

THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

Darin Latham/www.broadwaychurch.com

WEEK THIRTEEN

I. THE HOLY WAR IS ENGAGED (Revelation 12:1 – 13:18)

A. The Woman And The Dragon (12:1-17)

In the words of Dr. Gordon Fee, "In turning to chapters 12 – 14 in the Revelation, one comes to the theological center of things... Here the interest is not at all with the question of *when*, but with the *what*, *who*, and *why* of the coming events." The '*what*' is the coming Holy War. The '*who*' is the forces of evil (expressed in the form of an unholy 'trinity' of Satan and two beasts.) The '*why*' is because God's people are earthly representatives of Satan's defeat by the Lamb.

1. The sun-clothed woman and the dragon... (12:1-6)
 - a. The **"woman"**: representing the faithful Messianic community – the faithful remnant...
 - i. See Genesis 37:9-10; Isaiah 26:16-18; 66:7...
 - b. **"An enormous red dragon..."**: later identified as Satan (see 12:9); **"Red"**: a symbol of blood.
 - i. See Daniel 7:7-8 for similar imagery...
 - ii. **"Seven heads"**: seven is a number of divine completeness; **"Heads"**: symbol of authority...
Any authority that Satan has actually comes from God Himself!
 - iii. **"Ten horns"**: ten is a symbol of fullness; **"Horns"**: a symbol of strength...
 - iv. **"Seven crowns"**: a symbol of extreme wealth...
 - v. **"Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth"**: an allusion to Satan's power and influence...
 - vi. **"The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born..."**: the basic Christian story is being dramatized...
 - c. **"She gave birth to a son... And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne..."**: using Messianic language from Psalm 2:9, John condenses the life, death and resurrection of Christ into one verse!
 - d. **"The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days."**: the same time period of the trampling of the Holy City and the ministry of the two witnesses (11:2-3). This is most likely referring to the same event...
2. The defeat of the dragon in heaven... (12:7-12)
 - a. The dragon is defeated in the heavenly realm... (vv. 7-9)
 - b. The effect of the defeat is announced... (vv. 10-12)
 - i. The result of the defeat... (v. 10)
 - ii. The role of believers in the defeat... (v. 11)
 - iii. The celebration in heaven... (v. 12a)
 - iv. The terror on earth... (v. 12b)
3. The dragon pursues God's people on earth... (12:13-17)
 - a. John gives his readers the "behind the scenes" reason for their present and future suffering...
 - i. God's people are in the middle of a battle zone; we will triumph - not like a lion, but like the Lamb!

B. The Two Beasts (13:1-18)

There are various views regarding this next passage. Some see these beasts as apocalyptic symbols of Satanic-influenced political and religious structures over the centuries. Others see them as literal, historic individuals (the Antichrist and the False Prophet) that appear during a seven-year period called The Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:14). Some see a combination of both of these options...

1. The beast out of the sea... (vv. 1-10)
 - a. John describes this first beast... (vv. 1-4)
 - i. Using our previous knowledge of numbers and symbols, it is an incredibly powerful, wealthy, and perverse entity...
 - ii. It receives its power and authority from Satan.
 - iii. It is very resilient.
 - iv. The people respond to the beast in awe and intimidation.
 - b. John describes this beast's activities... (vv. 5-8)
 - i. It blasphemes all things holy...
 - ii. It wars against (and even conquers) God's people...
 - iii. It rules over the inhabitants of the earth...
 - iv. Those who are not God's people respond by worshipping this beast...
 - 1.) God's people will need to be patient and endure suffering...
2. The beast out of the earth... (vv. 11-18)
 - a. John describes this second beast... (v. 11)
 - i. It is a parody of the Lamb – a religious counterfeit...
 - b. John describes this beast's activities... (vv. 12-18)
 - i. It exists to bolster allegiance to the first beast...
 - ii. It exercises counterfeit powers to deceive people...
 - iii. It somehow 'marks' all people who give their allegiance to the first beast...

What Is This Mark?

In Deuteronomy 6:4-8, the people of Israel were told this: ***"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*** It is referred to as the "Shema." Moses then instructed the Israelites to, ***"tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads."*** (The forehead symbolizing what a person thinks and the hand symbolizing what a person does.) The mark in Revelation 13 appears to be a parody of this, an "anti-Shema." Whether John is describing a literal, physical mark on the body, or he is using an apocalyptic symbol, has been debated for centuries.

- iv. The number ***"666"*** is either a symbol or a gematria:
 - 1.) As a symbol: 6 is one less than the perfect 7; It is a number of incompleteness. Three is another biblical number that communicates completeness. Three 6's is "complete incompleteness!" It is humanity completely falling short of divine perfection.
 - 2.) As a gematria: in the first century, people had no numerals (symbols for numbers), so the letters of the alphabet were used as numerals. Gematria was the popular practice of using numerals as a code for names. It just so happens that if you translate Nero Caesar into Hebrew and do the gematria, it comes out to 666...