

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/24/10 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 13:11-18 "The Enemy Responds: The Dragon and the Beasts," part 3

To do: Read from *Voice of the Martyrs*, March 2010, story about Mr. Chin smuggling Bibles...

These are *abnormal* days. By and large, the American Church has enjoyed great peace and prosperity for over two hundred years. Even non-believers in Christ have basically adopted *Christian* values at least to some extent.

That is changing now. We're prone to think that what we've had is *the norm*. It's not. In most places in the world today, and in most times throughout the past two thousand years of the Church's existence, the Church has been hated and even hunted by the world.

That's the norm. Jesus said the world would *hate* His people just like it hated Him (John 15:18-21).

We may be inclined to see increasing antagonism towards the Church as an indication that we are now facing something *unusual*. We're not.

God gave a very special book to His people to complete the canon. The book was given to people who knew all about tribulation and needed encouragement. And God gave His people encouragement in that book, the book of Revelation. How? He revealed in vivid language what His Son was going to do at the end times.

Revelation 1--A picture of the Risen King

Revelation 2-3--A message from the King to His people: "I know what you're facing."

Revelation 4-5--A vision of the Throne of Heaven, and of the One who holds the destiny of the world in His hands

Revelation 6-11--The Lord reveals a series of judgments He's going to pour out on the world. Man has had *his* day. Then the Lord will have *His* day.

In Revelation 12-13--The Lord reveals how the opposition will respond to His future judgments. He wants us to know that *He knows*. Their opposition will not catch the Lord off guard.

In the past two weeks we've examined the record of this future opposition given in chapters 12-13. It's given in highly symbolic language--but often the symbols are not interpreted for us with precision. Here's what we've seen...

### **Review: The Highlights of chapters 12 and 13:1-10 -- Six scenes...**

#### I. Scene #1: John sees a pregnant woman (1-2).

- A. She's clothed with the sun.
- B. She's wearing a crown of twelve stars.
- C. She's about to give birth.

The woman seems to be a reference to the Messianic community (i.e. the "the Jerusalem that is above," Gal 4:26; the "spiritual Israel").

#### II. Scene #2: John sees an enormous, red dragon (3-6).

- A. He's powerful (3).
- B. He wanted to kill the child (4).
- C. His plot failed (5-6).
  - 1. The child was snatched up to God.
  - 2. The woman fled to the desert for 1,260 days.

#### III. Scene #3: John describes an angelic war in heaven (7-9).

- A. Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels (7).
- B. The dragon lost and was hurled to the earth (8-9).
- C. The identity of the dragon is clarified (9)...

1. He's the ancient serpent.
2. He is called the devil, or Satan.
3. He is the one who leads the world astray.

IV. Scene #4: John records the reaction of heaven (10-12).

A voice announces the significance of the victory...

- A. God's kingdom has come (10).
- B. The accuser has been hurled down (10b).
- C. The key to the dragon's defeat is identified (11).
- D. What is gain for heaven will result in pain for the earth (12).

V. Scene #5: John records the reaction of the defeated dragon (13-17).

- A. The dragon pursued the woman (13).
- B. The woman fled to a prepared place for three and one-half "times" (14).
- C. The dragon tried to destroy the woman, but failed (15-16).
- D. The dragon then sought to make war against the woman's offspring (17).

The text states the dragon went off to make war against "the rest of her offspring." Christ was the first offspring (5), but the dragon couldn't touch Him. So the dragon now goes after "the rest of the offspring," apparently a reference to the followers of Christ (Christ is the firstfruits among many brothers--see 1 Cor 15:23).

VI. Scene #6: John sees a beast (13:1-10).

**\*\*This Beast came out of the sea.**

This seems to be a reference to some future, secular authority, empire, or world ruler.

- A. Here are his identifying marks (1-4).

1. *His appearance (1):*

- ⇒He had ten horns and seven heads.
- ⇒He wore ten crowns on his horns.
- ⇒He had a blasphemous name on his heads.

2. *His resemblance (2):*

- ⇒He looked like a leopard.
- ⇒He had feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion.

3. *His source of power (2b):*

- ⇒The dragon gave the beast his power, throne, and authority.

4. *His influence (3-4):*

- ⇒He recovered from a fatal wound.
- ⇒The whole world followed him.
- ⇒Men worshiped the dragon because of him.
- ⇒Men also worshiped the beast.

- B. Here is what the beast received (5-10).

1. *He was given a mouth (5-6).*

- ⇒He uttered proud words and blasphemies (5).
- ⇒He blasphemed God, God's name, God's dwelling place, and God's people in heaven (6).

2. *He was given power (7a).*

3. *He was given authority (7b).*

4. *He was given worship (8).*

- C. Here is how we are to respond (9-10).

1. *Hear (9).*

2. *Resolve to endure and be faithful (10).*

## New Material--The Seventh Scene...

Read verses 11-18.

### VII. Scene #7: John sees another beast (13:11-18).

\*\*This Beast came *out of the earth*.

The second beast is the servant of the first. He compels men to worship the first. He seems to represent "organized religion" according to Ladd (182). The *NIVsb* suggests he symbolizes "religious power in the service of secular authorities."

#### A. Here are his identifying marks (11).

##### 1. He had two horns like a lamb.

Q: Who do we usually associate with the "Lamb?" Christ. This being tries to present himself as a religious "Savior." Ladd suggests he is a "parody of Christ--religion prostituted for evil ends."

He may try to come across as a proponent of peace--harmless like a lamb--but that will merely be a coverup for his deadly intent.

##### 2. He spoke like a dragon.

How does a dragon speak? The image seems to show the connection of the earthly beast with Satan (the "dragon" in ch 12).

#### B. Here is what he did (12-17).

##### 1. He promoted the first beast (12).

Q: What characteristic of the first beast is repeated?

##### 2. He performed miraculous signs (13).

Can Satan do miracles? Indeed, he can!

Q: What kind of miracle is mentioned here? Fire from heaven

Q: Who else did we see earlier performing miracles involving fire? The two witnesses in 11:5

##### 3. He deceived people with his signs (14a).

Discussion: Respond to the statement, "Satan is a friend of religion." How so? He uses *religion* to keep people from recognizing their need for Christ.

##### 4. He set up an image in honor of the beast (14b).

Notice something. Satan is an *imitator*. The second beast will set up an image to the first beast--the one who was wounded by the sword and yet lived (14).

What happened to Christ? He was wounded, yet lived. He received a fatal wound, yet came back to life.

What will the beast do? He will be wounded with a fatal wound, yet return to life. And the people of the world will worship him in their delusion.

##### 5. He was given power to energize the image (15).

Q: What will happen to those who refuse to worship the image?

##### 6. He forced everyone to receive a mark (16-17).

What's true of this mark?

⇒ On the right hand or forehead

⇒ Economic sanctions against those who refused

⇒ The mark is the name of the beast.

C. Here is how we are to respond (18).

John says gives two practical words of instruction...

1. Wisdom is needed.

The KJV says, "Here is wisdom." The NIV, "This calls for wisdom." God does not want His people to be deceived.

2. Calculate the number of the beast.

Quote: By George Ladd on the number 666...

"John now gives the name of the beast in symbolic form, using a device known in the ancient world as gematria. Neither the Greek nor Hebrew tongues used a system of numbers. Instead of numbers, the letters of the alphabet stood for numbers; e.g., A-1, B-2, C-3, etc. Thus a name could be converted into its corresponding letter. Deissmann records a wall-scribbling from Pompeii which reads, "I love her whose number is 545" (ΦΜΕ).

In the *Sibylline Oracles*, we find a relevant illustration of gematria. Swete alludes to a passage where the numerical value of the name Jesus is given as 888 (I=10, H=8, Σ=200, O=70, Y=400, Σ=200). John calls for wisdom in calculating the name of the beast from its number and adds that it is a human number, whose equivalent is 666.

The prevailing interpretation by preterist scholars is that the number refers to the Emperor Nero (*Neron Kaisar*). However, the numerical total of *Neron Kaisar* in Greek is not 666, but 1005. The problem is solved by transplanting *Neron Kaisar* into Hebrew, which does indeed total 666. This is achieved, however, by a slight variation in the spelling of the Hebrew word for Caesar. Furthermore, no one has explained why John, writing to a Greek-reading public, would have used the elaborate symbolism of gematria with a Hebrew instead of a Greek form of the name. It is also significant that none of the ancient interpreters of Revelation recognized this solution. Our earliest interpreter, Irenaeus, suggested that 666 might represent either *euanthas*, *teitan* (Titus?), or *lateinos* (the Latin Empire). Many interpreters have felt that this last solution of Irenaeus was the best one.

Almost anything can be done with these numbers by clever manipulation. If A=100, B=101, C=102, etc., the name Hitler totals 666.

It is possible that the number was intended to be altogether symbolic. If the name of the Messiah ΙΗΣΟΥΣ equals 888, and 7 is considered the perfect number, it is possible that 666 is intended to be a symbolic number for the best that man can do, which falls short of adequacy. This could be the meaning of the phrase "it is a human number." The most we can say is that if the number of the beast is a prophecy of a future situation, no one yet has solved the meaning of the number, but its meaning will be plain when the time comes."

For Discussion:

1. What kind of impact would this vision have had on John and his first century readers?
2. Why does God want us to know that these two "personages" (the two "beasts") are coming?
3. Who is the very next person John saw in his vision? see 14:1 The Lamb! And where is He standing? On Mount Zion.