

REVELATION – SERMON 52

THE REIGN OF THE BEAST

Revelation 13:5-10

INTRODUCTION

- John Lennon's song, *Imagine*, predicts a utopia with no heaven, hell, God, or countries; where the world will be one
- Such a song could well be the anthem of the coming Antichrist and his kingdom
- There is little doubt that music will play a vital role in bringing the world under Antichrist's power
- The whole popular culture is entirely opposed to God and is helping to prepare the world for the rule of Antichrist
- Many have attempted to identify the Antichrist as a past or present figure, yet such an exercise is fruitless as he is yet to be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
- Historically, Protestants have identified the Pope as the Antichrist
- While the Pope is certainly an antichrist and an agent of Satan, he is not *the* Antichrist—the papacy is an office, rather than a person; his dominion is religious, not political; he rules from Rome, not Jerusalem; he is already revealed, but the Antichrist is not revealed until after the Rapture
- In these verses we are given more details of the Antichrist's activities, particularly his blasphemies against God (5-6), as well as his domination of the people of the world (7-8); before giving an exhortation to saints who will live during that time (9-10)

I. THE CURSING WORDS OF THE DEVIL'S PRINCE (5-6)

A. The beast's sanction (5)

1. Note the repetition of the phrase, "was given unto him" (vv. 5,7), indicating the beast's reliance on divine permission for his rule
2. The dragon (Satan) gives power to the beast (vv.2,4)

3. Yet it is ultimately God who permits his rule, and sets the bounds of it (cf. Revelation 6:4,8; 7:2; 9:5)
4. The duration of the beast's rule is clearly defined and fixed by God – a mere 42 months
5. As God “raised up” Pharaoh to show his power and declare his glory, so the beast will be raised up at the appointed hour by God (Exodus 9:14-16; cf. John 19:10-11; Matthew 6:13)
6. “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Daniel 4:17,25,32)

B. The beast's speaking (5)

1. His tongue will be “set on fire of hell” (James 3:6)
2. “Great things”—proud, self-exalting words (Daniel 7:8,11,20,25)
3. “Blasphemies”—impious speech, cursing God (Daniel 11:36)

C. His blasphemies against God (6)

1. Against his name—his Person
2. Against his tabernacle—the heavenly temple
3. Against them that dwell in heaven—this includes believers caught up on the Rapture

II. THE CONQUERING WARFARE OF THE DIABOLICAL POTENTATE (7)

A. War with the saints

1. These are tribulation saints who refuse to take the mark and worship the beast
2. These saints will become the focus of the beast's fury and will face martyrdom (Daniel 7:21; 7:25; Revelation 13:15; cf. 17:6)
3. The beast will “overcome” them
 - a. This does not mean their faith is overcome, but only that they lose their mortal lives for the sake of Christ (Matthew 10:28)
 - b. This verse also supports the pre-tribulation rapture, as the church, according to Christ's promise in Matthew 16:18, cannot be overcome

B. Power over all kindreds, tongues and nations

1. This is clear proof that these events are yet future, as no king has ever had such a dominion

III. THE CORRUPT WORSHIP OF THE DEFIANT PEOPLE (8)

A. They are earth-dwellers

1. All "that dwell upon the earth" is a technical term that always refers to unbelievers during the tribulation (Isaiah 26:21; Luke 21:35; Revelation 3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:8)
2. They worship the beast and become like him, blaspheming God and persecuting the saints (Revelation 6:10; 11:10)

B. Their names are not written in the book of life

1. God, in his foreknowledge of his elect (1 Peter 1:2), has written in this book the names of all those who will be justified "from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 17:8)
2. While God in His foreknowledge records the names of all who will be saved, each person has a responsibility to repent and believe the gospel
3. This book belongs to the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"
 - a. God's plan of redemption was fixed and certain even before he created those whom he would redeem
 - b. The believer's salvation is eternally secure as God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), recorded that election in the book of life, and secured it by the blood of Christ

IV. THE COUNSEL TO WAIT ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE (9-10)

A. "If any man have an ear, let him hear" (9)

1. This is a call to attention, a prelude to an important message
2. This familiar phrase from chs. 2-3 is missing the words "what the Spirit saith unto the churches"

3. This confirms that during the tribulation, the church is absent from the earth and that these words are addressed to tribulation saints

B. Instruction for persecuted saints

1. These are words of encouragement to saints in the tribulation
2. It is a reminder that though the wicked may abuse and slaughter God's people, there will be a day of retribution when God will avenge their blood (Isaiah 33:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:6)
3. Through these trials, the patience and faith of the saints is manifest
 - a. Tribulation worketh patience (Romans 5:3-5)
 - b. It is through faith and patience that the promises are inherited (Hebrews 6:12)
 - c. As has happened previously during times of severe persecution, it seems that some will renounce their faith in Christ in order to save their lives, and true faith will be hard to find (Luke 18:8)
 - d. Persevering faith is evidence that it is a genuine faith (Matthew 10:22)

CONCLUSION

1. There are two groups of people in these verses: "them that dwell in heaven" (v.6) with them "that dwell upon the earth" (v.8)
2. Every one of us is either an earth-dweller or a heaven-dweller
3. The earth-dweller loves this present world (2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15; minds earthly things (Philippians 3:19); and lays up treasure upon earth (Matthew 6:19)
4. The heaven-dweller sets his affection on things above (Colossians 3:2); lays up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20-21); and has a desire to depart this world to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23)
5. Just as the beast/devil worshippers become like their evil god, the true Christian will become more and more like Christ
6. We are to be holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:16); we are to walk as he walked (1 John 2:6); we are to be conformed to his image (Romans 8:29)
7. Those who claim to be Christians, yet behave like the world are deceived and have a vain religion (Titus 1:16; James 1:26)