

The Dragon and His Beastly Allies

Rev. 13

Introduction:

1. Satan, the devil, the serpent of old or in Revelation, “the dragon,” is described as a deceiver. He is the adversary of the people of God and his purpose is to destroy us.
2. He willingly uses rulers and authorities, the governments and kings of the earth in his destructive work (Acts 4:25-27; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:21).
3. Paul describes our struggle as “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness” (Eph. 6:12).
4. The Book of Revelation focuses attention on this spiritual battle. Chapters 12 and 13 describe it in symbolic language. The dragon, a beast from the sea and a beast from the earth war with the people of God.
5. Who are these beasts and what is the message for us?

Discussion:

I. In order to better understand the language we need to realize that the images have their background in the O.T. prophets.

- A. Images of beasts were as common as “Wildcats,” “Eagles,” “Donkeys,” “Elephants,” and other images of today.
 1. Note some examples from ancient Babylon.
 2. The Book of Daniel uses such images. In Daniel 2 the king of Babylon had a dream of an image.
 - a. A statue—head of gold, breasts and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay.
 - b. A stone cut out without hands struck the image and crushed it. The stone then became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.
- B. By the power of God Daniel interpreted the image (2:44ff).
 1. The head of gold—the king of Babylon.
 2. Breasts and arms of silver—the kingdom after him—Medo-Persian empire.
 3. Bronze—Greek empire of Alexander the Great.
 4. Iron/clay—fourth kingdom—Rome.
 5. Daniel said that in the days of these kings God would set up a kingdom that would crush and put an end to all these kingdoms (Dan. 2:44ff).
- C. Later in the Book of Daniel (chap. 7), in the days of Belshazar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream of four great beasts.
 1. One was like a lion.
 2. One was like a bear.
 3. One was like a leopard.
 4. The fourth was dreadful and terrifying. It was extremely strong and had iron teeth and was very destructive. In the context of these images, God granted one like a Son of Man everlasting dominion, glory and a kingdom that would never be

destroyed. (Note the place of Dan. 7:13-14 in our developing theme of the rule of Christ. See Matt. 12:22ff; 24:30; 26:64.)

II. This beast from the sea represents this fourth world empire: the Rome of John's day (13:1-10).

- A. The dragon gave him his power and throne and authority (13:2).
- B. Both the dragon and the beast were worshiped. Roman emperors proclaimed themselves divine and called on the people to worship them.
- C. The beast blasphemed God and those who dwell in heaven. He made war with the saints (7-10, cf. Dan. 7:25). (The imagery of Rev. 13:10 is probably reminiscent of Jerusalem's war with Babylon. Some were killed. Some were taken captive. The people of God were to have faith in Him and persevere.)

III. If the first beast represents Rome to what does the second beast refer? (13:11-18).

- A. He is a deceiver.
 - 1. Horns like a lamb, but spoke as a dragon.
 - 2. Deceives with signs.
 - 3. His message is to make an image of the first beast and worship him.
 - 4. He intends to kill all who do not worship the beast.
 - 5. He controls buying and selling and unless you worship the beast and have his mark you are not allowed to buy and sell.
- B. This second beast represents the priesthood of Rome that propagated the worship of the Roman Emperors.

IV. Summary: Chapter 12 introduces us to the great dragon, the primary adversary of God and His kingdom. In chapter 13 we have met the two great forces used by Satan to accomplish his plans for destruction. The stage is being set for a final encounter. It is crucial that we understand the nature of the war. It is a spiritual conflict. While the Lamb was victorious on the cross, the full and complete victory awaits a final moment. The citizens of God's kingdom live in the already/not yet tension of a battle one but not entirely over. The means of the victory is accomplished, but the enemy's power must be extinguished. The rest of Revelation reveals the culmination of these events and the final victory of the Kingdom of God.

V. What are we to take home?

- A. A greater awareness of the spiritual war that we are engaged in, that it involves the devil's use of earthly rulers and governmental powers in his destructive work. While the great dragon worked through Rome in the first century and others before do we not realize that he is at work in earthly rulers and the governmental powers of today?
- B. Greater appreciation for faith and dependence upon God as we struggle against such spiritual forces (Eph. 6:10-20).
- C. "Be faithful until death" takes on real meaning (Rev. 2:10). We must willingly give our

lives to the struggle (cf. Heb. 12:3-4).

D. Although we have not yet arrived at the final victory celebration we will!!!

Conclusion:

1. Do you understand the nature of the battle?
2. Are you fully engaged in it or are you oblivious to what is going on? Perhaps you have been deceived and are engaged on the wrong side.
3. Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life (13:8)?