

The Soon Coming End – Part 8

2 Peter 3:9-13

Revelation 13

¹ Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

¹¹ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹² And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666. (Revelation 13:1-18 (NKJV))

May we begin today by again acknowledging a difficulty that we often have as we read and try to understand prophecies such as these, is that the words of prophecy truly are “mysterious”. We would prefer that all of God’s revelations be clear and plain to our ordinary minds. But as we’ve learned from teachings such as those in 1 Corinthians 2, it is by God’s design that the meaning of His words and the understanding of them be only by those who have first given their hearts and minds to Christ. Then and only then can such “spiritual things” be discerned, and even then, only by God’s Holy Spirit who dwells within those who believe. Why He has made the choice to do it that way is part of the mystery. But please do be encouraged by the realization that each time we read and study these words, they do become more and more clear to us. And we will do that today.

As we ended the message last week, the “church” had been “raptured” off the earth. Every Christian believer was gone, leaving only unbelievers to remain to carry on all the matters of daily life on the earth. And we noted that those who would be left behind, would probably not be the most trustworthy or most reliable of people, having been described in 2 Timothy 3 as being

² . . . lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, (2 Timothy 3:2-4 (ESV))

And so, after the rapture takes place, the world as we know it today, the family structures, the neighborhoods, the workplaces and the general society all around will be dramatically changed and in a state of great confusion.

Most of the people in the western world, especially here in America, have never really learned to provide for themselves. So, as the food and water supplies begin to dwindle and as violence increases, people will probably do exactly as they do now. They will cry out to the government for help, and this time the government will quickly oblige. But this time it will not be with EBT cards, or Medicaid or Medicare. It will be with the demonic “mark of the beast”.

And may I warn us again, that even now, before the “rapture” has taken place, and long before the food shortages and the chaos takes place, I have no doubt that demonically controlled world leaders will have already been working their way into key leadership positions in all the major governments of the world and have been developing these very systems to facilitate the programs of the “mark of the beast”. And yes, even right here in the United States. And they will be ready for that special moment of the rapture,

when all of the Christians are suddenly taken off the earth. It is then that those demonically controlled world leaders will begin to show themselves and to take full control over most all the world.

Do my words sound like those of some “paranoid conspiracy theorist”, or some religious fanatic, looking for a demon behind every bush? I’m sure that many would think so. But folks, I am simply reading the prophecies given here. And no, these things may not happen today, but they will soon, and much sooner than we think.

Read along with me! Here in these words of Revelation 13, God gives us a clear picture of what those demonic leaders will actually look like. Verse 1,

¹ Then I (John) stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. (Revelation 13:1-3)

Can you imagine, world leaders who have seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns, looking like a leopard, with feet of a bear, and a mouth of a lion. We are so accustomed to looking at leaders like Vladimir Putin of Russia and Kim Jong Un of North Korea and others like them. And they look exactly like all other men.

But these words of the Apostle John are really mysterious, describing grotesque demonic creatures. I’ve wondered what the people of the earth will actually see as they look at these leaders mentioned here? Will their real demonic features be seen, or will their grotesque faces and bodies be hidden behind some good-looking, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, smooth-talking man’s face?

It’s not known if God will unveil those demons and allow people to see what they really look like. But most bible scholars agree that those demons who will rise to power will probably do as we have read about in these scriptures. They will indwell ordinary people, and because of that, they will look much like one of us.

And may I offer one more thought, a question! As we look at some of the national leaders of Russia and Iran and Syria and North Korea and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and others, are we, even now, looking into the face of some of those very same grotesque demons spoken about here?

Some bible scholars have concluded that the way in which these demons are presented to us here in verses 1, 2 and 3 is also intended to describe their plans and purposes, that they are a consortium of government leaders, the seven heads and ten horns referring to groups of seven and ten nations whose leaders have aligned themselves together to control the world, leaders and nations mostly located in and around the Middle-East, all demonically controlled, but with satan, the “dragon”, ever and always in the highest of command over them all.

Back in chapter 12 of Revelations, God gave us a detailed description of this great “dragon”, satan, and all that he has been doing. There in chapter 12, we learn that over the millennia since his rebellion against God, satan has been amassing his forces, first by convincing a third of the angels to rebel with him. And from then on, with the help of his fellow demons, he has been waging a fierce war against Israel, and also against Christ and His beloved “church”.

And in the “last days”, that war will intensify beyond anything mankind has ever known before. In the “last days”, God will remove more and more of the control restraints from around satan and his demons and will allow satan’s wrath to increase and prevail against the people of the earth. And with the suffering of the people increasing daily because of shortages of food and water and other necessities of life, more and more people, described here in verse 8 as being those whose “names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb”, will turn to satan to receive “the mark of the beast”, and to join with him to help him persecute anyone who would dare turn their hearts to Christ.

Here in these words, we can clearly see satan’s plan beginning to unfold as he reaches for world leadership. In these words, we can see satan’s version of the “Trinity”, satan envisioning himself as God the Father, the antichrist as the Son, and one of the beasts as the Holy Spirit, clever, but demonically counterfeit.

And here we see that a lot of “drama” will take place to fascinate and awe the people of the world. People will marvel as miraculous signs are performed, and especially as one of those leaders will suddenly receive a deadly wound to his head, perhaps from an assassination attempt, or the like, but he will survive and will emerge to be the “antichrist”. Verse 3,

³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.
(Revelation 13:3)

And it’s believed that this antichrist will be especially charismatic. And during the first three and a half years of his leadership, he will win great favor with people all over the

world. And it is believed that He will especially win favor with the leaders of the nation of Israel. Some bible scholars believe that the antichrist will actually facilitate the rebuilding of God's Holy temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem, right over the very spot where the Muslim "dome of the rock" mosque now stands. I cannot imagine how that will be able to take place in the face of what will surely be the strongest of opposition from the Muslims. But many bible scholars believe this absolutely will take place.

But then, suddenly, after 3 ½ years, everything will change. Listen as I read! And note the change that takes place between verse 5 and verse 6!

⁵ And he (the antichrist) was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (Revelation 13:5-9)

Again, these words have been interpreted to mean that for three and a half years the antichrist will present himself as generous and helpful to the people of the world, and especially to the people of Israel, even permitting worship of God to continue. But then, just as suddenly as he began, he will stop his contrived generosity and kindness and will become arrogant and violent and demanding, turning against everyone who has not taken his "mark of the beast". And he will begin to violently persecute those people, and especially the Jews.

This is believed to be when strict enforcement of the requirement for everyone to have the "mark of the beast" will take place. Anyone who refuses to take the "mark" will be denied the basic provisions for life, food, clothing, healthcare, police and fire protection and all of the other needed provisions. And not only that, as time passes, those who continue to refuse to take the "mark", and especially those who have given their hearts to Christ during this tribulation time will actually be hunted down and put into prison or killed.

⁷ It was granted to the beast to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (Revelation 13:7-9)

And notice also in verse 4 that it will be in those days that satan and his beasts and the antichrist will begin to show their true colors. Satan's goal has always been to be "as God", to have people actually "worship him. And this will be the perfect setting for him to make the demands to, "worship him or die". And many, many people will worship him, "those whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb".

Before we close for today, may we acknowledge that as we read these words that sound so bleak for humankind, the utter misery that satan's hand will bring, that God always remains absolutely and completely in sovereign control over all that will take place. Hidden within these very words that we have been reading are special encouraging truths meant just for you and me to find and to commit to memory as the "last days" of this earth descend upon us.

Here in several of these verses that we have been reading, we can see God's hidden hand, reaching in to guide every activity and event to the exact end that He has planned for the earth, albeit with some things being very difficult and painful for the saints.

Notice in verse 5, we are told that the antichrist was "given" a mouth to speak great things and he was "given authority". Verse 5

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. (Revelation 13:5)

And in verse 7, it was "granted to him", and also "authority was given to him" . . .

⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (Revelation 13:7)

And in verses 14 and 15, also note the word "granted".

¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (Revelation 13:14-15)

Who is it that is giving this power and guidance spoke about here? Yes, satan, the "dragon" and His false version of the Holy Spirit, the "beast", does do some of the "granting" of power. But folks, the "real power" that is "given" and "granted" is from God. He is guiding and directing every part that is being played out in this final drama of men and angels. And with God in absolute sovereign control, while yes men may suffer for a

short while, His beloved children really have nothing to fear. His children need only to remain faithful and He will work everything together for their good. Praise the Lord!

⁹ Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

(Matthew 24:9-13 (NKJV))