

Rev. 13:1-10 “The Powers That Be”

For the Children: Sometimes the Lord allows other people to bully us, even to hurt us. I knew a young boy from a Christian family who was beaten up and had his school lunch and money stolen by other boys. Sometimes the Lord even allows the people who lead a nation to hurt His Church. The Lord warns His children against using violence against our leaders as a solution – though in some cases He allows us to defend ourselves (e.g. from robbers). He wants us to trust Him and wait for Him to remove those who are attacking His people; and to show a good Christian witness to those who persecute us. **Questions:** Is it ever right for God’s children to fight against their government? What is involved in giving a good witness to those who rule over us? Find a verse where the Lord Jesus showed that His kingdom is not built by force.

Introduction:

First Point: The Powers That Be

- 1) The Identity of the Beast from the Sea: The Beast is a hybrid of rapacious, powerful beasts, a combination of the 4 beasts of Daniel 7. The 4 successive kingdoms of Daniel’s visions are combined, to represent all anti-Christian governments and forces – hence the “7 heads.” The “10 horns/diadems” indicate the great power and dominion, the “blasphemous names” show the anti-Christian nature of these forces. They are given power by Satan – though under God’s control – for the whole of this age (“42 months”)
- 2) The Activity of the Beast from the Sea: Speaking blasphemies and arrogant words indicates anti-God, anti-Christian views and laws; divine pretensions; wars against the Church, i.e., open hostility that “overcomes” – Satan can temporarily do great harm that appears to wipe out the Church in one area or another. See 1 Pet. 5:8. The false “wonders” Satan works through these forces include the “resurrection” (reappearance) of hostile political systems that were thought to have died

Second Point: The Christian Response to the Powers That Be

- 1) Unlike the Unregenerate: Unbelievers are often impressed by such power and “wonders.” Or they conclude that resistance is futile and submit to the political correctness of the day. They make these powers their god, and so worship the dragon (often without realizing it). This is not the believer’s response to political power or strong-arm tactics
- 2) Neither Revolution Nor Compromise: Rom. 13 tells us to uphold even non-Christian governments, so long as they are lawful. Even those who abuse power must be upheld to a point. We are not given the sword to use against lawful authority at our whim. But neither fear, nor a false patriotism, should lead us to disobey the Lord. We must obey God rather than men, and be prepared to suffer the consequences – rather than revolt or compromise (v. 10) – though note Calvin’s carefully qualified place for removing ungodly governments
- 3) Endurance and Faith: V. 10 indicates the proper response to a government’s abuse of power – perseverance and faith. A similar approach is commanded in other authority-situations (1 Pet. 2:20; 3:1-2). We persevere because we know that the Lord limits oppression in time and scope – it is “given” to the Beast, and limited to 42 months (v. 7). We also know they can only hurt the body – which God will one day restore. For Christ’s wonders are true, as is His resurrection-power

Conclusion:

