

VIII. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Loosening of Satan and Identifying the Two Beasts”

Revelation 12–13

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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We will be looking at Revelation 12 and 13 in this study along with two other chapters as well in doing this overview. In this series we are looking at difficult texts, tough issues and the challenges of the day from a Christian world and life view where we put life into Biblical perspective over tough issues. We started by looking at what the Bible says about the end times and that's where we've been. Then we looked at the four views of the millennium and the one thousand years. I tried to point you to the simplest one where the thousand years is this glorious period of time and is a symbolic number like the numbers throughout the book of Revelation. We see that Satan is defeated but not destroyed, bound but not paralyzed and restrained but not passive. So that the Gospel will go throughout all the nations and two things have occurred. One is the Accuser has been cast down and secondly, he is not allowed to deceive the nations.

Part of my going through these tough texts is to try and substantiate a Biblical fact that not only is God's Word true and understandable but whenever you get to difficult texts you don't handle it as if it were some extra Biblical book but you handle it as Scripture interpreting Scripture. Because the Bible is truth then the Bible cannot contradict itself therefore if there is a difficult text then go to the simpler text because the difficult text cannot contradict the simpler text. We call that the analogy by faith for by faith we believe God's Word is God's Word, inerrant and infallible, meaning it is non-contradictory. You can certainly use other books to help supplement if need be.

When I met with the recent seniors who will be graduating I challenged them when they get to college to visit churches for up to nine weeks but then after that they needed to join a church. Then they asked me what they should look for in a church and I told them what we have been looking at this year. Find out what the church says about the Bible. Do they believe in the supremacy and sufficiency of God's Word? Secondly, are they preaching it? Does it permeate the disciple making of the church? If they are doing that you'll hear a clear doctrine of the Trinity in prayer and in worship. You will hear a clear proclamation of the Gospel that the Gospel saves you from the penalty and power of sin. I had a great conversation with them about this. All of that starts with this matter of the Word of God. We don't worship the Word of God but you can't know the God of the Word that you worship without the Word of God. That means you have to be convinced of its supremacy and sufficiency.

With that in mind we tackle some of these tough issues. In the last study we started looking at how an ISIS fits into this and how the persecution of believers fit in terms of the victory of Christ, the coming of Christ and the ongoing work of what Christ has done? How do we as Christians respond? To sum up, two of the points made were that it is absolutely right for the state which God has ordained to take the power of the sword of the state for justice to protect all of its citizens and it's right for our sons and daughters to serve in the armed forces that use the power of the state to support that. The state is not about evangelism or discipleship for that is what the church does. So our sons

and daughters can serve the God-ordained purpose of the state with the power of the sword to protect its people and the Lord can send them to plant churches and do evangelism as we undergird with prayer as we send them out to these very same countries. Now the sword of the Spirit whereby they lead men and women to Christ, both are right and it's right to be engaged in that.

In this study we're going to look at the foundation of how to view an ISIS, a Nazi Germany, a Soviet Union, a Republic of China and the rapidly secular fascist humanism and state-ism of America. In highly apocalyptic language the Apostle John, led by the Spirit of God, based upon the vision of Christ, gives us some insights. To understand Revelation 13 we need to start at Revelation 12. I'm not going to go into great detail but you will get a grasp of it. Revelation 12 is a summation of God's commitment to the work of redemption throughout all of the ages and it is delivered through three visions. The first vision is in Revelation 12:1–6. The second vision is found in Revelation 12:7–12 and the third vision is in Revelation 12:13–17. They build on one another in order to bring certain emphasis. Let's start with the first vision.

Revelation 12:1–6 says *[1] And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. [2] She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. [3] And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. [4] His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. [5] She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, [6] and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.*

Here is an interesting text of Scripture. The dragon throughout the Scriptures is also the serpent who is referring to our adversary, Satan. In this he stands before this woman with twelve stars and that is referring to God's covenant people in the Old Testament. The woman is also among the twelve stars and refers to His church and is being prepared to a process to bring forth the Redeemer. She goes through the process of birth pains and agony until finally she gives birth to this Savior. People always ask me if this woman is Mary but it is not for Mary is the chosen representative of that congregation of God's people through which the Messiah is born but the picture is not of the singular woman who bears the privilege to deliver the Child by God's appointment. This woman represents God's people and the agonies they went through in the Old Testament to bring forth this Child.

Part of the agony God's people went through is found in the tail, head and horns of the dragon. This claims his power and authority over the nations. The crowns/diadems on the dragon's head though they are false again claim a position of authority that is not truly his and he is about to be cast down from. He marshals one third of the angelic force that join him in this battle and they are cast to the earth. The dragon stands before the woman waiting to devour the child as she gives birth and we've seen this throughout the Old Testament. The first promise of this Redeemer comes to a woman and it's Eve. Eve is instructed that she will have a Seed and her Seed will be bruised upon His heel and He will bruise the head of the serpent. That is the first promise

of the Redeemer. It is also a promise of the virgin birth because women don't have seed but this one will. She will give birth to One who will win the victory over Satan to redeem His people from their sin which they have fallen into by virtue of Adam's sinful disobedience of God's Word and therefore Adam's entire race is born sinners, because he sinned we sinned with him.

Here is a promise of a second Adam. I will give a woman a Seed and a second Adam will come. When He comes He will deal a death blow for He will bruise the serpent upon the head. He won't be dead but it will cost him for he'll be bruised and will suffer. So what does Satan attempt to do? The text tells us that he tries to devour that Child after that Child is born. So you have Cain doing the work of Satan. He kills Abel and there the murderer is at work. Later Moses is born and there is this movement. Satan is not omniscient but he responds to this movement by trying to devour all the male children through Pharaoh. Moses is still not the Redeemer. Then there is the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, Athaliah, who tries to destroy all the seed of David through which the Redeemer will come. Then wise men come and proclaim that He will be born in Bethlehem and now Herod goes to devour all the children that are there during that time. Those are the agonies of Satan's attempt to devour the fulfillment of the promise throughout history, yet the Lord brings forth His Redeemer.

This One will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This woman, this congregation of God's people, give birth through this chosen woman of Mary and this birth comes to reality. Christ suffers, dies and rises and wins the victory on the cross for His people. Then He ascends back into heaven. Now as we move into the New Testament the woman, the congregation of God's people which include all the children of Abraham who are circumcised in heart, have to flee into a wilderness, a place of suffering but it is a place appointed and prepared by God. It is a place where the bride of His Savior, His covenant people, are being nourished.

We don't think of the wilderness as a place to be nourished, do we? Yet ask Elijah or Jesus. They were nourished by the presence of the Lord in the wilderness. The Apostle Paul was taught of the Lord in the wilderness. Ask John the Baptist who was taught out in the wilderness. Now the church of Jesus Christ from the ascension of Jesus to the second coming is in the wilderness in adversity. We haven't crossed over to the river to the new heavens and the new earth. We are under all the difficulties of the wilderness but it is a place God has appointed and it's a place where we're being refined and nourished with the manna from heaven to sustain us even as He did Israel who went into the wilderness and was nourished before she came into the Promised Land. So is His church, His bride being nourished by the risen Savior in the wilderness.

Where is Satan now that he failed in that? Let's go to the next vision. Revelation 12:7-12 says [7] *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, [8] but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. [9] And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. [10] And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. [11] And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they*

loved not their lives even unto death. [12] Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

So now with the ascension of Jesus He has bound the strong man, Satan and he is no longer the deceiver of the nations. The accuser of the brethren has no legal grounds to accuse the elect of God for it is God who justified them in Jesus Christ. So he is thrown down to the earth along with his angels. I do want you to keep that 1,260 days in the back of your mind but again that is a symbolic term for a specific purpose of a length of time but a specific amount of time in which the church is the wilderness but being nourished. Satan can no longer stop the work of the Gospel going to the nations. Now the heavens are rejoicing but us on the earth rejoice in what the Lord has done yet we are going through difficulties and challenges of being in this wilderness even though it has been prepared by God for our nourishment and refinement.

Now that Satan has come down and is doing his work, how are we to respond? Let's go to the third vision. Michael and the arch angels upon completion of Christ's victory have cast out Satan and the angels for they can no longer appear before God to accuse the brethren. The strong man has been bound, but not inactive so what will he do? Revelation 12:13–17 says *[13] And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. [14] But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. [15] The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. [16] But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. [17] Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.*

Now Satan goes after the woman. He goes after God's covenant people to make war against her and all of her offspring – all those churches being planted from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the utter most part of the world. They are the elect of God both Jew and Gentile. As Satan begins to challenge her she flies away on the wings of the eagle. Can you hear the words of the prophet? I will bear you up like upon wings of the eagle and the Lord will sustain her and all of the prosecution that is brought upon her. The Lord will nourish her.

It is very clear that in this period of time from the ascension of Jesus, the casting down of Satan, the binding of Satan, the restricting of Satan, this rage against the church from Satan that the Lord puts us in the wilderness to refine us and nourish us. He will bear us up, sustain us yet we will be persecuted unto death. The church will know persecution but it will never know destruction. Upon this Rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. No matter what comes she will prevail and there will be spiritual growth and transformation as she is nourished and developed. As the war comes against us from the defeated foe, we put on the armor of the Lord, we are sustained with the weapons of the Spirit and the Lord bears us up on the wings of eagles, speaking of the ministry of the Holy Spirit who bears us up in these days.

So who is it that Satan will assault and who is it that is sustained, refined and nourished even though their under persecution sometimes unto death? He says here are

the characteristics of My people. They keep My commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. This is not what saves them. Keeping the commandments and holding to Jesus is what reveals them. That is their evidence and the reality of their life. Those whom Jesus holds, hold onto Him. They seek to obey Him with unevenness and imperfection but their obedience to Him will be the evidence of His people. Please don't buy the books that put obedience to Christ as an evidence of salvation on the a la carte menu for it is the infallible evidence of the saved. They are not perfect in their obedience but their obedience is the evidence of the perfections of Christ on their behalf and they hold fast to Jesus. Anyone who denies Christ, the Son of God, having come in the flesh, not a man becoming God, but God having come to be a Man in the flesh and now bears His deity and humanity for all eternity, then that is not His church, for His people hold fast to the testimony of Jesus.

After those three visions, Satan has been cast down out of the heavens and it says he is on the sand of the sea. That means on one side would be the sea and the other side would be the land. In the Bible in Hebrew cosmology/pictures the sea is always bad. Rivers are good. The Gospel of grace is a river of life. The sea is roaring and foaming seeking to overcome. There is a reason that Pharaoh and his army were amerced in the sea for that was judgment upon them. The sea is the declaration of evil and judgment. So Satan is standing on the edge of the sea with the land on one side and the sea on the other.

Now Satan will have his assistance, his helpers, his allies – two beasts. Beast number one we see as we begin in Revelation 13. Revelation 13:1–10 says *[1] And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. (Same language used in Revelation 12:3 where the beast is not the same as the dragon in Revelation 12:3 but emulates the dragon.) [2] And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. [3] One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. [4] And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"*

[5] And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months (1,260 days – same amount of time referenced in Revelation 12:6). [6] It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. [7] Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, [8] and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. [9] If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

[10] If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

This text is an echo of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7 rising up out of the sea are four beasts and they are all pictured right here but they are pictured differently because the ones in Daniel 7 were rising, from Syria, Babylon, the Grecian Empire and Roman

Empire. This beast is described because it stands in league with those empires but it is now future manifestations of those empires. The fullness of the number of them is given, ten, the claim to authority, their ultimate success in ruling over all and their seeming success at destroying the church of Jesus Christ. We know they are not successful because the Bible says they can't be successful but with what they do there will seemingly be success. We will be taken captive, slain with the sword and the Lord says in those days the people who have faith in Christ endure to the end but the church is not conquered. We may die but the church is not conquered. On the contrary, it is furthered in the seed and blood of martyrs.

Who is this? Clearly, it is the power of nation states. This beast is the rising use of the state. What you have here is a growing dynamic to it and we've had throughout the years. We have had the tyrants in the Old Testament like Nimrod and then we've had the work of the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire all fitting this description of coming against God's covenant people to destroy them or rising up in blasphemy against the Lord. We have had empires since then as well.

Then there is a mirror of Christ that is here. The mirror of Christ is that Christ is slain, goes to the grave but rises victorious. The mirror image is the beast who is serving the dragon receives a mortal blow but seemingly comes back from it. It is not an actual mortal blow but it looks like a lethal blow, but he comes back from it. Now who is that? Some interpreters are going to tell you that is Rome, under Nero. The number of man is 666 and one can make that stand for Neron Kaisar. So some say this is referring to Rome having a death blow and Nero committed suicide and seemingly the empire fell apart in three parts but then came back together by a man named Vespasian in 70 AD who brought the empire back to life. Then the Roman Empire went forward and all other empires since then have been a manifestation of the Roman Empire. I like that and two of the books I've recommended for you to read say that but I would have to say I don't think that is the interpretation.

I think the interpretation is, the beast of the authority and power of the state government is identified with Satan. Who gives it power and authority to bring persecution against the church between the First and Second Advent of Christ, this 1,260 days, this 42 months? It is Satan. Remember Satan is restricted and restrained but it doesn't mean he doesn't have some powers and some activity that God is using in His sovereign grace. I believe the mortal blow is referring to that which the beast is identified, Satan and that he received the mortal blow when Christ won the victory at the cross but because he is defeated yet not destroyed, seemingly he still has power and authority. I think it is referring to Satan at work through the power of the state.

Remember he was bruised upon the head, the mortal blow was given to him at the cross and Jesus won His victory over sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan, but now not yet has he been destroyed and seemingly he has come back from that mortal blow. But in reality he has not. He is still under the sovereign hand of God and can only do what God allows to accomplish God's purposes. Satan's chief ally is the power of the state. It didn't quit with Rome for it continued with Medieval empires, a Soviet Union, communist and atheistic regimes, the destruction and killing of Christians have been going on and now it is rising even to the point of a caliphate movement called ISIS. That may be the final one and it may not be the final one but Satan will continue to do that and it will keep morphing and morphing and morphing. It will look like it even obliterates a

church. While many Christians will be slain His church will prevail or actually His church is being nourished in the wilderness under this assault but that's not the only ally that Satan has.

Another ally that he has is in the second part of Revelation 13. Revelation 13:11–16 says *[11] Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb (a metaphor for Jesus, so here is a nominal, religious presentation) and it spoke like a dragon (claims to be a lamb but it's the doctrine of demons from its speech). [12] It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence (in other words, this beast goes in league with the power of the state), and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast (The religious beast makes you worship the state, the messianic state that then becomes the deliverer), whose mortal wound was healed. [13] It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people (Paul refers to this as false signs and wonders that come with power), [14] and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived (You are to worship this beast that now stands with the dragon). [15] And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. [16] Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, [17] so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. [18] This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.*

This is why we're doing this series this year. Satan works through this beast which is the false church and all of its false doctrine and teaching. It grabs people because of their fascination with so called miracles that are done to the point that they leave the truth of God's Word in the seeking of miracles. But God's people stand because they love the truth, the truth of God's Word that leads them to the majesty of the God of the Word.

Some would tell you that number is Nero but I don't think so. I think it's the anti-Christ. The book of Revelation doesn't talk about this but now we have the anti-Christ government and the anti-Christ church. I have one more I'll share with you in just a moment that is doing the work of Satan to attack Christ by attacking His church. He can no longer try and devour the Messiah for He has come, risen and He is reigning again but now Satan brings his rage through these allies against God's people.

Concerning the numbers mentioned, I'm going to appeal to the symbolism of the text. The 42 months are the 1,260 days and it's also a quote from Daniel standing for time, times and half a times. Time is referring to one year, times is referring to two years, and now a half and we're back to 42 to months. He has used three different ways that there is a specific time. It is a temporary time. It is an appointed time between the ascension of Jesus and Satan's rage against the church which we can endure for lo his doom is sure, as we sing Sunday after Sunday. Even during this time, while the church is under physical persecution, it is under spiritual transformation, nourishment and growth in the Lord.

If you'll read on from Revelation 13 to Revelation 17 you'll see that the beast and the dragon have another ally. Who would that be? From Revelation 17, the ally of the

two beasts serving the dragon is the whore of Babylon, the great prostitute. There is much to say from Revelation 17 but now you see the development of what Satan and his assault upon God's people looks like in the nations of this world. One is the messianic state where the state is the messiah and the deliverer. Two is the false religions that become the hand maiden of the state and looks like a lamb but actually speaks the doctrine of demons. With false, signs, wonders and miracles he will deceive the world but cannot deceive the elect because of their love of the truth. Three is the pervasiveness of sexual immorality and unfettered eroticism – the whore of Babylon.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Do you see the power of the state against Christians – not just in the Middle East or Southeast Asia or North Africa? Go ask person after person where the power of the state has come against them. You need to understand this. Secular humanism is not asking for the church to tolerate secular humanism. Secular humanism wants to erase every form of religion except that which supports the state and Christianity in particular. It sees Christianity as a disease and if you can't get rid of it then what is the next best thing to do? It is to quarantine it. Put it in a place and give it a time but you can't bring it to the public square. This is what is happening today – secular fascist humanism and the power of the state against the church of Jesus Christ.

Praise the Lord we still have a first amendment and I'm asking the Lord for a Gospel awakening but what is happening here is the way of all states unless God's grace intervenes. It becomes an instrument of Satan to become the substitute messiah and then it will take your rights, your children and everything.

What about the false religions? Is that beast flourishing in our midst? Do we see the false religions moving? It is not simply any longer in the offshoots of cults, but now in theological liberalism is pervading evangelical Christianity. Has there ever been a culture so fascinated with sexual eroticism than ours today? It is the whore of Babylon. So what you are seeing is something that has been taking place since the ascension of Jesus and will take place – two beasts and the prostitute of Babylon. When Satan is loosened in this period of time it will become heightened that seemingly the church has become extinguished but it is not.

When you read the Bible don't be surprised at anti-Christ government and state, anti-Christ religion even masquerading as the Lamb's religion or anti-Christ ethics and even the preciousness of the gift of sexuality within marriage, but know this. The Lamb has conquered and won the victory. Though there is state persecution, religious deception, unfettered sexual eroticism and absorption for self-gratification, the truth of the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, from the mouth of the Lamb victorious, will keep His people and the gates of hell that are pouring out these things shall not prevail for the accuser of the brethren has been cast down. Our sins are forgiven and the power of the Spirit of God will keep His people and they will endure to the end. It is not their endurance that saves them. It is their Savior that keeps them and they will endure to the end.

Pastor, do you think we're at the last moment, the 42 months, the 1,260 days or the time, times and half a times or as Revelation calls it, 'the perfect 20'? Seven is the number of completion. Three is the number of perfection. So here is completion and here is perfection. Six is one short of the seven and six is incompleteness. The three of perfection is telling you – 666 – the incompleteness number said three times is telling you

the beast and all that comes up and the dragon, do not win the victory. It is Christ who wins the victory. It is Christ who has won it all. It is Christ who is the Redeemer. This seeming perfect storm is actually an incomplete and ultimate impotent storm. Christ has won the victory for His people.

I'll tell you where I think we are when we get to the book of Thessalonians in about two weeks. I will tell you what I'm praying. Go and read the darkness of the days of the state persecution of sexual immorality and an apostate church, we have had time after time where that was present and it's at that moment that God bursts forth in a Great Awakening. I pray for that daily, preach for it and get hope every time I look at the people I get to pastor and serve. So we will pray for God's glory with our commitment as Briarwood that we will equip Christians to worship God and reach people for Christ, beginning in Birmingham throughout all the world and may God do another awakening because it's at moments like we are today where His glory and the power of His grace can be seen in ways that have never been seen before. If not, then come quickly Lord Jesus and keep me faithful to the end. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time and privilege we could be together in Your Word, to go with these challenging texts in light of the simple truths of the Bible, to understand this enormous time of history with such apocalyptic language and yet it is merely giving picture to what You have already written throughout the Word of God. So Father, thank You for giving us with this, clarity so that we know it happened, it's happening and it will happen until Jesus comes but the one who seemingly came back from a mortal blow has been defeated and will be destroyed and so will the beast of the sea and the beast of the land and so will the prostitute of Babylon. Our Father, our Savior rose from the dead and is coming again. O Jesus thank You for telling us in this very Book the time is near so come and may You find us faithful to the end, in Jesus' Name, Amen.