The Empire Strikes Back — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 13:1–10 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 13, 2022 · *Kingdoms in Conflict*

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All right, well good singing out there this morning. Thanks to the team, the band, for leading us in worship this morning. They did a tremendous job in both of our services. And for those of you who didn't notice, last couple of weeks we've had some guest worship leaders. Josh Winlick led two weeks ago and Crystal led last week. And it's just a reminder, for those of you who don't know other churches besides Broadview, we are very, very blessed to have such a deep stall of talented musicians and vocalists and worship leaders.

And so special thanks to Crystal and Josh and then it's great of course to have Taylor back. And the band leading us in worship. If you have your Bible you can open to Revelation chapter 13. You know as a church we've been going through the book of the Revelation, line by line, verse by verse. That's how we do it around here. And we are getting to the tall weeds, fellas. We're getting to that point in the book of the Revelation where YouTube careers are made, talking Antichrist, mark of the beast, I mean tall, tall weeds.

And it is so easy and even tempting for me to get lost in those weeds and ultimately I think bring a message that is more unhelpful than it is helpful. Maybe it's informative. But my goal is not just to inform your mind, but to actually help you live the Christian life and overcome the things that you're facing in your day-to-day living. And so know that's my heart, even if we get a little bit lost in the weeds, because today we're dealing with a section of Revelation that is highly symbolic. It is highly controversial, there's a lot of debate around it.

And you just got to know that going in. Did anybody play football growing up? Or any guys, I guess. Some girls do. I had a girl play on my football team in high school. Kendra. She was a mean lady. Nobody wanted to mess with Kendra. Kendra, if you're watching, that was awesome. But every Friday we would play a football game and on Saturday the coaches

would make us go up to the field house and watch film. Anybody else have that? You have to watch film? And we'd always watch two films.

Well the one film we would watch was the opposition team that we were going to play the following Sunday, or the following Friday, I'm sorry. And then to kind of learn their moves, their strategies, how they go about doing things. And then the second film we would watch was our own game from last night or the night prior. And the coach would always say, Wes, the film don't lie. Because I'd say, Coach, I was doing it right, I was doing the X, Y, Z, I swear. And he'd say the film won't lie.

And sure enough, you watch the film, film don't lie. You know, you get chewed out for being a terrible football player, or at least I did, at least one time. And I've kind of thought about these last two weeks is watching film. Because we are looking at this kingdom conflict, these two kingdoms that are diametrically opposed to one another, the kingdom of God's kingdom, the kingdom of light. And Satan and his demons in the kingdom of darkness. And in some ways, it's not quite accurate to say that God fights against Satan.

Satan is a created being, he's an angel, God is God, he's eternal. It'd kind of be like a boxing match between Muhammad Ali and Mr. Rogers. I mean, it's no contest. It would just be an immediate win. But that does not negate the fact that Satan and this horde of those who follow after him are dead set on opposing God, his redemptive plans, and his people, and that conflict plays out in our day-to-day lives. Like we're in the middle of that conflict. And there are some things that happen in your world, some things that happen in your life, some things that happen in our world that are just really very difficult to explain outside of some kind of spiritual, supernatural explanation, certain types of evil, certain types of suffering.

Biological natural means don't explain some of the depths of depravity. That our world goes to. And it's just a reminder that there really is a devil. There really is a spiritual warfare going on around us. And I think that the last couple of weeks and hopefully today would be a watching of the game film so that we can number one expose the strategies of our enemy and two embrace a winning strategy for ourselves. Okay, we're going to watch the opposition, how they play, the plays they run. Expose those things and then embrace a winning strategy for ourselves.

Things we need to do differently, things that maybe we need to change, patterns of thinking that maybe we need to abandon or adopt. If you're new to the book of Revelation, if you're new to the Bible in general, you picked a big one to jump in on today. But Revelation chapter 13 comes after Revelation 12, obviously, and Revelation 12 and 13 really go together. They form like a block, and it's really a break in the action of the rest of the book of the Revelation, which is advancing this story about the end of days, you know, how everything kind of ends.

And really in Revelation 12, John presses the pause button. He says, come up behind the scenes and let me show you why some of the things are happening the way that they're happening on the earth. And gives us that overarching view of good and evil. When we got to chapter twelve, we are introduced to these different characters, this woman, this dragon, this child, the dragon trying to eat the child, and we don't have time to go back all into that. But essentially it was a picture of Satan's attempt to overthrow God and his redemptive plans through Jesus Christ.

And last week we left off, Jesus triumphed over Satan through his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. And Satan was cast out of heaven, he's been thrown to the earth, he knows his time is short, and so he is doing as much damage as he possibly can before his time is up, and Jesus comes back. What we're going to be introduced to today is how Satan goes about doing that damage. And we're going to be introduced, if you're taking notes, to what I'm going to call an unholy trinity.

Our trinity, the Christian Trinity, is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The unholy trinity is the dragon, the beast. And the second beast, or the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, or to give technical terms, Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet. And the Antichrist and the false prophet are played out in Revelation 13. So like I said, the most controversial like YouTube career stuff is in chapter 13, talking about Mark of the beast, the Antichrist, the end times empire. I titled the message the Empire Strikes Back because I really sense that this is Satan's MO.

This is how he knows his time is short. He's trying to do as much damage as he can in your life and in our world. How is he going to do it? He's going to do it through two means, through this Antichrist. Political figure and a political mechanism to crush the church and God's people. And then he's going to use a religious means through the false prophet, false religion. To deceive the world. And we'll look at the first this week and look at the second next week. So if you love this week, you'll really love next week.

If you hate this week, come back in two weeks. Alright. Revelation chapter twelve, verse eighteen says, the dragon stood on the sand of the sea, and then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, and it had ten horns and seven heads. And on its horns were ten crowns, and on its heads were blasphemous names. The beast I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave the beast his power, his throne, and great authority. And one of its heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but its fatal wound was healed.

The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. They worshipped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast. And then they worshipped the beast, saying, who is like the beast? Who is able to wage war against it? The beast was given a mouth to utter boast and blasphemies. It was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months, or three and a half

years. It began to speak blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his dwelling, those who dwell in heaven. And it was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them.

And it was also given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. So like I said, right away you sense the apocalyptic nature of the passage, right? You got this beast, well you got a dragon standing on the side of the seashore, and almost like he's showing off, he's bringing up this beast out of the sea the beast looks like the dragon in a lot of ways. He's got the ten heads— I'm sorry, the seven heads and the ten horns. He's a red beast, we learn from chapter seventeen. He looks like the dragon a lot of ways, but he's different from the dragon because he represents something else.

And this beast is referred to as being worshipped by the rest of the world as dominating the world, trying to destroy God's people, the saints. And having the rest of the world bow down and worship him. So it's so easy to read all of that and go, what in the world's going on and get all caught up in it. Is there literally going to be like a leopard coming out of the ocean. And no, that's not the case. This is apocalyptic literature, remember, so he's using symbols and metaphors and picturesque language to communicate true things, things that we would not necessarily be surprised by.

We would understand them, but he's using this very picturesque language to describe it. So we need to define the symbols. Anytime you read apocalyptic literature, you've got to define the symbols. And in this case, thankfully, the symbols are defined for us, either later on in the book of Revelation, prior in the book of Revelation, or elsewhere in the Scripture. And I want to give you, if you're taking notes, the three main symbols we need to define are the beast, the sea, and the seven heads. And there's some relationship between the three of them, but they're all defined for us elsewhere in the Bible or later in the book of the Revelation.

When it comes to the beast, the beast is actually defined for us because John is pulling his language about this beast from an Old Testament book or an Old Testament prophecy in the book of Daniel. In fact if you want to take your Bible and turn to the book of Daniel, it's a really helpful parallel with the book of Revelation, in particular Daniel chapter 7 and Daniel chapter 2, when John says that this beast was like a leopard, but it had a bear's feet and a lion's mouth, all that's from Daniel 7.

And if you go to Daniel 7, Daniel actually equates the beasts or his beast with nations and empires. He says in Daniel chapter 7, verse 23, the fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, different from the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth, trample it down, crush it. He's talking about a political force, a nation state. Just taking names, crushing people, owning land, kind of like Putin right now is trying to get all up into

Ukraine. That's this beast, like Russia would be a beast going after Ukraine trying to trample it and own it.

So when you think beast, think nation, think empire. That's why I titled the message the Empire Strikes Back. It's interesting in Daniel's prophecy and later on the book of Revelation that the nation and the political leader leading the nation are often conflated. Kings and kingdoms, they go together. So beast equals nation or empire. The sea is a symbol that, if you're taking notes, refers to evil. Or Gentile peoples and nations. You say are you saying every Gentile's evil? Well, yes, in some ways we're all sinners, but no, not necessarily. He's using a kind of a double entendre.

He's using a picture, a metaphor that communicates both truths. It is both evil and it refers to a group of people, maybe Gentiles, like non-Jewish peoples. You know it represents evil because every other time the beast comes up out of somewhere, it comes up out of the abyss. Chapter 11, the beast comes up out of the abyss. Chapter 17, the beast comes up out of the abyss. The abyss is a symbol for evil. It's a symbol for hell, a symbol for where all bad things come from. But he says, doesn't say abyss in chapter 13, he says sea.

And he says sea to communicate it's not just people in general, or not just evil in general, it's an evil group of people, or an evil class of people, or an evil nation, and maybe in particular a very evil person. Now why do I say that? Go to Revelation seventeen. Revelation seventeen actually defines what the sea is. Chapter seventeen, verse fifteen, the angel says to John, the waters that you saw where the beast comes up out of are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. So it's evil and peoples specifically, Gentile peoples, that comes from Isaiah chapter 60, where it talks about Gentile peoples being the sea.

The sea that was represented in Isaiah's prophecy referred to the Gentile nations. So if you put all those things together, you have this powerful kingdom, probably not Jewish, probably from the surrounding areas that surround Jerusalem, coming to power. Now what about the seven heads? Well again, thankfully this is defined for us later on in the book of Revelation. If you go again to chapter 17, verse 3. This angel defines what the seven heads are. He says in verse 3, John was carried away in the spirit to the wilderness. He saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast.

That's our beast from chapter 13. It was full of blasphemous names, just like 13's beast. It had seven heads, just like chapter 13. It had ten horns, just like chapter 13. So John essentially says, well, who is this beast? And then the angel defines it in chapter 17, verse 7. He says, why are you marveling? I'm going to tell you the mystery. Of the woman, we'll get to her later, and of the beast with the seven heads, and the ten horns that carries her. Okay, angel, who is it? And that's he says in the end of verse nine, the seven heads are seven mountains.

From the beast to the mountains. That's not real helpful, right? Now the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated, and they also are seven kings. Five of the kings have fallen. One king is right now. The other king has not yet come. And when he comes, he must remain for only a little while. So what does the mountain represent? It's like you're switching metaphors here. Well, that's an easy answer. Actually, throughout the Old Testament, mountains mean kingdoms. Kings and kingdoms and mountains are the same. Mount Zion is the kingdom of God.

In fact, the whole book of Obadiah is a whole prophecy about two mountains fighting each other. Mount Esau, that's Edom, and Mount Zion.[1] So it's talking about the kingdom of Edom. It's talking about the Edomites fighting against the Jews. There's kings and kingdoms. So the beast refers to a nation or an empire. The sea refers to evil or an evil group of people. And these seven heads refer to seven different kings and or kingdoms. And John actually says five of these kingdoms have already passed. One is right now, so that's probably talking about the Roman, the kingdom of Rome, because John is writing during Caesar's rule.

And then he said, and one hasn't happened yet. And I think that's this fatally wounded head that probably comes back to life. In chapter 13. Alright, so those are the symbols. Has everybody got that down? Too crazy? Y'all tracking with me now? So if you put all that together, what John is revealing when it comes to Satan's crushing of God's people during the end of days, his primary method, not his only method. But his primary method of persecuting God's people will be through a final evil end-times empire. Some kind of government, some kind of state authority that is big, it is bad, it is anti-Semitic, it is anti-Christian, and it will do everything in its power to crush God's people.

Some would say it's going to be a Gentile nation, so it's going to be something that's not Jewish. Others would say that goes too far. When you talk about the ten horns, because the beast had seven heads but ten horns. And on the ten horns were ten crowns. Some people go so far as to say those are ten different nations. So it's going to be like a coalition of nations. Kind of like we have the European Union, but it wouldn't be the European Union. It would be like a evil end times union of nations that persecute the Jews and the people of God.

That goes too far in my view. The text doesn't actually say that, but it does have these ten horns.[2] And later in Daniel's prophecy, these horns are uprooted by a little horn, the Antichrist. So there is a sense in which they are rulers and authorities. The horns in the Bible mean rulers and authority, or power and dominion. So it's some kind of authoritative figure that these ten horns represent and this beast kind of combines all of that for this big empire. It really is. If you can think Star Wars, okay.

The empire is bigger than any one person. It's like a lot of little persons, but at the head of all those little evil empires is what's the guy's name, the Dark Lord. He was in the Senate.

Palpatine. Okay, Palpatine's behind it all. He's kind of running the whole thing. But you've got Darth Vader and you've got the other generals and other high-ups. Those would be like the little horns. Palpatine would be like either the dragon or the beast. And this is the Empire Striking Back. Okay, Star Wars reference in church.

There you go. That's who it is. Now, am I going to say who's the Antichrist? Is it X, Y, Z person? No, the Bible doesn't say. It's hard for us to say, but we can know what the Antichrist will do. Which is the thing you need to see in your notes if you're taking notes. It's not only that this evil kingdom is going to rise up and crush God's people in the end of days. And it's not as if this hasn't happened before. We've seen this happen in Hitler's Germany. We see it happening right now with communist China crushing Christians.

It's not like this is an un— it's not surprising, right? It's just that at the end, John is saying it's going to be way worse than it's ever been before. But it's not just an empire rising to power, it's actually a figure who leads that empire. Every kingdom has to have a king. And so that king is going to be what the Bible calls the Antichrist, a satanically inspired Antichrist. So with all of that together, that's what the symbols are, that's what the symbols mean. That's kind of the general gist that Satan's primary method of crushing God's people in the end will be through a state actor led by a politician known as the Antichrist, he will be demonically inspired, satanically possessed, and he will try to destroy the church, and he will try to dominate the world, which is what we'll get to next.

So knowing who this person is, what is he going to try to do? The Antichrist and his evil empire are going to desire to dominate the whole world. Now, why do I say they're going to dominate the whole world? It's all because of the way John describes this beast in chapter 13, verse 2. You notice that he combines these three different animals. He says the beast is like a leopard, but he's also got the feet of a bear, and he's got the mouth of a lion. Why is John using those animals?

Is he just coming up with this off the top of his head? No, he's not. He's pulling it from another Old Testament book, the book of Daniel, and he's saying, this final end times empire is everything Daniel was talking about. So what was Daniel talking about? Well you got to go back to Daniel chapter 7 and read about it. But in Daniel chapter 7, he has these visions of these three four different beasts. The first beast is a lion, has wings like an eagle. The second beast is like a bear.

The third beast is like a leopard. Just like John said. John said it was like a leopard. It's reverse order. It's a combination in reverse order. A leopard who had feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. So what does Daniel's beast refer to? Well again everybody disagrees on this, but most the general consensus is that those three beasts refer to three historical empires. The first beast is a reference to Babylon. Who is headed up by Nebuchadnezzar,

who Daniel is under Nebuchadnezzar's authority when he interprets this dream. In fact, if you go to Daniel two, he has a dream.

I think I have the sheet up here. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a statue with a golden head and silver arms and chest and bronze belly and thighs, those three things refer to the same three beasts in Daniel 7. And Daniel defines it to Nebuchadnezzar. He says, you're the head. Okay, so you're the lion. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, you're the lion. The people who were going to come after you. Are going to be the chest. Okay, so they're the bear. That's the Medo-Persian empire who overtook Babylon and persecuted God's people after the fact.

And then Nebuchadnezzar after you, there's going to be another gentleman by the name of Alexander the Great. Sorry, that was French, not Greek. Alexander the Great is going to come up. He's going to overtake the known world. Do you guys watch that movie? It's on Netflix, the movie about Alexander the great, how he just basically conquered everything? The dude was a force of nature. He took everything Babylon conquered, he took everything Medo-Persia conquered, and then he did that plus some. That was the Greco, which would soon become Greco-Roman world, but he paved the way.

And so the third beast is the Greco-Roman empire, um, the Grecian Empire, led by Alexander the great. That's the leopard with the four heads and the four wings. I'm not going to get into all the symbolism there. So John is saying this end times beast is going to be like that. It's going to be like Babylon but stronger. It's going to be like the Medo-Persian empire, but worse. It's going to be like Greece. It's going to be rapidly expanding and take over the whole world, but even faster and more effective than Alexander the great did.

That's what John's describing. He had a leopard like a leopard, feet like a bear. Mouth like a lion, and he's going to try and dominate the world. That's what all of these empires try to do. That's what this future empire is going to try to do. It's going to try to dominate the world. John then describes, or I'm sorry, Daniel, if you go back to Daniel 7, he doesn't just describe these three beasts, he goes on to describe a fourth beast. And that's really what John's pulling from. He's trying to describe Daniel's fourth beast.

Look at Daniel chapter 7, verse 7. Daniel says, after this, while I was watching in the night visions, suddenly a fourth beast appeared. It was frightening and dreadful, incredibly strong, with large iron teeth, just like the iron legs of the statue. Talking about a nation, again, this nation devoured and crushed, and it trampled with its feet whatever was left. It was different from all the beasts before it, and it had ten horns, just like Revelation 13. While I was considering the horns, probably rulers and authorities in this evil empire, suddenly another horn, so another ruler or authority, a little one, came up among them.

And three of the first horns were uprooted before it. So it's like you've got ten little rulers and authorities. Three of them are taken out by a little horn who comes up. So now you've got

what seven plus the one that's eight. Eight horns now. And suddenly in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a human and a mouth that was speaking arrogantly. Almost everybody agrees that's the Antichrist. They disagree on what the Antichrist means, but they say this is this Antichrist who's coming to power, who's going to lead or unite this end times empire to crush the people of God.

That's what John is describing in Revelation chapter 13. He is talking about a beast, a nation, some kind of state actor who is going to seek to dominate the world. Later on, it describes that the whole earth bows down to the beast. This is why some people think that this Antichrist is going to be a one-world government, one world leader. I don't know that I buy that. I don't think that has to be the case. I think he could be some kind of religious figure. Or religious political figure kind of combining religion and politics together.

And so he has tentacles in every nation of the world, even though he's not the president of every country in the world, he has authority over every tribe, tongue and nation. So he's going to try to dominate the world. The second thing he's going to try to do, and we'll do this quickly and then we'll get to the practical application. He's going to try to dominate the world, and then secondly, he's going to try to deceive the world and destroy the saints. When this beast comes to power it says one of his heads are fatally wounded, and then it gets healed.

So if it's like a nation state. Or maybe some kind of political philosophy. It's like the political or nation-state falls out of power and then it comes back into power. Or if it's talking about a person in general, he gets a fatal head wound and then he resurrects himself. He comes back to power. Once that happens, he gets all this extra authority and power. It says in verse seven, it was permitted, this beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them. And it was also given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation.

So again, some people think that means a one-world government, but I don't think that's necessarily the case. The whole earth is worshiping this beast. Does that mean they're bowing down and worshiping like we do on Sunday morning? We sing songs to the beast who is like the beast? That's kind of what it sounds like. But the word worship literally just means to bow down to. So it could be as simple as some state actor coming to power, some politician comes to power. He owns this big evil empire that's trying to crush the saints.

And if you don't toe the line, if you don't kiss the ring, if you don't do what he says to do then he's going to crush you. And so everybody just kind of toes the line, says what they got to say, does what they got to do. I don't want to be on the outskirts. I don't want to be one of those people. I don't want to identify with that group. I'll do whatever you say to do. And so the whole earth is bowing down to this Antichrist. All those who live on the earth.

Look at verse 8. All those who live on the earth will worship it. Everyone whose name was not written from the foundation of the world. In the book of life of the Lamb who was slaughtered. So you've got two groups. Those who live on the earth, they're worshiping or they're bowing down to the Antichrist. Then you have the Christians, the saints, who refuse to bow down and who are crushed and destroyed as a result. So he's going to dominate the world, he's going to deceive the world, and he's going to try to destroy the saints.

Does this head wound mean that he's going to be literally killed by someone and come back to life? A lot of people believe that. I don't know that's necessarily the case though. It could be that. I think it could be a nation or a movement that looked like it was dead, they come back alive. All right, think of like right now the Islamic world. There's a lot of Muslims, Islamic people, who are craving for the day when a caliphate will come back to power and unite the Muslim world so that they can overtake everything.

Something I'm not saying it is that, but something like that is similar to what I think will be happening here very well could be the Islamic world. But a politician, a figure rises to power, he unites this thing, it comes back to life. It looked like it was dead. Now it's back to life, and the whole world has to bow down. And toe the line, kiss the ring. So if that's the case, how should God's people respond? Well look at what he says in verses 9 and 10. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.

If anybody is to be taken captive into captivity he goes. And if anyone is to be killed with a sword, with a sword he will be killed. This calls for endurance and faithfulness from the saints. So I want to close out our time with four points of application that I think you can do today because we already feel some of this spirit of the age today. There's no big evil empire yet that's over us. Okay, but there are state actors like communist China and the Islamic world that hates Christians, hates Jews.

And would love to do some of the things that this kind of person does in Revelation 13. So if that's a potential thing that's coming down the pipe and there's already cultural forces that put the pressure on Christians to bend the knee and compromise and do these things, how should we respond today? And then how do you in your own life overcome the suffering and the hardships and the obstacles? That your enemy, your opposition is trying to bring against you so that you fail or you're joyless in the Christian life instead of joyfully obedient to what God's called you to do.

Okay, four things. The acrostic is TEST, T-E-S-T. Trust in the sovereignty of God, even when it feels like you're losing. Encourage other believers until the very end. Stand and speak the truth no matter what it costs, and tell yourself it's temporary because it really is. Okay, so T, trust the sovereignty of God. Even when you don't feel like it, even in the valley low, even when it looks like Satan's won, even when it looks like all hope is lost. Trust that God is in control. He has a plan. He has you in his hand, and it's going to be okay.

It is so tempting when everything's going well in your life. It is so tempting to say, God is good, God is great. I trust God's sovereign plan because His sovereign plan is making my life awesome. But are you that willing to trust in the sovereignty of God when his plan is not good and he has crushed you and he has brought suffering into your life? Are you still willing to follow him? That's the test. That's how he passed the test. I trust he's good, even though he's taken away. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away.

In either case, blessed be the name of the Lord. When as Americans we love our rights, we love our freedoms and I'm you know I'm right there with you. But there may come a day where we're on the earth and those things are stripped away from us. Will you still trust the Lord then? Will you still be faithful? Will you still do as he's called you to do? Secondly, encourage other believers until the very end. There's a passage in the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, which basically says, the closer we get to the end times, the closer we get to that day.

The more necessary it is to gather together to love one another. He says, let us consider one another, how we might stir one another up or provoke one another to love and to good deeds. Not neglecting to gather together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near. Do I have that passage up there, Jace? It's like I think it's Hebrews chapter ten, verses twenty-four and twenty-five.[3] There is a tendency for God's people when the going gets tough for God's people to get going.

And the opposite should be true. The harder it gets, the more difficult it is to honor the Lord, the more we gather together and encourage one another. S. Stand for and speak the truth no matter what it costs. You know, it's not all the way there today, but there's even today in our culture a splitting of Christians. There are those Christians that the culture loves. They accommodate the culture on questions of sexuality and gender or abortion or the hot topic issues. They say, I know this is what the Bible says, but the Bible was written a long time ago and it's irrelevant.

We just need to love people. Culture loves those kind of Christians because it will take the culture's line on X, Y, or Z controversy. And the culture is already isolating and despising and maligning those Christians who hold fast to God's word. When we're committed to what God says about gender and marriage and sexuality and on and on we could go through the list. When we deviate from the culture's design and we say, no, this is God's design, his design is good, I'm going to hold fast to his design, we are going to feel pressure.

Our church will feel pressure. The question is, will we stand? Will we say, I don't care if it costs me, I don't care what it costs me, I'm going to stand for the truth and I'm going to speak the truth no matter what. Be wary of a spirit that causes you to compromise. To say what people want you to say. So you'll be liked and accepted. Not saying you should be a jerk

about the truth. Just don't compromise because of the pressure. And then finally tell yourself it's temporary because it really is.

Remember, Satan's rage is because he knows his time is short. Over and over again it uses this time designation, 42 months. Three and a half years, time times and half a time. So it's a short duration, this incredible pressure that Christians will experience. Now some will say it's a literal three and one half years. I tend to be in that camp that the Antichrist will rule for three and one half years, it will be incredibly bad, and then Jesus will come and cut it short. And end the madness. But it could also just be a reference to what we're living in right now.

Like we're living in a day that is temporary it's bad, it's hard, it's going to become increasingly more difficult, but it's temporary. Meaning Satan will not rage forever, he will not win forever, his kingdom will not ultimately triumph. He is on a clock, his days are numbered, and when those days are over, the kingdom of God will triumph. And remind yourself of that truth. In your valley low. Tell yourself this is temporary. This too shall pass. God's kingdom will come and I will be faithful to the end. Because even if they do the worst, even if they take my life, they can't even ultimately do that.

Because it is the Lord's to give and take away, and he has already promised me that it is mine forevermore in the Lord Jesus Christ. So how I want us to respond as Taylor leads us through this time is if you are a believing person, you consider yourself a Christian, I want you to take those four things and to maybe evaluate your life in light of them and ask the Lord, is there anywhere I'm being disobedient, anywhere I'm being weak in these areas? Pray that the Lord will give you courage and faith to move into these days with courage and conviction.

If you're also a believer and you're a member of our church, I want to ask you to pray for some of our young people. We had our Disciple Now weekend this last Friday. They were all there in the 9:30 service. They're not all here today. But if you would come down to the front or maybe on the front row or something. As a symbolic, visible way of saying they are feeling the pressure, maybe more than I am. Because it is hard to be a teenager and honor God in this culture.

Very difficult. If you see some young people in our service and you know them by name, pray for them by name, pray for their parents. But let's use this time to pray into what God's calling us to do as a church family. And then finally, if you're here and you're not a Christian, so much of what I've said you may hear as self-help, you know, do better, try harder, get yourself in shape. And that's really not what I'm saying. All of these things we will fail in. We will compromise on the truth.

We will not encourage other believers. We will check out of the church. We will be gone for years, you know, because we're sinners. And we're sinners in need of a savior. And praise

God that He has given us the Lord Jesus Christ who trusted the plan of God, who encouraged other believers, who stood for the truth and spoke it even though it cost him his life. And who, through his death on the cross and resurrection, gives to you and me righteousness that we cannot earn for ourselves. So if you're here and you're not a Christian, do not hear me say, get ready for the end by trying harder and doing better.

The way you get ready for the end is by repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. And if you haven't done that today is a day of salvation. Today is a day when you can respond to the Lord and say, I know I can't save myself. Only Jesus can save me. And so, Jesus, would you save me from my sin? So that I can trust in God and stand for the truth and do these things you've called me to do. We're going to have a time of response.

The altar's open if you want to pray. If you're watching online, you can go to the website broadview.life/next and respond spiritually to anything the Lord's calling you to do. But let's respond to the Lord. Father, we thank you for this time as we enter into this invitation. I pray you would give us wisdom to know what it is you're calling us to do specifically as individuals. Each of us have different things going on, different temptations, different areas in which we're prone to compromise. And so would you strengthen our resolve, strengthen us by your grace as we respond now in this hour?

And for those who are willing to pray for our students, would you use this as a way of visibly demonstrating to the young people in the room. That they are not alone. They're part of a church family that understands the challenges that they're facing and has committed to walk with them through that. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you're willing to pray for the young people in our church family, if this row is pretty open, you can just come to this front row, pray as a group.

If you want to pray as a group. But just get up, go over there, and pray together. And then if you need to pray anywhere else or pray requests you have, I'll be down at the front to receive you. Let's respond to the Lord. Right here where Jace is, if you want to step in and pray with him, he'll he'll kind of lead the way. If you're a mom or a dad, you can pray for your spouse or your grandma and grandpa pray for your kiddos, your grandkids. Maybe you know a friend or a loved one struggling right now, you can use this time to pray for them.

You can also, if you would like if you're a member of our church to pray for our church family, our staff, our pastors, our deacons. The day is not today, but the day may come when leading a church in faithfulness to the Lord may cost us. And that we would have the spiritual resolve to be obedient to the Lord. That God would be faithful to provide as we walk in faithfulness to Him. Lord Jesus, we thank you for this time and your word. We thank you for the local church. It's so much more than just a Sunday morning gathering where we come together and listen to a sermon and sing some songs.

It really is a time where you make us into the people you've called us to be. You form us into this unstoppable force that can take the good news of the gospel and advance it to every tribe, tongue, and nation. And today we've been reminded that there will be opposition, there will be difficulties and hardships because we have an enemy who is everywhere that we are. Everywhere that Jesus is, there is Satan who follows. So help us to be a people who are not ignorant of his schemes, who don't shrink back from his roar as a lion, his intimidating way of going about things, but that we would be people who stand fast, stand strong, who walk in faithfulness to what you've called us to do, and we would do it effectively, full of grace, full of love.

We would carry the spirit of Jesus and the way that we talk and the way that we interact, the way that we share the gospel. That when people interact with us, they wouldn't see mean, judgmental, obstinate people, but people who are willing to spend their lives in love for God and love for other people, no matter what it costs. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. And God's people said . . .

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Mount Moab and Mount Zion … the Moabites fighting against the Jews" (Wes then said "or Mount Edom. I can't remember"); Obadiah's prophecy is against Edom, "the hill country of Esau," which will be ruled from Mount Zion, not against Moab. Source: Obadiah 8–9, 21 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "these ten heads" (twice); the beast in Revelation 13:1 has ten horns and seven heads, with the ten crowns on its horns. Source: Revelation 13:1 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "Hebrews chapter ten, verse twenty-three"; the verses Wes quoted ("let us consider one another … not neglecting to gather together … as you see the day approaching") are Hebrews 10:24–25. Source: Hebrews 10:24–25 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩