

Tales of the End: A Study of the Book of Revelation

Session 14: The Last Word On Politics, 2

Scripture: Revelation 13-14

The Beasts

- The defeated dragon recruits 2 **beasts** to wage his war against the **Faith Community**: sea and earth.
- These beasts are based off the beasts in **Job** 40-41, and they are shown to be patched together and worn out.
- The 2 beasts are images to show us how the Satanic will covertly work in **government** and religion.
- Dragon needs a strategy to defeat the People of God:
- **Frighten** them into disobedience.
- Deceive them into **illusion**.
- The devil seeks to separate our behavior and our belief from the **rule** of God.
- The sea beast is designed to frighten us into disobedience (To change our **behavior**)
- The land beast is designed to deceive us into illusion (**belief**)

Faith and Endurance

- Each beast vision concludes with a pastoral counsel **guiding** us through the political dimensions of our lives.
- John's Task: To fortify his people to face the **worse**.
- When named, fears lose half their power.
- Our challenge: When we live in a violent world, it is easy to adopt **violent** means ourselves – especially when our cause is righteous.
- Sea beast **kills** its opposition.
- Our task is endurance and faith.
- Faith and Endurance are **NOT** passive.
- Aggressive forces in the battle between God and evil.

Land Beast

- Contains the capacity to **deceive**.
- The land beast is religious – a parody of the Lamb.
- Seeks to get people to **worship** it by using religious trappings (miracles).
- Known by the most famous number in the Bible: **666**.
- The religion of the land beast is NOT divine mystery, it is a human **number**.
- 666 is a triple failure to be **777**
- 777- 3 x the perfect number – whole, divine.
- The Land beast religion is commercialized – getting us to buy and sell at its bidding.
- **Forehead** and Right hand as places for the number.

- Shema – Dt. 6
- The mark of the beast replaces the **Shema** – religion becomes consumed, we bow before success.
- Peterson: “The buying and selling of **religion** is the mark of the beast.”
- When John is done with the beasts, they are not awesome, they are ridiculous.

Christians and Politics

- Early church had both a respect for government and contempt when it tried to substitute anything or person for **Jesus**.
- A Christian can be a good **citizen** under a bad government.
- And a Christian can maintain a **holy** witness in a corrupt church.
- Dragon, Sea beast, land beast – satanic trinity –infiltrate our **politics**, deflecting our worship from God to human authorities.
- In Revelation, all three are defeated.
- John, though, does not underrate their great **power** and deception.
- To give us **hope**, John matches the 3 beasts with 3 visions showing the force of salvation behind the scenes working on our behalf.
 1. **Lamb** leading worship (14:1-5)
 2. 3 angels preaching (14:6-13)
 3. Son of Man harvesting (14:14-20)
- While we are doing our best to worship, be taught, live lives of holiness – God is helping us to do each task.

Worship

- Our response to the lamb’s action, the **action** that redeems us.
- In worship, our fragmented lives are corrected and rearranged as an **offering** to God.
- If worship is not a **waste** of time for the **lamb**, it can’t be for us.
- “Excessive activism is for those who do not live by grace.”-Brutsh

Preaching

- Preaching is an act in which the word of God is proclaimed in **worship**, which dooms the beast, and guides holy living.

Holy Living

- Holy Living is the **action** by which we express in our behavior and speech the love and presence of Jesus.

Politics of the Lamb

- These 3 actions allow us to **survive** and flourish politically.
- No action or belief is **private**.
- The more religious, the less private.
- We cannot avoid politics.

- We are centers of **power** – the power to bless or curse.
- How will we manage our power?
- Uses the daily rhythms of **life** with Jesus to protect us from our own hubris and guide us to maturity.
- Politics of the **dragon**: Takes the superficial and pretentious and inflates into promises of dominion and reputation, seducing our ego.
- Every church is set down into the middle of the conflict of **politics**.
- We **live** in the crossfire of the blustering dragon and the powerful lamb-meekness.
- Both concern power.
- We must choose whose **power** we will follow: dragon or lamb.
- Difference: **Using** people to become powerful
- Or covenanting with people to extend **power** to everyone through the power of salvation.
- Will we exercise the power of coercion or the power of **grace**?
- We will persevere by submitting to the powers of the Kingdom and practicing the means of the Kingdom.