

**The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet**  
**Revelation 12-14**  
**December 29, 2013**

Last Lord's Day we looked at the first part of this twelfth chapter, and I entitled it, "How the Dragon Almost Stole Christmas" because the Christmas story is embedded in the first part of Revelation 12. We saw there a woman in labor, Revelation 12:2: "Then being with child she cried out in labor and pain to give birth."

And then we are introduced to this great red dragon. He goes by many names. He is still alive, and he is still on planet earth. And we are told who he is in verse nine. That great dragon is the serpent of old, the old snake who was in the garden. He disguised himself that way and spoke—the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

We see that in verse four, this wicked creature of God who was never created to be a devil, never created to be a Satan, never created to be a serpent, never created to be a dragon, but he was created. And if we read Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 correctly, we can see that he was created to be one of the highest ranking of all the angels of God. He was perfect. He was without sin until one day, as he is in the throne room of God. As an anointed cherub, he looks over at the LORD of hosts. All the other angels were covering their faces and covering their feet, but he peeked from behind the wings, and he said to himself, "How come he is getting all this glory? What about me? What about me?"

And so he became jealous of God and in his pride and in his arrogance, he led a great rebellion in heaven that is talked about there in verse seven and following. He led a great rebellion against God. And this once beautiful, magnificent musician—for he had magnificent pipes to sound the praises of God—this beautiful,

magnificent musician, this “covering” angel, this anointed cherub, fell from glory and fell from grace.

And in turning away from the living and true God, he became the opposite of what he was created to be. He became a darkened, depressed, death-dealing defiler of the whole creation. And there he stands ready in verse four of Revelation 12 to devour the child—that child is the Lord Jesus Christ—to devour him as soon as he was born.

Last week we saw how the law could have killed Christ justly and yet unjustly, because his mother was found to be with child while engaged to Joseph. And we found the megalomaniacal Herod the Great, who killed his own children, who lived in paranoid fear constantly, who wanted to kill the Christ child. And those are the stories that history would record for us. But the real story of history always seems to be elusive and escape the notice of the historian and escape our notice, because the book of Revelation, the Apocalypse—which literally means the unveiling, the pulling back of the curtain, shows us who the real puppet master of history is.

Who put Barack Obama in the White House? The same person who put George W. Bush in the White House, the same person who put Bill Clinton in the White House, George Herbert Walker Bush in the White House, Ronald Reagan in the White House, Jimmy Carter in the White House. Who put Vladimir Putin in power? And who is that? Well, he boasted to Christ in those great temptations reported in the gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke. See, all this wonderful, magnificent splendor, see all of this power, all of this can be yours if you will just bow down and worship me. It is mine to give. I give it to whom I choose (Matthew 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7). And he is telling a half truth, a partial truth.

The rest of the story is that God is sovereign even over the devil. And so the real story of Christmas—as we saw last week—is not in Herod or the law. The real story of Christmas is in this monster of history, this diabolical fiend who manipulates the events of history to his own purpose. It is Satan himself, the devil, the ancient snake, the fiery red dragon who sought to kill the Christ child as soon as he was born.

Now who is the woman? Well, obviously in one sense, we are sure the woman is the Virgin Mary. But I believe that she symbolizes more than just the Virgin Mary. I believe that the woman represents the people of Israel, the Jewish people. And we see that the great wrath of the dragon is toward the Jewish people throughout history. You can see it in the book of Esther.

Here was a man. He was very wealthy. He was very well connected. His lobbyists connected him to the most powerful politician of the entire kingdom, the Kingdom of Iran, Persia. His name is Haman. And in spite of having handsome sons and beautiful daughters and a massive amount of money and incredible political power, in spite of being honored by the king, over and over again, and basically having whatever he wanted—because of a lowly Jewish man named Mordecai, he was a deeply depressed and angry man. This is sort of the story of anti-Semitism throughout history (Esther 3:2-6).

Haman who had everything has all of his happiness and joy, why? Because there is a Jewish man standing in the gate who doesn't bow and scrape to him. That is part of the story of the book of Esther.

And so Satan has a particular malignant malevolence towards the Jewish people, and he seeks to persecute them. He seeks to wipe them out. But beyond that there are others. Look at verse 17, Revelation 12:17: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman.

And he went off to make war with the rest of her offspring.” And that includes you and me, “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” That is believers, whether Jewish or Gentile (Galatians 3:27-29), whether male or female, whether bond or free. We are all one in Christ Jesus.

Now, I want you to understand something about the meaning of history as we continue from last week’s sermon. The meaning of history in part is this. It is this anger and wrath of the devil who has been kicked out of heaven. You see the war in verse seven, Revelation 12:7. War broke out in heaven. It is interesting that the archangel who fights the former archangel has a name that really rebukes the devil. We have no idea what the devil’s original name was. But the name of the archangel who fights Satan is Michael. Three Hebrew words: Who, Like, God, Michael. Who is like God? That is what his name means.

So there is the devil. We don’t know what his name originally was. It is never Lucifer, by the way. That is simply taking the Latin Vulgate of Saint Jerome, five centuries after the time of Christ and using a word that he used, a Latin word meaning light bearer as the name of Satan. But that is not Satan’s name before he fell. It is not Satan’s name after he fell. What is his name? I don’t know what it is. Nobody knows what his name is. His name is forgotten. But here the archangel who stands against him, his name is remembered: Michael, Who, Like, God. Who is like God? Michael. And Michael overcomes, and the devil is kicked out of heaven along with the angels who followed him. They are symbolically referred to as stars. And we know that that symbolism is correct because of chapter one (Revelation 1:20).

And we see in verse four, this dragon’s tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth.

So the devil comes, and he is greatly angry, Revelation 12:12:  
“Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth.” Who is that?

Do we have any inhabitants of the earth here this morning? I am one. I live here. I live here. I am an inhabitant of the earth. Heaven may be rejoicing now because the devil has been kicked out of there. But the earth, there is woe on us, for the devil has come down to you having great wrath because he knows he has a short time.

You know, I often have people ask the question: “Well, why does the devil resist since he knows he is going to lose anyhow?”

Have you ever sat with somebody who is addicted to something? You say: “Why do you do this? Why do you do this?”

“I just can’t help it. I want to do it. I do it because I want to do it.”

See, it is not a rational thing. Sin is never rational. Rebellion against God is never rational. Satan knows he is going to the Lake of Fire, but he is going to raise as much hell as he can before he is cast into hell. That is true. And so in his anger and in his rage, in a self-destructive rage he cannot, he will not, repent. He comes to earth full of fury. And if you want to understand something of history, understand that it is written with the fiery fury of the evil one. He comes to earth having great wrath.

The second sentence of Revelation 12:12: “For the devil has come down to you”—that is here on planet earth—“having great wrath because he knows that he has a short time.”

He doesn’t know how long he has. Do you know why? The Bible tells us that a thousand years with the Lord is as one day, and a day as is a thousand years. So it has been less than two days since

Christ was crucified, dead and buried and ascended to heaven, less than two days. It is a short time. The devil doesn't know how long a time he has. But as long as he has, he is determined to wage war against the people of God, because he cannot pull God down from his throne. He cannot displace God, replace God. He cannot assault the Christ. So he assaults the people who name the name of Christ. And that is the Jewish people and the Gentile people, who, in the words of verse 13 "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

And how does the devil manifest ferocious, fiery wrath in human history? We see it, moving into chapter 13: "Then I saw on the sand of the sea and I saw a beast rising out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns and on his horns ten crowns and on his head some blasphemous name. The beast which I saw was like a leopard." That takes you back to the book of Daniel. It takes you to the Greek Empire. "He had feet like a bear." That takes you to the Persian Empire. "A lion like the mouth of a lion." It takes you back to Babylon. "The dragon gave him his power, his throne, his great authority" (Revelation 13:1-2).

Satan was telling Christ the truth when he offered the kingdoms of this world to him, but a partial truth: "It is mine to give."

Do you understand something of the flow of history? There has never been a golden age on earth and there never will be a golden age until Christ comes again. That is the truth of history. We talk about bygone days as if somehow or another they were wonderful days. They were not. The book of Ecclesiastes warns us: 'Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this' (Ecclesiastes 7:10). There has never been a golden age. "Oh, if only I had been born back then."

I want you to know something. The people who were born back then were saying, "Oh, if I only I had been born back then."

You see, people are always discontented with their lot in life. There has never been a golden age. There has never been a time when there was world peace. There has never been a time where people didn't hate each other. There has never been a time when there wasn't sickness and death. There are better times in history and worst times in history. I would have rather lived under the czars than under the reign of terror of the Bolsheviks. I would have rather lived under Louis XVI for all of his foolishness and insanity—as most world leaders are somewhat nuts. I would have rather lived under Louis XVI than under Robespierre and the blood bath and reign of terror where they invented an instrument of sudden death, the guillotine invented by a doctor to make death quick and painless. I would rather have lived under the Bourbon dynasty than I would have lived under the reign of terror. There are better times and worse times, but there has never been a golden age.

What we see in Revelation 13:1 is that Satan is manipulating the events of world history, and world history is going somewhere. Where is it going? Turn with me, if you will, for a moment, to 2 Thessalonians two. Where is world history going? World history is going to a climax, a crisis, a judgment. World history is going to a place.

2 Thessalonians chapter two, where are finally on the scene of world history—not just a figure who is deceived and manipulated by Satan comes to power—but someone in a peculiar and unique way, filled with the spirit of Satan—is exalted in power on the earth. And here is what he says in 2 Thessalonians 2:3:

“Let no one deceive you by any means for that day”—what day?—our gathering together with the Lord, the rapture, the Lord calling us up to heaven to be with himself. Verse one: “Brethren,

concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him.” So that is what he is referring to.

“Let no one deceive you by any means for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the Son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped so that he sits as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

And he goes on and speaks about him further, and then he speaks in verse eight: “And then the lawless one will be revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). I want you to understand that even now, there are many antichrists, as it has always been throughout history (1 John 2:18). Satan has had many candidates that he has sought to put on the final, ultimate throne of power on the earth. But he has always been checked by the sovereignty of God (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).

But there will come a point when God will no longer check what Satan is doing, and he will allow Satan to put his man on the throne of power in a global, one world government that will seek to annihilate believers and the Jewish people.

2 Thessalonians 2:8, “Then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming.” And so what is he saying? He is saying that right in the middle of this human being, empowered by Satan, filled with the spirit of Satan, finally gaining global power over the whole world—the civilized world, at least, because there is this factor of the armies out of the East that seem to be in rebellion against him—finally when he is on the throne of power, Satan’s own man and individual—after many attempts, many starts and stops throughout history—what happens to him? The Lord



Jesus destroys him with the breath of his mouth at the time of his coming.

But notice verse nine: “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Sobering words, right? Why do news people, whether they are European or American, whether they are South American or Central American, whether they are from Asia or Africa, why do the news people fawn over evil? Why do they promote evil most of the time? Why do they omit the good stories and tell us the stories that bring us down? Why do they fawn over political leaders? Here is the answer: “With all unrighteousness,” verse 10, “deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

And so, as we look back at Revelation 13, throughout history Satan has been manipulating political figures, the rise and fall of nations. We saw how God overrules that himself in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts so that men would come and seek God (Acts 17:26-27). But Satan is manipulating in the Democratic party and in the Republican party and in the Libertarian party and in the Green party and even the Constitution party and all the other parties. He is manipulating things. He wants people to be deceived. He wants people to believe that finally man can bring about world peace without God. That is the basic lie, isn't it? “You will be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). That is the lie. And they believe the lie. And if we look back at Revelation 13, this enraged, angry, fiery red dragon, this ancient snake, this devil, this Satan works to carry out this rage towards the

Lord and the Lord's messiah by carrying out that rage towards the people of God.

And so he takes this beast, this composite of many animals throughout history, and he creates a final form of political evil that extends his power not only over the lower 48, but over Alaska and over Hawaii and over Panama and Brazil, over France and Germany and Russia and China and Nigeria, over all the nations of the earth. He attempts to extend his power. He is called the beast. Why?

There is great irony in his being called the beast, because he is attempting to be man at his best, humanity in its zenith, humanity to the nth degree, six, the number of man, to the nth degree: six, six, six. What is the mystery of that number? The mystery of the number is very simple. It is the number of man. Notice that is what he says at the end of this chapter. What is the mystery?

Revelation 13:18, "Here is wisdom. Let whom who has understanding calculate the number of the beast for it is the number"—by the way there is no indefinite article there in Greek—"it is the number of man."

What? Is it that simple? Yes, it is that simple. That doesn't require linguistic, mathematical skill, like adding up the value of the Hebrew letters in the Hebrew word, קסר נרון (Neron Kaisar, Nero Caesar), or Latin Kingdom, the Roman Empire, Λατεινος (Lateinos, a Greek word). It is not for the clever. He doesn't say: "Let the genius come forward and figure out this supreme mystery." He says: "Here is wisdom," חָכְמָה (hahkma). "Here is wisdom," σοφία (sophia). "Here is wisdom": "It is the number of Man" (Revelation 13:18).

What an amazing thing. It is the number of man. Do you mean 666 is that simple? It is the number of man? That is what it means?

You mean . . . are you serious? I bought all these books explaining the mystery of the number and numerology and this, that and the other. You mean it is that simple. You mean it actually tells us what it means right there in the verse? Yes. It is the number of man. It is “Man is the measure of all things.” And there you see the irony of the whole chapter. When you see a political figure who communicates with you warmly and intimately, face-to-face in the way that television makes possible—we actually see somebody’s face.

You know, I was watching some old movies this past week, black and white movies, and I was struck at the acting style and how different it is. It is because actors a century ago had to project and they had to use exaggerated features not unlike comedy and tragedy back in Greek drama. They had to project their voices and they exaggerated their gestures and their facial expressions so that the audience could see the television and movies—particularly with high definition where you see all their blemishes—chances all of that so that now we view that as almost bathos rather than pathos, a humorous kind of tragedy instead of real tragedy. We see it as overly dramatic.

We watched a short presentation of *A Christmas Carol* that was narrated by Vincent Price many, many years ago, and it seemed so exaggerated. It seemed melodramatic. But the intimacy . . . Think of what is possible today with politics. You can see the person’s face. You can see the twitch in their eye. You can see all these amazing things. It is so personable.

Who won the 1960 presidential debates? Richard Nixon. He did. He beat John Kennedy. But he didn’t really. People who watched it said, “Oh, no. Nixon didn’t win. It was Kennedy,” because Kennedy had been coached on how to communicate using this new medium of television, warm and personable and friendly and kind. It was intimate.

And you see the politician can now appeal to you in a personal, warm, friendly way. But you still have to ask the question that was asked of Richard Nixon. Would you buy a used car from this man?

And that is Satan's last political figure. This last political figure, 666, was a warm, humanistic, kind, caring, I feel your pain kind of person. You feel in your heart, "Oh, he loves me." I mean, think about modern people who live in isolation in their own private narcissistic prisons as they watch television. And somehow they feel connected, as if Oprah knows who I am, as if that TV preacher really does pray for you as over against—unless there is a check in it—throwing them in the round file.

See, television is an amazingly deceptive medium, and it makes possible what we see here. And what we see here is this: Satan comes to earth with great power, great rage, coming with his terrors to ravage the people of God. And what does he do? He produces a beast out of all of the beastly empires the world has known. He gives us a final form of evil, a terrifying beast. But we don't see it that way. What we see at the end of Revelation 13, verse 18: there is a kind, warm, humane figure, who makes us feel loved, appreciated and known. That is the beast.

But there is more to it. There is this final form of political evil. It hasn't happened yet. But it has never been more possible to happen than right now.

Has homeland security made you any safer? Has the NSA made you any safer? You can still fool airport security. Everything you need to take over an aircraft is on that airplane, if you know what you are doing. I am serious. I won't tell you that, not on a recording on the Internet, but everything that you need to commandeer an airplane, just as effectively as if you had a nine

millimeter pistol, everything is on that plane. It is a matter of mind and knowing what you are doing and having the will power to do it.

Why all of these dollars with the former czar of this kind of stuff, Chertoff owning the company that represents these body scanners and all of that stuff. What is all of that about? What is all of that about, collecting all of your emails, all of your phone messages, all of your text messages? Collecting them. It doesn't mean that there is some individual sitting there analyzing each one. They do have algorithms to pick up certain things like **الله أكبر** (Allahu Akbar). Anybody home?

But what am I saying? Never in the history of the world has there been the ability for a kind appearing, human appearing, humanistic appearing, benevolent appearing, 666 kind of character, who is really a ravenous beast, to rise to power than right now. And the computer, something that just before I was born didn't even exist, and even in my early childhood, they were in massive rooms with giant refrigerators, because the tubes kept burning out. Computers now on a wrist watch, now on a cell phone . . . access to the libraries of the world. All of these things, knowledge increasing and, believe it or not, this kind, human looking government that says: "Trust me. Trust me." That "Trust me" is a beast. It is there, as a beast, ready to ravage, to kill and destroy. Why? Because the beast receives his power from the dragon.

Chapter 13 and verse two, the last sentence. "The dragon gave him his power, his throne and great authority." There is a satanic trinity at work in history and that satanic trinity is the dragon himself, and then the humane, kind, benevolent—"We are going to have global peace and global prosperity. We are going to level the playing field so that everybody has the same thing. We are going to have an outcome based economic system. So whether you work hard or

don't work at all, you all get the same." It sounds good. It sounds great.

There is a third character. Let's look at the third character for a moment. The third character, the third member of this satanic trinity, verse 11. "And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. The first one comes out of the sea. The second comes out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb and he spoke like a dragon" (Revelation 13:11).

Beware of preachers with dragon's breath. That is an interesting thing. This satanic trinity: the enraged devil who knows he has only a short time who has been cast out of heaven, who has come to earth in a satanic, insane rage against God, unable to pull God down from his throne, unable to pull the Lord's Christ down from his throne, comes with a fury towards the people of God, spewing out water to drown the woman, but God causes the earth to open and swallow up the devil's flood (Revelation 12:16).

This devil raises up political power that hates the name of Jesus, despises the name of Jesus. "You can't pray in that name." And we see the rise of that anti-Jesus sentiment very much in our own day. It is powerful. It is there, and it is an indication of beastly power behind the throne. That is the beast that the dragon raises up in the first part of chapter 13. But the second beast is just as deadly, Revelation 13:11, because he reminds us of a lamb.

"Oh, Brother So and So, he is such a good man. We always go out of church feeling good. He makes me feel good about myself. He makes me feel good about everything else. And he makes me feel good about the future " . . . when all of a sudden, like a roach stomped by a heavy foot, life comes up and knocks you upside the head. "But Brother So and So, he reminds me of Jesus, and he is always making sure that everybody knows that he would remind them that he is like Jesus, and he always says good things. He

always makes me feel good. I am a good person. I am not like those other folks in that other denomination.”

Revelation 13:11, “I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb.” Oh, it reminds me of Jesus, until I got a load of his breath.

There was a guy who used to be in our church years ago. I am sure he is dead and trust he has gone on to be with the Lord. And he used to smoke cigars. And when he had not brushed his teeth, and he had smoked that cigar, and he would get in my face—you know there is a sign of insanity that has to do with not respecting other people’s personal space. I will give you a little hint here. Back off. People are indicating they are a little bit of out of touch with reality when they invade your personal space, but let me tell you: I can take it as long as you have deodorant and brushed your teeth and—but this guy had cigar breath. I mean, cigar breath—it smells like an ashtray mixed with kitty litter. It really does, an ashtray mixed with kitty litter. And he would get in my face. “Hey, Brother Bob.” And he would laugh. And he would laugh that kitty litter, ashtray breath.

There is a preacher coming on the scene of world power. He is empowered not by the Holy Spirit, but by the unclean spirit of Satan himself. He comes to serve the political power, put on the scene of world history. He reminds us so much of Jesus until he opens his mouth, and you are overcome with dragon’s breath. He spoke like a dragon.

Verse 12 of chapter 13, “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. He performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men and he deceives those who

dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast” (Revelation 13:12-14).

What I want you to understand is this, as you look at 2014: what does 2014 hold? Well, as we saw last week, Satan doesn't write the final chapter of world history. God does. And it is already written, and we know that the Lord wins, and we know that in spite of all of the demonic, diabolical, satanic, devilish, dragon-oriented inspired schemes and plots of men, God is working his purpose out in history. He is altering the boundaries of nations and the times and seasons, so that men and women and boys and girls would not look to themselves or their government—trust in themselves or their government—not look to themselves or their cash balance—they would look to the Lord himself. They would turn to the Lord and be saved. God is working in history to that end (Acts 17:26-27).

But if you want to understand where history is going, history is going to get worse. That is what Revelation chapters 12 through 14, the central vision of the book of Revelation is telling us. This central vision of the book of Revelation chapter 12 begins with the birth of Christ and climaxes with the second coming of Christ and the final defeat of Satan into the pit of hell.

Revelation 14:11: “And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. They have no rest day or night who worship the beast and his image, whoever receives the mark of his name.” So it concludes with the consummation of the ages. But in the end time, as Christ has defeated Satan, as Michael the archangel has cast Satan and all of the angels who joined with him in their rebellion against God, out of heaven, and they have come to earth, they have come with great power, and they manifested in the Democratic party and in the Republican party and in the Libertarian party and in the Constitutional party and in the Green party and the Communist party—and I actually met Gus Hall who is the



perennial presidential candidate of the Communist party years ago. And I talked to him. I was a seminary student.

He said, "Some of my best friends are preachers." No kidding, Gus Hall told me that. Gus Hall, the perennial candidate for President of the United States in the Communist party told me this. He said, "Some of my best friends are preachers." And I thought to myself: "Yeah, that is right. None dare call it treason. Wow."

Throughout history, political power is coming to a final point, and the wrath of Satan is against the Lord and his Christ, and is climaxing in a one world government. History is going to get worse. That is what Revelation 12, 13 and 14 tell us. You are going to be betrayed by the Republican Party. You are going to be betrayed by the Democratic Party. You are going to be betrayed by the most attractive, charismatic and gifted politicians. You can't even imagine how gifted they are. They will make Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama seem like the three stooges by how effectively they will be able to communicate and get you to follow them. "Come on. I am going to give you what you really want. Follow me."

And they are going to have a bevy of preachers backing them up, and a religious leader backing them up and churches that do not preach what Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me." Those churches will lose their tax exemption. They will be marginalized. They will be put out.

No, you see, there is a third satanic figure. There is the dragon, Satan himself. There is the beast, the political power. And there is this worldly, spiritual power: "You know, we all believe the same things. There are many paths to God. Just do the best you can. Find the inner god in yourself and be true to what is inside you. You are, after all, divine." Sounds to some people like the lamb.

But you hear in those words the voice of the dragon, for the dragon hates the name of Jesus, and he hates the idea that there is an exclusive claim to truth.

“I,” said Jesus, “am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

Or, as his apostle said in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other. There is none other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved.”

You see, it is the exclusive truth claim of Christ that causes the world that follows the beast, the world that follows the false prophet, the world that ultimately follows the dragon, to despise the Church of God, the true Church of God, the Church of God that speaks the truth in love.

Marvel not, said Jesus, that the world hates you. It hated me first (1 John 3:13; John 15:18-25).

So what does 2014 hold for you and me? It holds this for us: The Lord is coming. We confess as the Church has confessed for the past two days . . . two days? A thousand years to the Lord is one day (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). “Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.”

We confess he is coming again, but before that coming again, there is a global crisis. There is a move to power. There is a seizing of power. There is a persecuting of the people of God. There is a marginalizing of the people of God. There is an attempt to annihilate the people of God including the Jewish people.

So what does history hold for you and me in 2014? I don’t know. But it holds a lot of terror for a lot of people who don’t know God. And in that terror they will flee to the government rather than

fleeing to God. And in that terror they will flee to worldly security that will say: "I can make you safe." For they will exchange freedom for a lie.

And, finally, egged on by the religious crowd, the beast, the false prophet, who looks like a lamb but speaks with a voice of the dragon, they will worship Satan. That is what is coming.

Is it going to happen in 2014 that Christ is going to return? I don't know, and anybody who tells you they do know is deceived. But I tell you this. We need to be ready, because the coming of the Lord draws near. And as the coming of the Lord draws near, as the judge is even now standing at the door, we need to be ready.

Are you ready? I want to challenge you in 2014 to deal with the sin that is in your life. What is in your life? Maybe it is not some glaring thing like you are having an affair, or you are a heroine addict, or addicted to alcohol, or stealing or constantly involved in that. You are not a mafia hit man.

Maybe it is just your pride. Maybe it is just your anger. Maybe it is the hurt in you life you just won't deal with and won't allow the Lord to take away.

But whatever it is, I want to challenge you in 2014 to have a tender conscience towards God, because you need to hear from God. You need to have God speaking to you out of Scripture by his Holy Spirit, impressing you with truth.

Listen. There has never been a greater time in human history than the time in which we live. It is a momentous time. The forces of world history, with leopards and bears and lions, all of these beasts throughout history are coming to a great amalgam under the power of Satan. I want to be ready to stand for Jesus in 2014. Don't you?

Draw near to the Lord. And if you are not a believer, there has never been a better day than this last Sunday of 2013 to ask the Lord Jesus to come into your life to save you and to heal you and to rid you of all the junk and mess that is inside, that you might find the Lord and know the Lord so that when that trumpet sounds and the archangel shouts and Christ calls you home, you will go home to be with him, as the final stages of terrible tribulation are poured out on planet earth.

May we pray?

Lord, I think we may well be the generation who will actually see the man of sin revealed, who actually will see the nations of this world form an alliance under a one world system with power and law and the enforcement of that law actually taking place in which the religious people, Muslims, Jews and Christians, come together to form a worldly fellowship that follows not the Savior, not the Lord Jesus Christ, not the Lamb of God, but the dragon—Lord, a system that looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon. Would you deliver anyone here who is not a believer, and grant that today would be the day of closing with Christ and coming to him. For Jesus' sake. Amen.