wary,” he warns, “of people who think theirs is the only way,” end quote.

Members of his board, by the way, include a Zen Buddhist, a Hindu from Minnesota, an Anglican, a rabbi and, of course, Rick Warren. Blair is also one of the featured speakers at the “2009 Leadership Summit” hosted by Bill Hybles at Willow Creek Church, the Church that kind of gave birth to the “seeker sensitive” movement about 30 years ago. They are also going to host the rock star Bono who, as you may recall, created the “coexist” sign. Have you seen those bumper stickers that say, “Coexist”? That was first displayed in his 2005 Vertigo Tour. I have seen it on the internet. It has this massive big screen and it says, “Coexist.” And the C is in the sign of the Islamic crescent and the X is a Jewish Star of David and the T is a Christian cross. And then others have added to that the O and the E and the I and the S. The O is now the broken inverted Cross in the peace sign and then the E is the gender symbols for the male and the female and the I is the Wicca pagan b’hai symbol. And in the S they have turned into the symbol that is used by Taoism and Confucianism which is “confusingism.” Also displayed on that sign at this massive concert is the favorite mantra of the Emergent Church, the new age church, and it reads, “Everything you know is wrong.” And then you can hear Bono leading the audience in the chant, quote, “Jesus, Jew, Mohammed, all true. Jesus, Jew, Mohammed, all true.” And on it goes.

These are men speaking at a Christian leadership conference? Beloved, discernment is rapidly leaving what is ostensibly the Christian Church. Satan is preparing the world for the antichrist and he will fill this leadership vacuum by sending his son, shall we say. Satan will send the antichrist who is the second member of the unholy trinity consisting of the dragon who is Satan and the “beast out of the sea” as we will read about today who is the antichrist, and “the beast out of the earth” who is the false prophet.

The antichrist will be a satanically possessed man that will deceive the world. And during the first half of the tribulation, through the help of his false prophets and myriads of demons, the antichrist will, indeed, establish a one world religion, as we will learn more as we go through the book of Revelation. The coexist sign will come to life, shall we say. The Lord calls this religion in Revelation 17, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”² And we even go on to read how that this unified religion that is to be tolerant of everyone will become drunk with the blood of the saints.

Midway through the tribulation he will turn against this very system and demand that the world worship him. And we literally see in the prophetic drama of the apocalypse the beast being pitted against the Lamb. The antichrist will be a self-deified politician who will be the seed of the serpent, who will be given power to rule over a 10 nation confederacy and ultimately the world. And this will all be an effort to eventually,

² Revelation 17:5.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

completely, once and for all eradicate the seed of the woman—remember that is Israel—and therefore destroy the Jew and, thus, thwart the purposes of God in establishing the messianic kingdom. Beloved, as Judas betrayed Christ, so, too, the antichrist will betray Israel.

So with that background we return to the Lord's revelation of the end of the age and his coming glory. I want you to remember that the sounding of the seventh trumpet back in chapter 11 really sets into motion the final judgments that God is going to pour out upon the world just prior to his return, and the actual details of these judgments are described beginning in chapter 15 through chapter 18, and that is when the chronological narrative of the tribulation will resume.

So in chapters 12 through 14—and, of course, we are in 13 here today—we have a parenthetical section that chronicles Satan's career and certainly that of the antichrist and the false prophet. And, actually, this whole section recapitulates the events of Revelation chapters six through 11.

So as we come to these 10 verses this morning we will examine six themes that I believe emerge from the text regarding the coming antichrist.

First of all, let's look at *his demonic origin*. Number one, verse one. "And he," referring to the dragon, "stood on the sand of the seashore."³ This is symbolic of the nations of the world over which he stands, and we read, "And I saw a beast,"⁴ a *therion* (thay-ree'-on) which refers to a ferocious and violent creature. And notice this beast is coming up out of the sea.

The metaphor of the sea is used in the Old Testament to describe the realm of wickedness, that sphere of Satan, the source, even, of satanic sea monsters. So the ancients considered the sea to be a symbol of the reservoir of evil. And it is likened to the biblical abyss. In fact, in Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 we see that the beast is literally coming up out of, it says, "the abyss," which is that prison that currently incarcerates the most vile demons and where Satan will eventually be incarcerated during the millennial reign. So John sees this man arising from this wretched penitentiary.

The diabolical and desecrating nature of this demon possessed man can be seen even more clearly when we look at the epithets that we find in Scripture. For example, in Daniel he is called "the little horn," "the insolent king," "the prince who is to come," "the one who makes desolate," "the despicable person," "the strong willed king." And in Zechariah he is described as "the worthless shepherd." And Paul describes him in 2 Thessalonians two and verse three as "the man of lawlessness" and "the son of destruction." And then in verse eight he is described as "the lawless one" and, of course, here in Revelation he is called "the beast."

³ Revelation 13:1.

⁴ Revelation 13:2.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

This man, beloved, will be a charismatic demagogue, brilliant, persuasive and yet deceptive and deadly.

Now, as a footnote here: Some have asked me about the nationality of the antichrist. We can't be dogmatic. But some believe that he will be a Jew, and they will argue based on the preposition "anti" in front of Christ which could mean "counterfeit." But nowhere in the context do we read that the purpose of the antichrist is to copy or reflect Christ. But, rather, he wishes to literally replace him and conquer him. In Revelation 19:19, in Daniel 11:36-39 we read that he is going to war against Israel. He is going to war against the Messiah Christ. And, certainly, that would not support the idea of him trying to counterfeit the Jewish Messiah.

Others would argue on the basis of Daniel 11 and verse 37 that he will be a Jew. There we read, "And he will not regard the God of his fathers."⁵ And the assumption here is that the God of his fathers is a reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, therefore, the father of the patriarchs, the Jews.

Personally I do not find that compelling because exegetically this can also be translated the "gods" (small g, plural) of his fathers. And we also know that the ancient pagans worshipped traditional deities that were passed down to them from their fathers, various gods that represented differing things. But the antichrist, we know, is going to be in a category all to himself, and that is what I believe we read here. His only God will be "a god of fortresses," verse 38.

Keep in mind, dear friends, that the focus of Daniel 11:36-39 is upon the self-deification of the antichrist and his blasphemies against the true God and his preoccupation will be to try to gain power. In Daniel 11 in verse seven, 10, 19, 31 and 39 we have mention of fortresses. This will be his obsession, to gain power. And in verse 38 we read, "He will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures."⁶ So, in other words, he will spend his treasure in order to gain this power, the god of fortresses.

I am convinced that the antichrist will be a Gentile. You will recall in Luke 21:24 Jesus referred to this time as "the time of the Gentiles" indicating that a Gentile will be in a position of ruling during this time. And I believe it is incongruent to have Satan empowering a Jew to be the final ruler of "the times of the Gentiles" when the Gentiles are going to be trampling down the Jews.

Remember also that the antichrist is going to lead a European alliance, a revived Roman Empire of Gentile nations. All of the rulers of these nations are described in Daniel two and Daniel seven. And it would make no sense to me to assume that the antichrist, whose kingdom bears the identity of the Roman Empire, would be anything other than a Gentile. Moreover, the description of Daniel chapter 11 parallels the character of other arch-enemies of Israel, all of which have been Gentiles: Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus

⁵ Paraphrase of Daniel 11:37.

⁶ Daniel 11:38.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

IV Epiphanes. You have Titus and Hadrian and many other Roman and Muslim and European rulers like Hitler, Stalin and so forth.

And I would also add: If you do believe that the antichrist will be Jewish—and certainly this is not a test of orthodoxy here—but you might want to be careful because this is supremely offensive to Jewish people. This fuels the flames of the ancient “blood libel,” allegations of human sacrifices upon the altar. In fact, this fuels the most virulent strain of anti-Semitism around the world that has motivated Christians down through history to persecute Jews and also it has motivated many Muslims.

It is hard to know where this originated, but we do know, for example, that one of the Church fathers, John Chrysostom, in the fourth century AD taught that the antichrist would be a Jew and he would come from the cursed tribe of Dan, he believed. And so many people began to believe in that day and down through time that Jews were nothing more than these inveterate murderers possessed by the devil. And, of course, you know how things grow. The “blood libel” begins to grow and before you know it you have got people groups that believe that the Jews sold themselves to Satan and that they are worse than apes—as many of the Muslims believe—and that some have grown horns and they are committed to enslaving all of the non Jewish world. So, again, if you hold that view, be very careful.

Now I want you to notice the likeness of the beast to the one who empowers him. And at the end of verse one he has “10 horns and seven heads.” It is interesting. We have almost an identical description of Satan in chapter 12 and verse three where we read the, “great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.”⁷ Now we know biblically that horns are emblematic of great strength and power. And in this symbolism we see that the beast will rule over 10 kings of 10 nations. In Daniel chapter seven verses 16 and following we discover that the number 10 is emblematic of the great political and military power of the antichrist. And, ultimately, according to Daniel seven verse 23 he will rule over the whole world.

And there he is pictured as, “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth.”⁸ This, dear friends, is a description that links him to the fourth kingdom of Daniel’s vision of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Do you remember that in Daniel two? And, of course, that kingdom is the kingdom of Rome. There we read that it will have “legs of iron, yet its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.” And then later on we read how that this will be the one where a stone will be cut without hands—a picture of Christ—and it will strike on its feet of iron and clay and crush it, verses 33 and 34.

So the Lord tells us through John’s vision that this beast has 10 horns, symbolic of this revived Roman Empire. And it also has “seven heads”. And this is representative of seven successive world empires (we read more of this in Revelation 17) that of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and Rome and then finally the kingdom of the antichrist.

⁷ Revelation 12:3.

⁸ Daniel 7:23.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

And notice on these 10 horns “were 10 diadems,” *diadema* in Greek. It is a reference to the kind of crown that marked the regal status of a subordinate king. So this is symbolic of the regal authority associated with the 10 rulers and their empires, all of which will be subordinate to the beast.

And, finally, we see that “on his heads were blasphemous names.” Of course, these names will demonstrate their allegiance to the beast whom they will deify rather than the one true God. This was also practiced in the days of the Roman Empire where emperors would use various divine titles and place them on various parts of their clothing and crowns. Well, obviously such an inscription is tantamount to blasphemy.

So we see *his demonic origin*. Next, let’s turn, secondly, to *his world empire*, verse two. “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.”⁹ Now, the imagery here is rooted in Daniel seven where Daniel portrays four beasts. One is a lion, one is a bear, one is a leopard and then the fourth beast which is a composite of the other three, is described in verse seven as “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong.” That will be the empire of the antichrist. Now here in Revelation it is interesting that John lists these animals in reverse because he is looking back into history whereas when Daniel described them he was looking forward into the future.

These three animals—the leopard, the bear and the lion—symbolize the ferocious, vicious power of these three successive world empires of Neo Babylonia, Medo Persia and Greece. But the fourth beast, representing the Roman Empire, is emblematic of the final empire of the antichrist that will incorporate all of the cruelty and all of the power of the first three.

Beloved, this will be an empire that is unparalleled in human history. Having watched our last presidential election it is easy to see how quickly people can abandon all logic and common sense and worship a man. And what we have witnessed in the United States is repeated over and over again in many other countries. It has been that way down through history. It is interesting that when people are afraid and they are desperate and they are unsure about the future, they quickly turn to some man that they think will give them the answers rather than turning to God.

Every dictator in history preys upon the fears of the people in order to help him rise to power. You will recall that Adolf Hitler seized upon the depressed economy and the fears of the German people. And he promised them “peace with honor, peace for our time.” And they bought it, and the rest is history. Well, dear friends, the rule of the antichrist will exceed all of the deceptions and wickedness of Hitler 1000 fold and for good reason.

Notice in verse two at the end. “And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.”¹⁰

⁹ Revelation 13:2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

Again, it is hard to imagine what this world will be like once the Church is removed. But think of the utter freefall of morality when the Holy Spirit steps aside as we know he will according to the prophecy we read in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 where the apostle Paul tells us, “he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”¹¹ In the Greek literally “steps aside,” which he will do at the midpoint of the tribulation. And this will allow Satan’s dictator to rule without restraint for 42 months, the last half of the tribulation.

Next, the Lord reveals to us the incredible deception that Satan will use through the antichrist to unite the world in worshipping him. This third theme is *his counterfeit death*. Notice verse three. “And 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.”¹²

Now, the personal pronoun “his” combined with verse 12 and 14 as well as chapter 17 verses eight and 11 helps us understand that this fatal wound does not refer to the destruction and subsequent healing of one of the nations, but it rather refers to the antichrist himself as a person. And this also explains why the world’s amazement will galvanize them together in this vast religious and political enterprise as they follow after the beast.

Now we are not told the specifics here of what happens, but we are told that he will supposedly die and come back to life, a counterfeit death and resurrection of Christ. Now we are familiar with what I like to call the world of religious world wrestling where people go in and watch some of these phony faith healers heal people. However, I would add that the smoke and mirrors of Benny Hinn, dear friends, will absolutely pale in comparison to the deceptions of the false prophet that will be introduced later on next week in verses 12 through 15. In fact, Paul describes this powerful trickery in 2 Thessalonians two beginning in verse nine. Here is what he says.

The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.¹³

And we know, according to 2 Timothy four and verse four that whenever a man “turns away his ears from the truth, he will turn aside unto myths.” And, by now, during the tribulation those who have heard the truth and rejected it will be literally overcome by the myth of worshipping the antichrist. They will experience the “deluding influence” that God will send upon them, again, as Paul said, “because they did not receive the love of the truth.” And at this point God will judicially seal them in the tomb of their unbelief.

¹¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

¹² Revelation 13:3.

¹³ 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

Well, this counterfeit death leads to, number four, *his global worship*. Verse four. “And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast.”¹⁴ Now keep in mind that by now the cataclysmic judgments of the seal and the trumpet judgments have killed billions. And the inhabitants of the earth will be living in utter terror. And yet we know according to the biblical record they will continue to blaspheme the God of glory, their only hope of salvation. It is inconceivable.

But an amazing shift begins to take place at this point in the tribulation. The world that embraced this whole ecumenical pluralistic great harlot church where all of the religions finally learn to “coexist,” will suddenly bow their knee to the antichrist. And Christianity and Christ will be public enemy number one as well as all of the Jews who will now begin to not only reject the antichrist, but will embrace the living Christ.

After seeing the death of the antichrist I am sure many will be amazed to see him come back to life and they will probably—since so many people believe in reincarnation—believe that that is what has happened here. And they are probably going to want the same. They are going to say, “My goodness, all of this death and destruction around us. Look what happened. He died. He can come back to life.” Undoubtedly that will be part of the lie that will get them to follow him, that he can offer them some measure of salvation. So by worshipping the antichrist they will unwittingly be worshippers of Satan, the one who empowers him. Isn’t it fascinating? Satan is so powerful that he can actually deceive people into worshipping him, the very one that will damn them. They will say in verse four, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”¹⁵ So they will see him as being an invincible God.

So we have seen *his demonic origin, his world empire, his counterfeit death and his global worship*. Fifthly, let’s look at *his arrogant blasphemies* in verse five. “And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.”¹⁶ I love this. Notice it says, “There was given to him...”¹⁷ Here the Lord reminds us that ultimately he is the sovereign God who has ordained these sufferings.

I can hear it now, people saying, “No, no, no, no. Not a God of love. He would never do that.” Beloved, you must understand that on the basis of Scripture we see that while our holy God is never the cause of sin and evil, we do see that he brings it about indirectly through the willing, voluntary actions of moral creatures that will be held accountable for their actions. This is clearly the testimony of the Word of God.

He himself said in Isaiah 45 verse seven, for example, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”¹⁸ We know that

¹⁴ Revelation 13:4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Revelation 13:5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Isaiah 45:7.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

he did this, according to Romans nine verses 18 through 24, in order to dramatically display his glory through his holiness and his wrath and his mercy and his grace, his love and his power.

I ask you, for example, did not God decree that Jesus would die upon the cross? The Bible makes it clear that he did so by his predetermined plan. And I ask you: *Is God more or less glorified because he ordained evil to enter the world?* Let me ask it differently. *Is God more or less glorified because he ordained Jesus to die on the cross?* Obviously had he not done that we would have never known the heights of his holiness and the depths of his grace.

So knowing that God is in charge, beloved, is a source of great comfort for all of us, but especially for these dear people that are coming to Christ during this time of unbelievable suffering. This will be great encouragement to them. For God to basically say, “Listen. I am in charge here. I am in charge here. I have given to him the freedom to do these things, but I am in charge. Remember the promised blessing in chapter one verse three? “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”¹⁹ Beloved, this is an example of that.

So God ordains this 42 month season of blasphemy against himself. And this will also include blasphemy against three things. Notice in verse six. “And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name.”²⁰ What is his name? Well, as we study the name of God we see that that is the consummate sum of all of his glorious attributes. He will also blaspheme “his tabernacle.” That is a reference to the transcendent glory of heaven from which Satan has now been expelled, and he will also blaspheme “those who dwell in heaven.” That is a reference to the saints, the Church that I believe by now has been snatched away into glory as well as all of the holy angels.

And then the Lord concludes this section with a description of the antichrist’s *murderous campaign*. And this would be the sixth and final theme. “And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.”²¹ Overcome them? Yes, overcome them, physically, not spiritually.

Beloved, keep in mind. All through Scripture we see that saints persevere in the faith. “Yes, but what about those who apostatize and who lose their salvation?” Oh, dear friends, be careful. Has not the Word said in Ephesians 4:30 that we have been sealed for the day of redemption? Philippians 1:6, “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”²² Romans eight we read that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:5 “we are protected by,” now catch this, “the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”²³

¹⁹ Revelation 1:3.

²⁰ Revelation 13:6.

²¹ Revelation 13:7.

²² Philippians 1:6.

²³ 1 Peter 1:5.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

Beloved, God secures and guarantees the final salvation of all true believers. And by his grace he will cause them to persevere.

Some will be quick to say, “Well, then why do some abandon the faith?” My answer is simple. Their faith was not real. John tells us in 1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.”²⁴

So here we see Satan’s murderous campaign is going to overpower many believers physically but not spiritually. And notice we read that God gave him, “authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.”²⁵ This was given to him. Isn’t that interesting? Verse eight. “And all who dwell on the earth,”²⁶ which is a phrase in Revelation that refers to unbelievers. “And 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.”²⁷

In the New Testament the phrase, “The foundation of the world,” is a synonym for “before time began” or “in eternity past.” And it is interesting that seven times in the New Testament we have a description of believers having their “names being written in this book of life” referring to a divine registry of those whom God has chosen in eternity past before the foundation of the world to reconcile unto himself by his uninfluenced choice, a registry written in eternity past. In Titus one verse one we read that we were “chosen of God” and in verse two, “in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”²⁸ Same thing, “before time began” in the Greek. Ephesians 1:4, “He chose us in Him [when?] before the foundation of the world.”²⁹

Oh, dear friends, here we are once again confronted with the depths of God’s grace, that he chose us in eternity past to one day voluntarily repent and place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the most humbling of all doctrines. It is yet another inscrutable mystery as are all Bible doctrines. There is no way you can possibly harmonize man’s responsibility with God’s sovereign purposes, but God does. And, you know, I am so thankful that he chose me, for had he not chosen me, I would have never chosen him.

But please be clear. As we study the Word of God we see that while God saves his elect by the uninfluenced purposes of his grace, the non-elect perish in their sins not because God did not elect them, but because they rejected the gospel of grace. 1 Peter 4:17. “Judgment,” it says, “will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God.”

So here the Lord reminds all of us—and certainly the dear people of this day—of their security. These people who will be victims of the antichrist, of the beast that will try to

²⁴ 1 John 2:19.

²⁵ Revelation 13:7.

²⁶ Revelation 13:8.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Titus 1:2.

²⁹ Ephesians 1:4.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

tear them apart. He reminds them that they have a security that is guaranteed not only because of sovereign election that their names were written in this divine registry in eternity past, but also notice because of “the blood of the lamb who was slain.”

Now I ask you. Were we not purchased by the blood of the Lamb? Was he not the propitiation for our sins? Did he not fully satisfy the wrath of God as our substitute? Of course he did. Were we not forgiven by the riches of his grace? And does not his blood confirm his promise to give eternal life to all who believe? Is not the blood the great seal of his covenant? Of course it is.

Beloved, there is nothing deficient in the blood of Christ. There is nothing deficient in his atoning work. The same blood that saved us will keep us. And if you ever doubt that, I would encourage you to once again look to the cross and see the bleeding Savior and never doubt again.

After assuring the saints of their security because of their election and the sanctifying work of the blood of the Lamb who has been slain, he makes a plea for spiritual understanding. Verse nine. He says, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”³⁰

I want to pause for a second. This is so important. It is technical, but it is so important. It is fascinating. This phrase, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear,”³¹ is used seven times in chapters two and three. But wherever it is used, at the end of that phrase there is an additional phrase. It says, “to what the Spirit says to the churches.” Hmm. That’s interesting. And yet it is omitted here. Seven times it says, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches,” chapters two and three. So why is it omitted here? Because, beloved, I believe that by now the Church has been snatched away in the rapture. In Revelation two and three we see the Church on earth. In Chapter four and on it is never mentioned again except in heaven.

So he says, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”³² And then he gives them a proverb. And this is really addressed specifically to the saints that will be alive during this time of just unprecedented suffering and persecution. Verse 10 he says, “If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed.”³³

What he is saying here is both a warning for them to submit without retaliation to the impending persecution at the hands of the antichrist, but it is also a message of hope. He is reminding them, again, that, “I am the one that has ordained this. I am the one who is in charge. My grace will prevail. My grace is sufficient.”

And I can almost hear him say what Paul tells us in Titus three and verse seven, having been, “justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal

³⁰ Revelation 13:9.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Revelation 13:10.

The Rise of the Beast

Revelation 13:1-10

life.”³⁴ And, thus, he concludes in verse 10. “Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.”³⁵

I leave you with this thought.

Ordained to suffer for a while,
By grace we will endure.
The flames of each and every trial,
Doth make our faith more pure.

By grace alone he gave us life,
Indwelt he conquers fear.
Redeemed to live above the strife,
By grace we persevere.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May they resonate within our heart so that we are so captivated by your grace that we never doubt that you will leave us or forsake us, that we never doubt that somehow even in the midst of profound suffering we would ever abandon the one who has united us to himself.

Lord, thank you for your grace. Thank you for the truths of your Word. And cause these words to conform us to the image of Christ I ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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³⁴ Titus 3:7.

³⁵ Revelation 13:10.