



Part 17: Satan's Allies

Revelation 13

Revelation is a prophetic call to the people of God to resist the seduction of cultural powers, whether political, ideological, or religious.

ALLEGIANCE TO JESUS IS OPPOSED

Staying faithful to Jesus is very hard because our faithfulness is opposed by Satan (Rev. 12). Rev. 13 reveals to us that Satan pursues the people of God through two allies: the sea beast and the earth beast. Together these three form a counterfeit “trinity of evil,” which try to mimic God.

SATAN'S ALLIES: MANIPULATED POLITICAL & RELIGIOUS POWER

- Sea Beast = Rome and any political power manipulated by Satan

This metaphorical language of a “beast” comes from Daniel 7:1-14. In a dream, Daniel sees four great beasts coming from the sea, which is the same language used here.

Daniel’s dream about four beasts from the sea is referring to four successive world powers living in hostility to the God’s people. In Daniel’s dream, these kingdoms are likely Babylon, Persia, Mede, and Greece, all of which were particular expressions of the sea beast.

The sea beast is any political power that does not acknowledge its duty to govern according to the laws of the living God. It is any political power manipulated by Satan to pressure Jesus’ disciples to compromise their loyalty to Him. Any political power that moves from under God will move in the direction of blasphemy and beastliness. Power that is no longer exercised under God seeks to play God!

- Earth Beast aka False Prophet (Rev. 16:13, 19:20, 20:10) = religious institutions and powers manipulated by Satan

The earth beast, also known as the false prophet, is religious institutions and powers manipulated by Satan to entice people to worship political powers (the sea beast) in rebellion against God.

The beast comes looking a little like Jesus Christ in that he has “two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon” (13:2). He mimics the Lamb’s horns which are the image of strength. The earth beast deceives through signs and wonders (13:13-14). He makes it very difficult for anyone who does not bow down to the sea beast (13:14-15).

The earth beast’s role is primarily a religious role. This is made clear later in Revelation where John calls the beast the “false prophet” (16:13, 19:20, 20:10).

Whereas the true prophet leads people to worship the living God, the false prophet leads people to worship the state. The earth beast is mimicking the role of the Holy Spirit, who gives breath to the worship of Jesus Christ (13:15).

“The profound religious insight that lies behind these kaleidoscopic pictures in chapter 13 is that men and women are so constituted as to worship some absolute power, and if they do not worship the true and real Power behind the universe, they will construct a god for themselves and give allegiance to that. In the last analysis, it is always a choice between the power that operates through inflicting suffering, that is, the power of the beast, and the power that operates through accepting suffering, namely, the power of the Lamb.” G.K. Beale

- Mark of the beast = the character of the beast embedded in his followers (Rev. 13:16-18)

Evil mimics the true God. The earth beast and the sea beast are mimicking Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus puts His mark, or seal, on His people. He puts His name on them, meaning His very character. The mark of Jesus Christ is the character of Jesus Christ sealed in us by the Holy Spirit.

“Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

The number 666 is symbolic, like all numbers in the book. The number seven in the book refers to completion or perfection – “the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6) = the Holy Spirit. The number six is one less than seven meaning it is incomplete. 666 represents false religion.

THE RISE OF “POLITICAL RELIGIONS”

Two idolatrous responses:

- Christian Nationalism = a political ideology about American identity that advocates for Christian power rather than Christian principles
- The Myth of Progressive Utopia (last week’s sermon)

THE THIRD WAY - ALLEGIANCE TO KING JESUS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How have you heard or understood the sea beast and earth beast interpreted? What about the mark of the beast?
- Looking at Daniel 7:1-14 as background, does this help you see the sea beast is a political power opposed to God’s people? Do you see the religious nature of the earth beast?
- Does the symbolism of the mark of the beast and the number 666 help you see that it is not likely a literal mark, but mimicking the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14)?
- How do you see Christians on the right and left political spectrums being seduced by other powers besides Jesus? What do you sense Jesus calling you to?