

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: The Beast from the Sea: Revelation 13:1-10

Stop Complaining

Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher, used to be subject to occasions of great physical pain, in the course of which he would roll on the ground in sheer agony. When the pain was over, the first words he used to say were, "I hope I didn't complain." How much more effective our witness for Christ would be if we didn't complain so much about our trials of faith.

Submit, Do Not Grumble

Unfortunately, even among Christians there are those who are chronic grumblers. A woman of this type grumbled at everything and everybody. But at last the preacher thought he had found something about which she could make no complaint—the lady's crop of potatoes was certainly the finest for miles around. "Ah, for once you must be pleased," he said with a beaming smile as he met her in the village street. "Everyone is saying how splendid your potatoes are this year." The lady glared at him as she answered, "They're not so poor. But where's the bad ones for the pigs?" If the mouth is given to grumbling, then the heart is lacking in submissiveness to God.

The name devil means "accuser," and Satan means "adversary." Satan stands at the throne of God and fights the saints by accusing them (Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:1). But Jesus Christ, the "heavenly Advocate" (1 John 2:1-2), represents the church before God's holy throne. Because Jesus Christ died for us, we can overcome Satan's accusations "by the blood of the Lamb." Our salvation is secure, not because of our own works, but because of His finished work at Calvary.

How furious Satan will be when the church comes forth in glory "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." When the accuser sees that his tactics have failed, he will become angry and threaten the very peace of heaven.

How does this future war apply to the church today? The same serpent who accuses the saints in heaven also deceives the nations on earth (Revelation 12:9); and one of his strategies is to be about the church. He deceives the nations into thinking that the people of God are dangerous, deluded, even destructive. It is through Satan's deception that the leaders of the nations band together against Christ and His people (Psalms 2; Acts 4:23-30). God's people in every age must expect the world's opposition, but the church can always defeat the enemy by being faithful to Jesus Christ.

Christ's shed blood gives us our perfect standing before God (1 John 1:5-2:2). But our witness to God's Word and our willingness to lay down our lives for Christ defeats Satan as well. Satan is not equal to God; he is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. His power is limited and his tactics must fail when God's people trust the power of the blood and of the Word. Nothing Satan does can rob us of "salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Revelation 12:10), if we are yielded to Him. God's great purposes will be fulfilled!

Believers in any age or situation can rejoice in this victory, no matter how difficult their experiences may be. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of the wicked one; and these have been defeated by our Saviour (Ephesians 6:10 ff, also Ephesians 1:15-23).

Heaven will rejoice when Satan is cast out, but the earth-dwellers will not, for the last half of the Tribulation will mean intense suffering for the world. The "woe" in Revelation 12:12 reminds us of the "three woes" referred to in Revelation 8:13. The first "woe" is described in Revelation 9:1-12, and the second in Revelation 9:13-21. The third "woe" is referred to in Revelation 11:14 ff, but this passage only summarizes the events that will climax God's plan for the earth. It may be that part of this third "woe" is casting out Satan and permitting his terrible wrath on earth.

This, then, is the third scene in the drama: Satan's wrath on earth (Revelation 12:13-16). Knowing that his time is short, and having no more access to heaven, the adversary must vent all of his anger earthward. He begins with Israel (the woman), and creates a wave of anti-Semitism. Satan has always hated the Jews because they are God's chosen people and the vehicle through which salvation came into the world. Satan would like to destroy the nation, particularly as the time draws near for the Messiah to return to earth to establish the promised kingdom. A Jewish remnant must be ready to receive Him and form the nucleus for the kingdom (Zechariah 12:9-14:21; Revelation 1:7).

God will prepare a special place where the Jewish remnant will be protected and cared for. It is interesting that the remnant's escape from Satan is described in terms of a flying eagle, for this is a repeated image in the Old Testament with reference to Israel. God delivered Israel from Egypt "on eagles' wings" (Exodus 19:4), and cared for the people in the wilderness as an eagle would her young (Deuteronomy 32:11-12). Their return from Babylonian Captivity was like "mounting up with wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40:31).

Note that the remnant will be sheltered for the last half of the Tribulation. We do not know where this sheltered place will be, nor do we need to know. But the lesson for all of us is clear. God cares for those whom HE! wants to use to accomplish His purposes on earth. True, some people will give their lives (Revelation 12:11), but others will be spared (see Acts 12 for an example of this principle).

The phrase "water as a flood" is not explained, but there is a parallel in Psalms 124. (Also note the phrase "escaped as a bird" in verse 7 of this same Psalm.) This "flood" is probably an outpouring of hatred and anti-Semitic propaganda. Or it may symbolize armies that invade Israel and seek to defeat the remnant. If that is the meaning, then the earth opening up could well be an earthquake that God sends to destroy the invaders. When Satan discovers that the people he seeks to kill are protected, then he turns on those who were not carried to the hidden place of safety. He will declare war, and God will permit him to have victory for a time (Revelation 13:7); but ultimately, the old serpent will be defeated.

The Beast from the Sea (Revelation 13:1-10) Some texts read, "And he [Satan] stood upon the sand of the sea." The sea symbolizes the Gentile nations (Revelation 17:15). From one of them, Satan will bring forth his "Super Leader," the man we call "Antichrist." Up to this point, Antichrist has headed a ten-nation European league; but now he is about to embark on a new career as Satan's world dictator.

You will remember that Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker (Revelation 6:2) and even "settled" the Arab-Israeli problem by making a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years (Daniel 9:27). This protection would permit the nation to rebuild the temple and reinstitute religious rituals

(Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11:1). But in the middle of the seven year period (the time we are studying now in Revelation 10-14) he will break that covenant, stop the ceremonies, and set up himself as god in the temple (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

The symbolic description of "the beast" enables us to learn something about his origin and character. God does not see him as a man, made in the divine image, but as a wild animal, under the control of Satan. He is a man (Revelation 13:18); but he is energized from hell, for he comes out of the pit (Revelation 11:7; 17:8). Just as Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, so "the beast" will be Satan in a human body (John 13:2,27).

The seven heads represent seven mountains (Revelation 17:9); and since Rome was built on seven hills, this must be a veiled reference to that powerful city (see Revelation 17:18). It would be a most meaningful allusion in John's day!

The ten horns represent ten kingdoms (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 17:12). It appears that "the beast" will head a "United States of Europe," a revived Roman Empire, before taking over as world dictator. All nations will no doubt admire and thank him for the "peace" he has achieved, little realizing the sorrow and destruction he will bring to the world.

The three animals named in Revelation 13:2 remind us of the four beasts Daniel saw in his dream (Daniel 7): a lion (Babylon), a bear (Media-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and a "terrible beast" (the Antichrist). John saw these animals, or kingdoms, in reverse order since he was looking back, while Daniel was looking ahead. The final world empire will be rooted in all the previous empires and unite in one their evil and power. Added to the ferocity of these beasts will be Satan's own power, throne, and authority!

Once Satan presents his great "masterpiece," the counterfeit Christ, to the world, what will happen next?

First, there will be wonder (Revelation 13:3). Certainly a terrified world will wonder at Antichrist's power and his sudden rise to international fame and authority. But mankind will also wonder at the healing of his "wound." What is this "wound"? John does not explain it, but perhaps what he later wrote (Revelation 17:9-13) can help interpret the symbolism. This "wound" must be important, because John mentioned it three times (Revelation 13:3,12,14), including the fact that it was sword-inflicted.

The seven heads represent seven mountains, but also seven kings or kingdoms (Revelation 17:10), Antichrist or "the beast" is one of these seven kings (Revelation 17:11), but he is also the eighth. Apparently, he reigns twice; but how can this be? The suggestion has been made that "the beast" will be a European leader who will form a ten-nation federation (Revelation 17:12), but be slain in the process. Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 state that "the beast" will ascend out of the abyss. Is it possible that Satan will (with God's permission) resurrect a man from the dead? If Satan has power to give life to a dead idol (Revelation 13:15), could he not also give life to a dead body?

If "the beast" ruled as one of the seven kings, was slain, and then raised up again, he could rule as the eighth king. If, on the other hand, the image is seen representing kingdoms rather than individuals, we would have the reemergence of a "dead kingdom" on the world scene. However, it would be difficult to understand how a kingdom could be slain by a sword. It is best, I think, to apply this prophecy to individual persons.

Not only will there be wonder, but there will also be worship (Revelation 13:4). Worship is the one thing Satan has always wanted (Matthew 4:8-10), and he will receive it through "the beast." The second "beast," described in the last half of this chapter, will organize and promote the worship of Antichrist, making it the official religion of the world!

There will also be words (Revelation 13:5-6). Almost all dictators have risen to power by controlling people with their words. Some of us can recall when Adolf Hitler was rising to power, and know now how he mesmerized huge crowds with his speeches. Satan will make "the beast" a great orator, whose addresses will blaspheme God, His name, His tabernacle (heaven), and the saints in heaven. Since Satan will have recently been cast out of heaven, this blasphemy is to be expected.

Satan can do nothing without God's permission (Job 1-2; Luke 22:31-32), so "the beasts" authority is delegated, not inherent. It will last for three-and-a-half years, the last half of the Tribulation.

In his night vision, Daniel saw "the beast" as the fourth and final empire (Daniel 7:19-28). There, as in John's vision, is the same image of the ten horns with the added revelation that "the beast" must defeat three of the kings to gain control. Daniel also heard "the beasts" blasphemous words (Daniel 7:25).

Finally, there will be war (Revelation 13:7-10). God will permit Antichrist to war against His people ("wear out the saints," Daniel 7:25) and even to defeat some of them. John prophesied that some of the saints will be captured and some will be martyred. But because of their faith, they will have patience, or endurance (see Hebrews 6:12; Revelation 1:9), and will not deny the Lord in spite of persecution and death.

The world's population will be divided: those who are saved, with their names in God's book, will not submit to "the beast"; those who are lost - the earth-dwellers - will worship "the beast" and do his bidding. Note that Revelation 13:9 applies this truth to "any man," no matter in which age he may live. Certainly in John's day, this was meaningful; for every Roman citizen had to acknowledge, "Caesar is Lord." Likewise in every age of the church, true believers have had to take their stand for Christ, come what may.

Keep in mind that "the beast" is a counterfeit Christ. The world would not receive Christ, but it will receive Antichrist (John 5:43). The world would not believe the truth, but they will believe the Re (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). Jesus spoke (and still speaks) gracious words of salvation, and men turn a deaf ear; but they will listen to the blasphemous words of "the beast." The world will not worship the Christ, but they will bow down to Antichrist.

In Revelation 17, we will learn that "the beast" rises to power by means of "the harlot," a symbol of the apostate world church. This is not any one denomination or faith, but a world religious system that has rejected God's Son and God's truth. However, when "the beast" rises to universal power, he will no longer need "the harlot" and shall subsequently destroy her and establish his own satanic religion.