

Revelation Ch13v1-18 - Satan's War

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[0 : 00] Those please to Revelation chapter 13. Revelation 13.

So let's hear God's word together, starting at verse 1. The dragon stood on the shore of the sea, and I saw a beast coming out of the sea.

It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.

The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.

The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast.

[1 : 51] And they also worshipped the beast and asked, Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it? The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for 42 months.

It opened its mouth to blaspheme God and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them.

And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast.

All whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life. The Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.

[3 : 06] This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness in the part of God's people. Then I saw a second beast coming out of the earth.

It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf. And made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth.

It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the first beast and the number of its name.

[4 : 39] This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man.

That number is 666. Well, again, we need the Lord's help, so let's pray and ask for his goodness to us now.

Our Father God, we thank you for your blessings to us throughout this week. We thank you for the blessing it is to gather like this as your people, to hear your word, to hear your voice, speaking to us, speaking to us about your world and what is going on and how we should live in it.

And so we pray that we would be attentive to you this morning, that these words that we hear and look at together would penetrate deep into our life and cause us to be the kind of people, the kind of church you have called us to be.

So pour out your spirit upon us, generously we ask, in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in 1914, at the start of the First World War, Allied troops in northern France dug in to defend themselves against the advancing German army.

[6 : 31] It became known as the Western Front. It was trench warfare. It was bloody and it was fierce.

And for four long years, they faced each other and fought. Eventually, victory was achieved. The Allies had won. But not without loss of life.

In that area of war, 13 million soldiers died in those four years. It was costly. Well, the church is also at war.

Not the war of guns and tanks against flesh and blood, but a war against the powers of this dark world and the forces of evil. It's a war with Satan.

And that battle has been pictured for us here in Revelation 13. Have a look at verse 1. The dragon, who we know is Satan, stood on the shore of the sea.

[7 : 45] Well, the sea in the Bible represents chaos and evil. And that is what the dragon has come to bring. This is what Satan has come to do.

And he unleashes two terrifying beasts. The first one we read in verse 1. I saw a beast coming out of the sea.

Verse 7. And this beast was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them.

Verse 11. Then I saw a second beast coming out of the earth. And we're told what he will do. Verse 15. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

You see, this war is fierce and bloody. And Satan's purpose is to oppose Christ and destroy the church.

[9 : 00] It's trench warfare. And we as God's people are on the front line of this war. So how are we to face into this battle?

How are we to fight our enemy? Well, three things we're going to see from the text. The first is we've got to know our enemy.

Second, we need to prepare for war. And third, we need to stand with confidence. We need to know our enemy. We need to prepare for war.

And we need to stand with confidence. So first, we need to know our enemy. Our enemy is Satan.

And he hates Carigalline Baptist Church. He's out to turn you at this very moment from your love of Christ.

- [10 : 01] He wants you to stop listening right now to think and focus on other things. But as fierce as the dragon might look, we mustn't be fooled by his threats.
- There's two things we need to know about our enemy. First, Satan is defeated, but not yet surrendered. Defeated, but not surrendered.
- Chapter 12, that we saw a couple of weeks ago, is all about the defeat of Satan through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Our enemy was defeated. He was disarmed and overpowered. At the moment, as Jesus died and rose, chapter 12, verse 9, The great dragon was hurled down.
- That ancient snake called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.
- [11 : 07] Now he is powerless to accuse God's people. But he hasn't yet surrendered. Look at chapter 12, the end of verse 12.
- He's not yet surrendered. He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short. And so he's on a mission, verse 17.
- The dragon was enraged at the woman. The woman here is a symbol of God's church, God's people. And he went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring.
- Who are they? Those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus. Is that you today?
- Those who want to keep God's command and hold fast to the testimony about Jesus? You're in a war. But yet, Satan has been crushed.
- [12 : 12] The dragon has been slayed. The devil has been defeated. Our enemy has been stripped of his powers. But he is not giving up without a fight.
- He knows his end is short. But he's not going to submit quietly. He is still opposed to the church. So defeated, but not yet surrendered.
- Second, he's wounded, but not yet destroyed. Wounded, but not destroyed. Satan unleashes a beast, two of them, who is ultimately a reflection or an image of Satan himself.
- We're told a little bit about him. Look at verse 3. This is chapter 13, verse 3. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound.
- But the fatal wound had been healed. The beast is described in similar terms in verse 14.
- [13 : 22] If you look at the second part of verse 14. It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.
- So wounded, but restored. So has Satan somehow recovered? Did God really defeat Satan at the cross?
- Has he kind of managed to get back all his strength again? Well, yes, Satan was fatally wounded by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- He was delivered a crushing blow that signalled his end. But he is not yet destroyed. The fact that he continues with the fight gives the appearance that his wound has been healed.
- Look back at verse 3. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound. A fatal wound that had been healed. Make no mistake, the wound is fatal.
- [14 : 32] His end is coming. He may present himself as having overcome, but it's all lies. The crushing blow has already landed.
- The sword has already fallen. The dragon is breathing his very last and he is desperate to inflict as much damage as possible.

So as God's people, we must not be overwhelmed by our enemy. It's not like God is in a fight that he cannot win or a battle that he cannot end.

No, Satan is defeated and wounded. His days are short. He might not surrender, but his destruction is coming.

So we mustn't be overwhelmed. But at the same time, we must not underestimate our enemy. He's defeated and wounded and he's angry and he remains fully opposed to Christ and he seeks to destroy the church.

[15 : 45] Which means we must be prepared for war. We need to be prepared for this war.

Satan's war with the church is on two fronts, which is represented here by these two beasts. We're going to look at them each in turn.

First beast is persecution. Look at verse 1. The dragon stood on the shore of the sea and I saw a beast coming out of the sea.

It had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on its horns and on each head a blasphemous name. Pretty scary creature, isn't it?

But who or what is this beast? Well, as we've seen as we've been reading through Revelation, the images that John sees in his visions all have their root and they're all found in the Old Testament.

[16 : 57] So with this description of the beast coming out of the sea, turn with me, please, to Daniel chapter 7. Daniel chapter 7.

I'm sorry, I haven't got a page number. If you're using a red church Bible, if somebody could call it out, that would be helpful.

8, 9, 3. 8, 9, 3. Daniel chapter 7. So the context here is that Daniel along with thousands of God's people had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

They were a mighty kingdom, a great empire that oppressed God's people and forced them to abandon God and to worship idols. You may recall some of the accounts in Daniel where they were forced to bow down to an idol and if they didn't bow down, they would be thrown into a blazing furnace.

And it's in this context that Daniel has a vision of powerful kingdoms. four of them and the last one is more terrifying than the rest.

[18 : 13] So let's look at chapter 7, verse 2. Daniel said, in my vision at night, it says, It says, In my vision at night, in my vision at night, it says, but there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.

Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. Verse 15. I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.

I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all of this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things. The four great beasts are four kings or four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.

But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever. Yes, forever and ever. Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast which was different from all the others and most terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws.

The beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. Verse 23. He gave me this explanation.

[19 : 47] The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.

So the four beasts of Daniel's vision that he sees are successive kingdoms that appear and come and disappear and another kingdom replaces it.

But the point is that with each successive kingdom they become more oppressive. And the fourth one, this fourth kingdom is the worst.

Now let's go back to Revelation chapter 13. John says, John says, The beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.

And the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. So it seems that the beast John saw represents or is a continuation of these kingdoms and empires that appear.

[21 : 19] So I think it's best to understand this first beast in Revelation as representing governing powers who oppose and persecute the church today.

I want us to be clear on that. This first beast is an image or a reflection of the representing governing powers in the world today who oppose and persecute the church.

The attack is experienced in two ways. It can come by verbal persecution verse 5. The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for 42 months.

It opened its mouth. So these are all words to blaspheme God and to slander his name and his dwelling place and all those who live in heaven. But it's not just a verbal attack.

There will also be physical attack. Look at verse 7. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them.

[22 : 36] In fact, this will be experienced by every church all over the world. Satan is at work through the governing powers and nations that arise to persecute the church.

Look at the rest of verse 7. It was given authority. This is the beast was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

You see, John's vision is not just tied to one empire or one kingdom in a particular time and place. No, he's showing us that the rulers and the regimes of today, no matter what their language or nation or people or tribe, they are out to destroy the church, whether it's a dictatorship or a democracy.

You see, there is no such thing as a Christian state. There is no Christian utopia where the church and the state somehow merge into one.

No, the governing bodies of today are used by Satan to oppose the church. I spoke with my friend Raj from India this week.

[23 : 53] Some of you have met him. He was here. He preached in this church some years ago. He had messaged me. He was very down and very discouraged. And so we had a conversation.

He told me that in recent weeks, World Vision, you've maybe heard of that. They do a lot of work with people with vision problems. A Christian organisation and it's been banned.

1,200 workers removed just like that. Right now, his own ministry where they work, the government has decided to take an audit out on their organisation, which means their assets and buildings can be seized, their accounts closed.

On top of that, he told me of one colleague who's in jail because of anti-Christian laws. While in prison, his wife has been attacked and received death threats, telling that her children have to leave.

It helps us to understand what the church and what our brothers and sisters are going through. Look at verse 9.

[25 : 17] Whoever has ears, let them hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity or prison, they will go.

If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed. These stories can be repeated thousands of times all over the world.

For your homework, I could suggest this, to check out Open Doors UK or Church in Chains. Read about your brothers and sisters.

Know what is happening. Switch off Facebook. Switch off looking at all the wonderful gifts you can buy and order and see what's going on.

The nations, the ruling governing powers stand against the church today. We might face verbal and physical persecution like our friends in India.

[26 : 31] But there's a subtle oppression against the church today. In recent years, our government has basically torn out and ripped up Genesis 1 and 2 through various legislation and all kinds of promotion.

People don't know who they are anymore. Their image, their gender, their sexuality, marriage. It's all been redefined.

The very foundations of life are thrown out. It's a reminder to us that the church's voice is no longer welcomed.

It's to be silenced. It's to be crushed. You see, Satan is at work through the beast of governing powers to oppose and persecute the church.

We're in a war. And it's bloody. And it's serious. But it's not just persecution.

[27 : 45] There is subtle seduction. Let's look at the second beast. Verse 11. Then I saw a second beast coming out of the earth.

It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. So what or who does this second beast represent?

It looks like a lamb, we're told, but it speaks like a dragon. Well, these images are already familiar to us throughout Revelation.

The lamb is identified as Jesus. We even see that back in verse 8 as all inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, all whose names have not been written in the lamb's book of life, the lamb who was slain before the creation of the world.

This is speaking about Jesus. And the dragon we have seen is identified as Satan. So it's as if this second beast comes along and presents himself as Jesus.

[28 : 54] Or speaks as if he represents Jesus. But listen very carefully to his words and it will become very clear that they are nothing less than the seductive words of Satan.

You remember Jesus talked about the wolves in sheep's clothing. Well, in a similar way, John is saying, watch out for dragons in lamb's clothing.

In other words, the second beast represents the false teachers who come along, who twist the truth of God's word. Rather than tell you clearly what God's word has said, they tell you what your itchy ears want to hear.

The aim is to lead you astray, to deceive you. Look how the second beast does his work.

Let's look at verse 16. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave.

[30 : 01] So it doesn't matter who they are, where they come from. It forced all people to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Now people get very excited about the mark of the beast. I mean, who is it? We're even given number, aren't we, in verse 18? 666? Well, some claim that the COVID vaccine was the mark.

If you've had the vaccine, you've got the mark. My goodness me. No, that's not helpful. That's more deception. The mark is symbolic of who or what you belong to.

Who is your loyalty to? Is it to the true word of God or the deceptive word of Satan? Where is your allegiance? Is it to the lamb or to the dragon?

What's your priority? Is it to the church or to the world? Now how we answer that will mark out, it will identify who or what you belong to.

[31 : 25] But more than that, it will determine how you get on in life. Because, look at verse 17, those with, those, if you didn't have the mark, they couldn't buy or sell.

They couldn't go about business. They couldn't go about buying and selling and make a living for themselves. You see, align yourselves with the deceptive word of Satan and you will have access to all that the world offers.

Why would you align yourself with Christ and the church? Because all that's going to mean is opposition and persecution. Don't you want an easier life?

This is what's going on here. If your loyalty is with Christ, if your allegiance is to the church, life is going to get very hard for you.

It's going to be difficult. But you know what? If you're just willing to compromise a little, just, just twist a little bit, then, then you'll get on well in life.

[32 : 39] You'll be able to buy and sell. You'll be able to get your good job and earn promotion and get a salary increase and you'll be able to get all your home comforts and you'll be financially secure.

It's very simple. All you need to do is don't talk about your faith. Why would you cause an upset by talking about Jesus?

All you need to do is wear the rainbow badge. Why, why, why, why start isolating yourself from people? All you need to do is accept that, you know what, there's no absolute truth.

It's whatever's true for you. Why be such a fusspot? All you need to do is just compromise every now and then.

When things get a little bit sticky, just kind of rein it in a little bit and you'll be comfortable and you'll be secure. Align yourselves to the right side and you'll get on alright.

[33 : 54] You see, this is us, isn't it? We can be so desperate for a better life, a comfortable life, an easy life, without opposition, without persecution.

We just want to take it easy. Watch out for the deceptive words of false teachers.

Listen very carefully and you will see that they are the words of Satan. So this is the war we've got to be prepared for. This twin attack of persecution and seduction and it's fierce and it rages on every single day.

So how are we going to stand against these beasts? How are we going to fight the threats of the dragon? Well, we need to stand with confidence.

As we face this war, the way we fight is to stand our ground on the truth of God's word. Three truths that are going to keep us strong in this battle.

[35 : 12] First truth, let's remind ourselves often that God is sovereign. The beasts appear to be unrivaled and dominant.

Look at verse 4. People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast and they also worshipped the beast and asked, who is like the beast?

Who can wage war against it? Who can fight against him? He's too big, too fierce. Well, let's be absolutely clear.

Satan's authority does not rival God's authority. It's not a 50-50 war. It's not even 75% God, 25% Satan.

No, Satan cannot do anything without God's decree. He cannot. Look at verse 5. The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words.

- [36 : 23] verse 7. It was given power to wage war. The end of verse 7, and it was given authority. It's the same with the second beast. Verse 15, the second beast was given power to give breath to the image. You see, Satan doesn't have ultimate authority. He can't decide to do whatever he wants whenever he likes. He can only do what God allows him to do or what God gives him permission to do. Satan does not have free reign. He is on a leash. Now, this shouldn't cause us to doubt God's care and love for us. Rather, it should fortify and strengthen us as a church because it means that nothing happens by chance. God makes no mistake with your life or with this church. Whatever may come to us in this battle, we are ultimately in God's hands and he is ultimately in control.
- [37 : 40] He is the commanding officer over everything. Nothing can overcome us. And what Satan uses to harm us, God will use it for our good and for his glory. So let us stand confident that God is sovereign over your life and over this church. Second truth that we need to hold on to is victory is assured. Satan is not only restrained, he is not only on a leash, but his time is limited. Look at verse 5. The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for 42 months. Now here's one of those strange numbers that we keep coming up against and we've been reminding ourselves that they're symbolic, they remind us of things, and this is part of a series of numbers. Back in chapter 12 verse 6 we read about 1260 days. In chapter 12 verse 14 we read about a time's time and half a time.
- [39 : 04] And if we understand time to be a year then that's three and a half years. And now here in chapter 13 verse 5 we have 42 months. Well you can do the maths. 1260 days is equal to guess what? Three and a half years. And that's also equal to 42 months. So they're not different lengths of time but they refer to the same time period. They represent the time of war that the church is going to face between the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ. This is not peace time. This is war time. But the important thing is this war is going to come to an end and it's only going to last for a certain time. It's limited 42 months. It will come to an end. Now that should encourage us and strengthen us.
- [40 : 17] Our lives in this world is not spiralling out of control. It's not like Satan is on his march to victory. No, Satan does not win. And we, the church, we do not lose. God has the victory. And we can be confident that this victory is ours too. So let's remind ourselves of the truth that God is sovereign. Victory is assured. And with that let us together as one people, as Carigalline Baptist Church, stand with confidence. You see, the way we fight this battle, the way we face into it, is to stand your ground on God's word. Because God is sovereign, because his victory is assured, look at the end of verse 10, this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness of the part of God's people. It also calls, verse 18, for wisdom. Look, when we're in the heat of the battle, when we're bunkered down in trench warfare, when persecution comes and it will, when seduction tempts you and it does, let us be wise.

[41 : 45] Don't panic. Don't fear. Don't worry. Instead, remind yourself of God's truth. Wait patiently for the coming king. Hold faithfully to your task.

Jesus is the sovereign, victorious champion. Satan does not win and we do not lose. peace. I mentioned my friend Raj earlier.

He sent updates asking for prayer. What struck me was he didn't ask for the persecution to stop.

He didn't ask for more comfort and security. what he asked for was that we would stand strong. Here's what he asked for.

This is his prayer request and I think this is a good prayer request for us too. Let me read it to you.

[42 : 50] Let's just be quiet, reflect and pray together. This is their prayer and this is our prayer.

He writes it is quite a bad situation but please pray that the Lord will use this situation for his glory. please pray for boldness and courage to proclaim the gospel news in the midst of opposition.

It's overwhelming. We feel helpless. Please pray that the Lord will go before us and fight for us. Please pray that we will trust him and lie at his feet and draw closer to him.

father we pray this for brothers and sisters we know around the world.

Those we know personally those we do not know but your church is everywhere and we pray it for ourselves. We don't pray for an easy life.

[44 : 15] we don't pray for more comforts or more security but we pray for courage for patient endurance for faithfulness to go on teaching and sharing the gospel whether that's in Sunday school or rock or rooted or polo amongst our friends our colleagues our family.

That we would hold fast to our task in the knowledge that you almighty God are sovereign over every event over every circumstance of our life.

That because of Christ we stand assured of victory. Give us patience to wait for the coming king. Give us courage courage that we too would lie at your feet and draw closer to you.

Help us we pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing a great song.

We've sung I hope we sing great songs every Sunday. I think we do. We've sung some good ones.