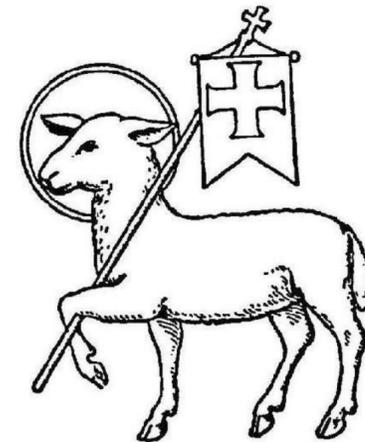


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

6. Hell on earth: Beasts and Babylon



Bible readings

9:1-11; 12:1-18; 13:1-17; 17:1-19-21

Introduction

Conditions on earth just prior to the end of the world & Second Coming of Christ:

- Wars, earthquakes, famine, disease (nothing new, but getting worse and more frequent)
- New convulsions such as environmental and outer space – but all 'man made'

Satan and his army

- The 5th Angel blowing the 5th trumpet (9:1) and first woe (9:12) introduces us to the supernatural dimension behind all this.
- Satan at work in the seven churches of Asia (2:9; 2:23; 2:24; 3:9)
- Titles of Satan: Satan (the accuser); Lucifer (the shining one) The devil (destroyer) the Evil One.
- Pre-cosmic rebellion in heaven and the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 8:31; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6-7; Rev 12:4)
- His power is limited (Job 2:2; Job 2:6; Rev 9:4)

Apollyon and his army of locusts (9:1-11)

- Unleashed by the 5th Angel & 5th Trumpet. This is the first 'woe' (9:12)
- Is this Satan? (Apollyon means 'destroyer'; 'king of the demons' (9:11)
- Or is this a leading demon?
- Is the army a horde of demons or symbolic picture of aerial warfare?
- The limitation of their destructive work (9:4-5)
- Their victims prefer death to repentance (9:6 c/f/ 9:20-21)

The 6th Angel and 6th trumpet (9:13-19)

- Four (bound demonic) angels at the River Euphrates
- The description of this army

The dragon (12:1-18)

- This is Satan (12:9 – ancient serpent (Genesis 3); the devil and Satan
- Red dragon: blood, murder, (John 8:44) seven heads and ten horns: fullness of evil and power
- The 10 horns: an end-time confederacy of 10 rulers
- The battle between Michael and Satan. This may refer to the pre-cosmic conflict, or a vision of the future.
- Satan's death throes; intensifies persecution against God's people (12:17)

The first beast – from the sea (13:1-10)

- Ten horns and seven heads – like the dragon, but not the dragon (13:4)

- Lion, bear, leopard (Daniel 7:1 -7) Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece, Rome?
- The beast reincarnates/re-invents itself in every major persecuting power throughout history.
- Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) and Islam.
- The temporary defeat of God's people (13:7) , but their rise again
- Unlikely to be an atheistic power like Communism, but a religious power (worship).
- The death blow (Luke 10:17-24; Luke 11:14-22; John 12:21-33; Col 2:15; Gen 3:13)

The second beast – from the earth: The Antichrist (13:11-17)

- Less terrifying to look at – a lamb! Looks like Jesus!
- The first horseman of the apocalypse (Rev 6:2 c/f Rev 19:11)
- Antichrist can both be '*against* Christ' and '*in place of* Christ'
- More of a religious and spiritual power with supernatural ability in signs and wonders.
- Also called 'the false prophet' (Rev 19:20)
- Economic influence (13:17) the cashless society and electronic chips?

The number of the beast – 666 (13:18)

- The study of '*gematria*' - a code where letters of the alphabet have their numerical equivalent.
- The Jews used Hebrew gematria very well to conceal names and connections.
- Early church understanding: Polycarp (John's disciple) said it was the numerical equivalent of '*Latenios*' the Greek word for Romans – so Caesar and Roman Empire.
- Various others in history: Nero (661!) Saladin, Mohammed, Napoleon, Hitler, The Pope and even the late Henry Kissinger! – US diplomat)
- Or does it simply mean mankind's best efforts at perfection – but not coming up to the mark? 777! 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; 1 John 2:18-25

Two views

- **The historicist.** Antichrist is a spirit at work throughout the church ages, but particularly manifested in the Papacy (Reformers; Arnulf, Archbishop of Reims (991); (Franciscans) Peter John Olivi (1248-1298; Michael of Cesena (1270-1342) and Joachim of Fiore (Cistercian) – will comes from the West.
- **The futurist.** Spanish Jesuits (Francisco Ribera 1537-1591) and Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801). 'The Coming of the Messiah in Majesty' translated by Edward Irving 1830s; then popularised by JN Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. Modern antichrist films such as '*Rosemary's Baby*' and '*The Omen*'. A Jew born now or soon.

The whore of Babylon (Revelation 17 – 19:3)

- The Roman Empire 'on seven hills' (Rev 17:9)
- The Papacy or the totality of all false religion
- Symbol for 'the world' in general – life organised outside the Kingdom of God.