

REVELATION

Sermon Points

Title: The Combatants Are Revealed

Date: 7.10.22 • Scripture: Revelation 4-7

- **Main Point:** In his life death and resurrection Christ crushed the head of the dragon, ensuring his final victory with the saints when he returns.

Purpose: In the main, the purpose of the book of Revelation is to comfort the militant Church in its struggle against the forces of evil. It is full of help and comfort for persecuted and suffering Christians.

Theme: The theme is the victory of Christ and of His Church over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers. The Apocalypse is meant to show us that things are not what they seem.

4 scenes:

1. The Devil's attempt to destroy the Christ is a failure (12:1-6)
2. Jesus triumphs over Satan through his death (7-12)
3. The Lord protects the church from Satanic attacks (12:13-13:18)
4. The Christ will return in salvation and in judgment (ch. 14)

Scene 1: 1. The Devil's attempts to destroy the Christ is a failure (1-6)

v1. sign – to convey through symbols (see. 1:1) – A great spectacle that points to the Consummation.

- Sign 1: The Woman

12 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

a. Who she is

The imagery surrounding the woman harkens us back to Israel, the Old Testament people of God. The language resembles that of Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9). It is important to note that such language often describes faithful Israel, those who have not broken God's covenant (cf. Dan. 12:3). It is the remnant of God represented by the woman and her attire.

12 is also significant in Revelation 21, where the city has twelve gates with the names of the tribes of Israel, and 12 foundations with the names of the apostles

Who is she: The people of God (the elect lady and her children...2 John)

b. What she does

The woman is crying out in pain, on the cusp of giving birth. These birth pains refer to the suffering of the messianic community, the people of God as they await the coming Messiah (Is. 26:17). They are enduring the birth pains of the Messiah.

Summary: The woman represents the people of God throughout history, anxiously awaiting the coming of the Messiah who will defeat all their enemies and dwell with them forever.

- Sign 2: The Dragon

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

a. Who he is

Like the woman, this dragon's appearance indicates something about him. He has 7 heads, indicating craftiness; he has 12 horns indicating power and ferocity; and he has upon his heads 7 diadems, indicating authority. This dragon is none other than "that ancient serpent" of Genesis 3. Who in his craftiness tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit, and who is behind all of the calamity and persecution of the people of God throughout history. In his power swept a third of the stars from heaven. This is a reference to Daniel 8 and the persecution of the saints and with ferocity warred against the Seed of Woman through the ages, and who held sway over the kingdoms of the world since the fall. When we think of Cain murdering Abel, Pharaoh seeking to destroy the Israelites, Haman doing the same, Saul seeking to destroy David, and on and on it goes. He is the Devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

b. What he does

He is set to one overarching purpose graphically depicted here: to devour the woman's child. The enemy doesn't change. Indeed, it is the Dragon's hatred for the child that spurs all of his actions in Revelation 12. He is the persecutor of the people of God.

Martin Luther understood this... "For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe his craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate on earth is not his equal."

- Sign 3. The child (5-6)

5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is about to rule [a] all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

a. Who he is

A male child who would "shepherd all nations with an iron staff" This statement most likely alludes to Psalm 2:8-9: Thus, the baby about to be born is none other than the promised messiah who would defeat all of Yahweh's enemies. In 12:5, however, ὅς μέλλει is added, indicating that this decisive event is ushering in the promise of Psalm 2:9.

b. What he does:

He is caught up to God and to his throne. In one swift event, John gives us a picture of the entire Christ event. His birth, the temptation, exorcisms, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are all depicted as the child being born and "caught up to God and his throne." John here assumes Jesus' whole earthly ministry, focusing on his victory. The Dragon's plan has been thwarted and God's Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father (cf. Col 2:13-15). This is the great promise of Genesis 3:15. The seed of the woman has triumphed over the Serpent. He has crushed his head. The devastation and horror that evil brings. It is easy to take for granted...but it is frightening and it is powerful and it is destructive.

This text tells us that JESUS HAS CONQUERED. And one day, he will rule with a rod of iron! And so we have seen our first truth: The Devil's attempt to destroy the Christ is a failure.

Scene 2. Jesus triumphs over Satan through his death (7-12)

- Sign 4. War in Heaven (7-12)

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

A great war in heaven between Michael and Satan, and Michael defeats Satan and Satan is expelled from heaven. This is a great victory. The ancient serpent, the devil (the one who slanders), the one who deceives the whole world. And how great his deception is! 1 John says the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. The gospel of John calls him the ruler of this world. Paul- the prince of the power of the air.

Heavenly counterpart to earthy drama of 1-5.

We should not underestimate the enemy, but he is a defeated enemy. Here he is expelled to heaven and thrown to earth. When did this happen? This is not Satan's original fall, nor is it something future. This is Satan's expulsion from heaven based on Christ's finished work on the cross. When the Christ goes up, the dragon must come down. Loud voice in heaven! "Now is the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ! [but why] For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night . And they conquered them by the blood of the lamb and through the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives until death! Because of this, rejoice heavens and those dwelling there." Victory has come through the cross. In John's gospel, ch. 12 "now is the judgment of this world, now will the ruler of this world be cast out"...I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Michael wins his victory because of what Christ has accomplished at Calvary. THEREFORE, our enemy's accusations have no place.

When Satan attacks you and you feel utterly condemned, and worthless, and defiled, what do you do? When Satan accuses you before the Father saying you shouldn't love Darryl, he has sinned against you this day; You should never forgive Katherine, she has trust in herself rather than Christ this day; how can you ever look upon Matt or Tyler or Ashley or Paige or Ryan or Chris. They have all treasured other things above you! How do you respond brothers and sisters. You remind yourself of the gospel. You don't say, "I'm actually a good person" you say "I have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb." I HAVE sinned, I HAVE trusted other things, I HAVE treasured lesser things. BUT God forgives, for Christ has paid the penalty and we are adopted sons and daughters! And even in our testimony as we stand firm in the finished work of Christ we share in his victory over this great, but defeated, enemy. Our only hope is the blood of the Lamb. Brothers and sisters, "when Satan tempts you to despair, and tells you of the guilt within, upward you look and see him there who made an end of all your sin. Because the sinless savior died, your sinful soul is counted free, for God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me." And so we have seen our second truth: Jesus triumphs over Satan through his death

Third scene: The Lord protects the church from Satanic attacks (Rev. 12:13-17)

This third scene extends from 12:13 all the way through chapter 13.

13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the

woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood [c] on the sand of the sea.

Satan knows his time is short, and in his rage the Dragon pursues the woman, the people of God. But the woman is miraculously protected, first by the wings of a great eagle where she flies into the wilderness, to her place of nourishment. The wings of the eagle do not represent the united states air force. It's something far better, isn't it? This is the saving power of God himself (Ex. 19:3). IT's God's power that preserves the church while in the wilderness. The serpent continues to pursue her by pouring forth water from its mouth, water throughout the story is a symbol of chaos, he is seeking to sweep her away. But again she is miraculously protected as the earth opens and swallows the river. In his rage the dragon wages war on the rest of her offspring. The image depicted here is one of the sovereign protection of the people of God.

So what is going on here? When is it that the people of God are persecuted by Satan because he knows his time is limited. This is the time between Christ's first and second comings. The time of persecution as the gospel goes forth. We saw this clearly in the book of Acts. So when we read that the woman is nourished for time, times and half a time. The language is cryptic and confusing, but we know what it means. It is the limited time of persecution that spans the epoch between Christs initial victory over Satan at the cross and his final defeat of him at the second Coming.

Revelation 13:1-10: Enter the Beasts

13 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. 4 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, [d] that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. [e] And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, 8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

10 If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

In Revelation 13 we are introduced to two beasts. For the sake of time I'm going to look at these beasts together and I want to make four observations regarding these beasts.

4 observations regarding the beasts:

1. The beasts operate under the authority of the dragon
2. The beasts imitate the lamb
3. The beasts exercise their power temporarily
4. The beasts are ultimately under the sovereignty of God

In vs. 18 we saw the dragon standing on the shore of the sea. He is now ready to call up his beastly minions from the waters in front of him and the earth behind him.

First beast:

Who is he:

In our minds eye we can imagine this beast slowly rising out of the sea, as John describes its head, then his body.

10 horns and 7 heads with 10 diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

The horns and heads remind us that this beast is in league with the dragon, who is described similarly. He bears the power and authority of the dragon, and carries on his mission to persecute the people of God.

As the beast's body comes into view we see it was like a leopard, with a feet like a bear's and a mouth like a lions.

Further we see that one of the heads of the beasts appears to have a mortal wound, but the best was healed and the whole earth marvels, and so they worship the dragon and the beast.

Who is this beast?

I believe this beast refers to the Roman empire and its empowers, particularly Nero and Domitian; but this beast also transcends the Roman empire.

Why Roman empire:

1. from the sea
2. blasphemous names
3. beasts of Daniel represent kingdoms
4. mortal wound healed
5. What is the context of John's apocalypse?

Daniel 7, 4 beasts emerge from the sea. 4 totalitarian states who persecute God's people.

Babylon, Medeo-Persian, Greek, Roman. Govts. in opposition to God and his people. But John goes beyond Daniel. John combines them...this is a composite beast. Thus it's a transhistorical beast.

The blasphemous names on its head refer to the fact that it takes the title of God for himself.

The blasphemous names on its head likely allude to the honorific titles the Roman emperors of that day took upon themselves. At their deaths, Julius Caesar, Augustus, Claudius and Vespasian were declared by the senate to be "divine." Further, during his reign, and at the time of this writing, Domition wished to be addressed as dominus et deus, "lord and god." It seems likely then that, at least in part, this beast represents the Roman empire and the king which rules it. The wound in the head that was healed. The apparent collapse of the empire? The death of Nero...but sprang to live again under Domitian. Typological principle here regarding how the state functions as an antichrist.

But I also believe this beast transcends any one empire. Why?

1. It exercises the dragons authority

2. It is a composite beast...it combines all the fierceness of Daniel's beasts rolled into one..and this includes the Roman empire

3. primary: It endures throughout the church age

This beast endures for the duration of the church age. Exercise authority for 42 months.

42 months! does this ring a bell? 1260 days; 31/2 years; time, times, half a time..? what have we learned?

ch. 12 time during which God assures his people of spiritual protection

ch. 11 time during which the church encounters persecution, why?

ch. 11 the time in which the church is given the responsibility of witness to Jesus Christ

What is it? at what period in history does the church witness to Jesus, is persecuted because of it, and received spiritual protection through it?

The epoch of tribulation. The time between the two great days, D-day and V-day.

An abiding force at work in this world, generated by the power of the dragon that occurred again and again and again. It is God opposing, Christ hating, church persecuting governmental power. It demands allegiance which is reserved for God alone.

One commentator summarizes it this way:

"The beast is a symbol of the perpetual deification of secular authority. Even more, he represents the powers of evil which lie behind the kingdoms of this world, and which encourage in society, at any moment in history, compromise with the truth and opposition to the justice and mercy of God."

What does he do?

The beast utters blasphemous words, exercises authority, makes war on the saints and conquers them. It has authority over all unbelievers ("earth-dwellers").

The beast operates under the constraints of God's sovereignty.

Notice the language of God's sovereignty here: "The beast was given a mouth"; "It was allowed to exercise authority..."; "it was allowed to make war..."; "authority was given it..."; Every other time this language is used in Revelation it is referring to God's sovereign work.

Daniel says, "The Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he wills"

John stresses God's sovereignty so that we will trust God and give ourselves to him, even in the hardest of times. No matter how difficult times get, even if we die, God is in control. He reigns!

Never random, never purposeless, always infused with divine purpose and meaning.

John ends this portion of his vision with a familiar exhortation: "If anyone has an ear, let him hear..."

If anyone is to be taken captive, into captivity you will go. If you are destined to be killed with the sword, then with the sword you must be killed.

This is what it means to overcome! "they love not their lives unto death"

The Second beast:

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, [f] and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. 13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of [g] the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 And it was allowed to give breath

to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. 16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, [h] to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

The second beast elsewhere is called the false prophet. I believe the second beast represents false religion. We see here that this second beast is deceptive. he mimics Christ, for he has two horns like a lamb; yet he speaks like a dragon. He makes the earth dwellers worship the first beast, and performs signs and wonders, which remind us of Elijah.

This beast is the lie Satan dressed up like the truth.

Counterfeit trinity: dragon gives authority to first beast. second beast performs signs which leads to worship of 1 st beast. This all results in the worship of the dragon.

- Distributes the first beast's mark (666) – Roman empire and emperors, yet transcends Rome
 - Primary image is it's trinitarian imperfection (the sum of "all apostate power")
 - Secondary could be a further reference to Nero

The two beasts: anti-Christian government and anti-Christian religion work in perfect cooperation. In John's day, the priests of the pagan temples did their best to impress upon the minds of the people that "Caesar is Lord" that the emperor is both dominus et deus, Lord and God. Think of Pergamum, which John said is "where Satan dwells." Why? because of the stature of the emperor, and anyone who refused to acknowledge the emperor as such was put to death.

Scene 4. The Christ will return in salvation and in judgment (ch. 14)

Chapter 14 we read of the worship of the redeemed in 1-5; Warnings to mankind in 6-13; the harvest at the end (14-17); and the judgment of the wicked (17-20)

"is it worth it to endure as a Christian"

vv. 1-5

14 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, 3 and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

The first scene we see here is 144,000 with the lamb on Mt. Zion. This is the sealed multitude of ch. 7. The description of these 144,000 highlight their faithfulness to God and their endurance through tribulation. They are pure, obedient, redeemed and blameless. Remember, these are the people of God, the church of Jesus Christ. Mt. Zion is the heavenly Jerusalem. This text looks forward to the future reward of believers. Zion. The presence of God. This is a call for the endurance of the saints.

The name of God and the Lamb on the foreheads of the saints is the opposite of the mark of the

beast. Those who bear this name belong to God. Brothers and sisters, who are you? what is your identity? You belong to God...any reward we may get in this life will pale in significance to this! May the Spirit drive this reality home to you.

6-13 Warnings to mankind

- 1) Fear God and give him glory because judgment is come
- 2) Fallen is Babylon the great!
- 3) If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark he experience God's wrath

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

Finally, we see the harvest of mankind (14-20). On the one hand there is final salvation and on the other, final judgment, symbolized by a great harvest which recalls Matthew 3:12 and the gathering of the elect to God and the wicked to judgment.

"The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him, his rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure. One little word shall fail him..."