



IMAGERY IN REVELATION

PURGING THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION



Part 4

“The World, the Flesh, & the Devil”

11/15/20

Introduction

- As we have seen in recent weeks, the imagery in Revelation is intended to exhort and encourage us. Believers experiencing hostility from the surrounding culture and outright persecution from governing authorities would have been tempted towards despair and discouragement. The visions of Jesus as the Lion and Lamb and of God Almighty enthroned in heaven serve to remind them of God's judgment and mercy as well as His sovereignty over the events on earth. The visions within the book of Revelation also, serve to warn believers of the dangers that they face from the temptation to compromise their faith and fall into idolatry.

Key Point: By examining the imagery in Revelation which describes the future, we are warned in the present of the danger of the _____ and the true evil that lies behind it so that we will not compromise our witness.

The Great Conflict—Revelation 12:1-8

- The vision in this chapter displays the _____ conflict between God and Satan.

The Great Red Dragon

⇒ The dragon is identified as Satan, the ancient enemy of God and His people.

Rev. 12:9a—And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world..

The Woman

⇒ Although the woman is not specifically identified, she represents the nation of Israel through whom God sent Messiah, the Promised Rescuer (Gen. 3:15) who will ultimately bring about the defeat of Satan. .

Rev. 12:5—She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne

- The vision anticipates the _____ form of the conflict.

⇒ Satan will be cast down to the earth and will greatly persecute both the nation of Israel and those who come to faith in Christ during the end-times.

Rev. 12:17—Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Key Point: This vision graphically illustrates for God's people that they are a part of an ongoing spiritual _____ and that victory comes through the blood of the Lamb and the maintaining faithful witness (12:11).

The Imagery of the World System: The Dragon, the Beast, & the Prostitute

“Thus there must be three facets to any definition of the world: the idea of an ordered system, the relation of Satan to it, and the concept of its hostility to God. Here is a suggested definition: *the cosmos world is that system organized by Satan, headed by Satan, and run by Satan, which leaves God out and is a rival to Him.*” — Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology

Dragon Imagery — *The Evil Power Behind the World System*

In the latter half of Revelation, the Dragon stands behind the evil figure of the beast, giving his authority to the end-time antagonist (Antichrist) and empowering him to exercise rule over much of the world.

Rev. 13:2b-4—...And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

OT Background

Isa. 51:9-10—⁹Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? ¹⁰Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?

Isa. 27:1—In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Key Point: The dragon imagery used in Revelation serves as a warning to believers that it is Satan who is at work through the world system to _____ unbelievers and to persecute believers or lead them astray.

Beast Imagery — *The Political Idolatry of the World System*

Satan's persecution of believers and deception of unbelievers is carried out through certain earthly means, specifically the governing authorities that He empowers and directs.

Rev. 13:1-2a, 5-8—¹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth... ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

OT Background

Dan. 7:7—After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Key Point: The beast imagery used in Revelation warns believers of the potential dangers posed by the _____ forces of the world system which will at times persecute them and which could compromise their witness.

Prostitute Imagery — *The Economic & Moral Idolatry of the World System*

The beast, who is representative of the idolatrous political system of the world, also enables the deception of the nations through the promotion of the values and pleasures offered by the world system.

Rev. 17:3-4—³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

OT Background

Nah. 3:4-5a—⁴ And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. ⁵ Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts...

Babylon the Great

This world system to which the prostitute imagery is referring is called “Babylon” in Rev. 18. When God's judgments come upon the world, those who were characterized by her immorality (18:3) and who indulged themselves in her luxuries (18:15-17) will mourn over her (18:11-13).

Key Point: The prostitute imagery used in Revelation warns believers of the enticements of the world system which invites us to indulge the _____ of our flesh.

Applying the Imagery

- Dragon, beast, and prostitute imagery serve to _____ us of the dangers of the world system.

(1) *We have an enemy who seeks to discourage and ultimately destroy us.*

1 Pet. 5:8—Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

(2) *We are tempted by the world system to embrace its vision, values, and practices and to become idolators.*

1 John 2:15-16—¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

“The issue of true and false worship is fundamental to John's prophetic insight into the power-structures of the world his readers lived in. In the end, the book [Revelation] is about the incompatibility of the exclusive...worship portrayed in Ch. 4 with every kind of idolatry—the political, social and economic idolatries from which more narrowly religious idolatry is inseparable.”

—Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation

- The Lord Jesus has _____ our enemies so that we might live faithfully as His witnesses!

John 16:33—I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Gal. 6:14—But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Rev. 12:10-11—¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.