

Revelation: How to Live through the End of the World.

Part 2: The Dragon, the Beasts, and the Lamb.

Revelation 12, 13, 4, and 5.

Summary: Revelation pulls back the curtain to show us the real battle—the clash between the way of the Dragon (power and control) and the way of the Lamb (sacrificial love)—and challenges us to decide which path we will follow.

Main Ideas:

Many people fear that Christianity is under attack and fear makes us fight back

There is a real war between the forces of God and the forces of evil.

Satan's goal is to bring chaos to the world and destroy God's people.

Satan uses willing leaders and the systems of the world to carry out his plans.

Jesus Followers should always be ready to identify and disconnect from political powers that claim to be for or from God.

Jesus brings God's rescue, salvation, and justice not by "winning" but by losing his life.

Jesus' death shows the true meaning of power, judgment, and salvation.

The people of God participate in the revolution of God by following the way of the Lamb.

The Way of the Lamb is the only way to peace, justice, and ultimate victory.

Invitation:

Read: Philippians 2:3-11

Ask:

- What am I following or relying on that doesn't match this picture?
- Am I more concerned about winning or following the way of the Lamb?

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out, bothered, inspired, or confused you in this week's message?
2. Who or what do you tend to treat as "enemies" in your life? What would "winning" against them look like to you?
3. Read Philippians 2:3-11. What would it look like to live as a follower of the Lamb in your job, relationships, and daily interactions?
4. What fears might hold us back from fully embracing the way of the Lamb?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Matthew 5:3-10 and 38-45

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work

for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs

You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow. "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.

X Post: "Christians who say love and pray for your enemies are the reasons Christians are losing"

Many people fear that Xianity is under attack and fear makes us fight back... take control and protect what's ours

- But does it fix anything? Or does it just add to the cycle of suffering and hate?

There is another way... a way that might look weak at first/on the surface but ultimately overcomes evil at its root?

Xian or not... we want to live in a world without all of this violence and hatred.

The answer is found in the book of Revelation. Written to show actual persecuted Xians the real battle isn't what they think.

It pulls back the curtain to show us what's really going on in our world.

- It flips our ideas of power and authority on their heads.
- And shows us the way to the life and world we are hoping for.

Revelation isn't a timeline—it's a symbolic vision that revealed hidden spiritual realities to its first readers.

It is about the deeper cosmic war between God's kingdom and the forces of darkness.

It answers the questions...

- Why are we convinced that power is the only way to win?
- Why do we think if we don't fight fire with fire, we'll lose?
- That domination is the only path to victory?
- Even though deep down we know these only keep the cycle going?

REV is a crystal ball telling us the future; it shows us how to live in our world now.

And it reveals the ultimate villain —the Dragon.

GOD: Revelation 12:1-5

Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant, and she cried out because of her labor pains and the agony of giving birth. Then I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven

heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept away one-third of the stars in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born. She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne.

A dragon is a character many in the ancient world would be familiar with... think of Godzilla or Jurassic TRex for us...

- A creature of chaos, deception, and destruction.

And after a war in heaven, this dragon is thrown down to earth and we discover his real identity...

12:9 *This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels*

The dragon is not just a symbol of evil, but he is the one who is hell-bent on destroying God's purposes for the world.

Satan himself. There is a real war between the forces of God and the forces of evil.

And the dragon is trying to destroy this woman with a crown of 12 stars and her son who was to rule all nations.

- 12 tribes of Israel and out of Israel the Savior King the Messiah... Jesus.
- Who will carry out the purposes of God

But the son is born and is carried away to God's throne... it's a cliff notes version of Jesus' life

- Jesus defeats the dragon's attempts through his death, resurrection and ascension, and is no longer vulnerable to anything the dragon can do.

But the dragon won't rest until he destroys God's people.

- After he is thrown down to earth he still pursues the woman...

12:13-18 *When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness. There she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time. Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from his mouth. But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. And the dragon was angry at the woman and declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God's commandments and maintain their testimony for Jesus. Then the dragon took his stand on the shore beside the sea.*

The dragon can't destroy the woman so he tries to take his vengeance out on the rest of her children...

- Those who keep God's commandments and maintain their testimony of Jesus.
- JF's... the Church... Born out of the faith of Abraham... The faith of Israel.

See the curtain is pulled back on what is really going on...

The struggles John's first readers were going through... the persecution, arrests, and executions.

And the struggles we deal with... are not a sign that God isn't paying attention or losing...

They are proof that there is a great ongoing cosmic battle in which all Xians have a part in, whether they know it or not.

And Satan's goal is to bring chaos to the world and destroy God's people.

To carry out his plan of destruction the dragon enlists the help of others... 2 beasts or better phrase "wild things"

The first beast comes out of the sea and the dragon gives him his authority and power.

- Speaking blasphemies against God
- Claiming to have great power and deserves worship
- Rules over the nations of the world
- And uses his empire and power to wage war against God's people
- All the people of the world are impressed with his power and the power of the beast and begin worshipping and following both.

This beast represents empires that claim ultimate power, demanding loyalty to human rulers instead of God.

John says the beast's number is 666.

- A lot of meaning but not what the speculators think it is...
- 777 is a number of perfection... 666 is a parody... an insult to someone who claims to be divine but is in reality utter imperfection
- It's a man trying to be God. Using the power of the dragon to try to dominate the world.
- In Greek there were no numbers... letters were used for numbers and letters (Roman Numerals)
- You take the name Nero Ceaser in Greek use those letters for numbers, add them up and you get... 666.

For John's readers, that was Rome, headed by the emperor.

But the pattern repeats throughout history—human governments or leaders who act as if they are God.

The Beast is what we see whenever human systems align themselves with power at all costs—instead of following the way of the Lamb.

- It could be a government, a political leader, or even a cultural mindset that says we must win at any cost.
- And possibly, as many believe, there will be a final figure like this at the end of world history but in the meantime we need to be aware that...

Satan uses willing leaders and the systems of the world to carry out his plans.

- He uses power-hungry people to bring about chaos, idolatry, evil, and a culture of death.

And what John is asking us is: "Do we recognize when we are placing our faith in a beast?"

Then a 2nd beast appears out of the earth... He's the propaganda agent/hypeman of the 1st beast

He convinces people to worship the first beast...

- Convincing them that the first beast represents the true God and God's real will.

- Leads people to give blind allegiance to worldly powers instead of God.

For John, could've been the local governing authorities enforcing the rule of Rome and the worship of the emperor.

For us... could be seen as anyone/group trying to convince us the way of domination/conquering is what God wants for us.

- Give your loyalty, be a real American/Xian/Etc. or face the consequences
- Canceling/belittling/character assassination.

Throughout history, the dragon/Satan has used his beasts to create cultures and systems of idolatry, evil, chaos, and death... what REV calls Babylon... NEXT WEEK.

The message is... **JF's should always be ready to identify and disconnect from political powers that claim to be for or from God.**

- That claim to be God's chosen instrument.
- While demanding total, or unquestioning allegiance

B/C... There's someone with true, infinite power that the dragon can only try to mimic.

But to see it we have to move back to the beginning of REV...

- To where the story really begins... the throne room of God...

Rev. 4:2b-5 ...I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.

24 elders: 12 tribes + 12 disciples... representing God's people.

- Along w/ other beings worshipping God on his throne.

This image of a throne room would remind John's readers of another throne room... Caesar's.

- But what John is showing is all earthly thrones are cheap imitations of the throne of the true Lord and King of the cosmos

But then this scene is interrupted...

- John sees a scroll, most likely God's plan for salvation/justice, but no one can open it.

And poor John begins to cry... will there never be justice... is there no one who can save us... BUT THEN...

V.5:5 But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Yes! The lion of Judah, heir to King David's throne!"

- The promised Messiah, the conqueror of nations, the destroyer of God's enemies.

- He's going to open the scroll he's going to conquer!

That's what John hears... but then he turns around and...

5:6-7 *Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth. He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne.*

The lion has turned into a slaughtered lamb.

- With 7 eyes (perfect wisdom)
- And 7 horns (perfect power)

The ferocious royal lion's victory is going to come through the slaughtered lamb...

Jesus brings God's rescue, salvation, and justice not by "winning" but by losing his life.

- Not by destroying but by sacrificing.

NT Wright: *The lion is the symbol both of ultimate power and of supreme royalty, while the lamb symbolizes both gentle vulnerability and, through its sacrifice, the ultimate weakness of death. But the two are now to be fused together, completely and for ever. From this moment on, John, and we as his careful readers, are to understand that the victory won by the lion is accomplished through the sacrifice of the lamb, and in no other way*

And this is the central truth of Revelation. Power is being redefined for the world.

God's victory over the dragon... doesn't come by using the same weapons of the dragon (violence, coercion, death)

It comes from humble, self-sacrifice and service... it comes from what Jesus told his followers to do... love.

God overcomes the dragon and the beasts and Babylon not through a show of force but through the suffering and death of Jesus.

But then something even more interesting happens.

V. 8-14 *And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song with these words:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll
and break its seals and open it.*

*For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*And you have caused them to become
a Kingdom of priests for our God,
And they will reign on the earth."*

Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. And they sang in a mighty chorus:

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—
to receive power and riches
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing.”*

And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang:

*“Blessing and honor and glory and power
belong to the one sitting on the throne
and to the Lamb forever and ever.”*

And the four living beings said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb.

Do you see it?

The Lamb is the only one worthy to carry out God’s plan of justice and salvation.

- He shares the same authority as the One on the throne.
- He is worthy of the same worship as God

This is where the rest of the book makes sense...

This vision of the slaughtered lamb is how God chose to show John, and us, who he really is.

He is the all-powerful creator God, the maker of everything we see and don't see. All authority is his.

- And what did he do with all of his power and authority?
- He sacrificed himself to save his people.

Jesus’ death shows the true meaning of power, judgment, and salvation.

Everything else makes sense when we grasp this vision of who Jesus the God-Man is.

And as the story continues we see it is this lamb who ultimately defeats and judges the dragon and his beastly peons. And brings an end to their corrupt empire... Babylon.

Great story, right? But what do we do with all of this?

We are invited to participate in the Lambs overthrow of the dragon... when the dragon is thrown to earth... there’s a part we skipped...

Rev. 12:10-12 *Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has come at last— salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown*

down to earth— the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great anger, knowing that he has little time.”

The people of God defeat the dragon by the blood of the lamb and by their testimony.

In other words: The people of God participate in the revolution of God by following the way of the Lamb.

By showing and telling that the way to real life isn't through conquering, destroying, winning

- It's through following the lamb and displaying his love, peace, mercy, and justice.
- The people of God conquer by reflecting the lamb to a world that is enslaved by and in love with the way of the dragon.

The followers of the Lamb win by choosing to lose...

- By choosing to love and forgive their enemies
- By working for peace and justice for those who can't do it for themselves.

The dragon tries to control through violence and fear, but the Lamb wins through love and faithfulness.

YOU: So to join the revolution... we need to learn to discern the dragon's influence behind the beasts of our time.

Revelation wasn't given to scare us... it was given to wake us up and show the world for what it is.

There is a war going on that whether or not we know it/like it... we are a part of.

- We see it in the major events of the world and we see it in our families, classrooms, and offices.
- Forces that try to dominate, and control... creating chaos and hatred.

Will we trust the Lamb and his way or will we give in and try to use the weapons of the dragon for ourselves.

- Like the One ring in LOTR.

John's message is clear: God's kingdom is not built by force—but by sacrificial love.

The way of the Dragon is appealing... especially to people raised in a culture of being part of the best, most powerful, most successful nation in world history.

- We win, we dominate, we are exceptional.
- The Way of the Dragon is so appealing... we want to win.

But The true Lion conquers as the Lamb. Will we follow Him?

So to help us discern the difference between the way of the dragon and the way of the lamb... let's remind ourselves of who the lamb is, what he is like, and who his people are called to be.

Read: [Philippians 2:3-11](#)

Ask:

- What am I following or relying on that doesn't match this picture?
- Am I more concerned about winning or following the way of the Lamb?

In your job, do you compromise on integrity to “win” in your career?

In your relationships, do you seek control instead of sacrificial love?

In your politics, is your faith in Jesus or in worldly power?

The way of the Dragon will always promise victory but end in destruction.

The way of the Lamb looks like losing—but it’s the only way to real life.

Which will you choose?

WE: The Lamb... not Caesar, not the dragon is the king of the all.

We as individuals and as a community are invited to play our part in bringing the Revolution of Jesus to our world now.

But it comes through love... not force

It comes through acceptance not division

It comes from helping the stranger and the enemy not by trying to save our own little kingdoms.

The battle is real. Our loyalty matters.

The Way of the Lamb is the only way to peace, justice, and ultimate victory.

Zach Lambert Post.

I’m going to prioritize love.

Above dogma and debates.

Above theology and ideology.

I’m going to prioritize love.

Because Jesus didn’t say his followers would be known by our beliefs.

Jesus said we’d be known by our love.



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