

A Look At Satan's Ministers

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I invite you to turn in the Scriptures this morning to Revelation 13. I've been saying along that Revelation is not that hard. This one's a little harder, but I'm excited to preach it this morning. Revelation chapter 13, we'll consider the entirety of the chapter, then we'll pray to the Lord and ask him to give us help. Revelation chapter 13 this morning. This is the last book of the Bible. We're working through this book if you're a visitor. This is the word of the Lord. Let's consider beginning at verse 1.

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. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One 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. 4 And 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?" 5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

I want you to notice, pause, that that is the very same period, the entire period that we've been considering of the woman out in the wilderness in the time of gospel proclamation. It's very important. This has been going on the whole time, he's saying.

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. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear: 10 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. 11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercises all the

authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. 13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. 16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

And there ends the reading of God's word.

Let's pray.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we come to you asking for your help by your Spirit. that this word would be rightly divided today to the benefit and edification of your people and the intention it was inspired, and give me, Lord, words of clarity and boldness to preach this in a way that brings great glory to your name so that as the exposure that is intended here it would open our eyes to receive the blessing that Revelation promises those who read it and understand it. Give us those two things as we read today. May we have understanding from you and receive that blessing. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

I want to help you recall what we considered last time. It's so important to see the connection here from chapter 12 and 13 as we're in this fourth cycle of visions, and chapter 12, you'll remember, was helping Christians understand why this battle is so fierce that we are in, in light of Jesus' victory. It's really important to consider that if he has been raised from the dead, why are things so hard and why are things so fierce right now? And chapter 12 had a very distinctive message for us. Its goal was to say you're at the end of a long history of war that has been going on, a war from the beginning. And it gave us symbols to help understand that war: a woman, a dragon, her offspring, ultimately centered on the woman's son. All this symbolism was given. A beautiful woman was clothed with the sun in chapter 12. Under her feet the moon and wrapped around her head was a garland of stars. She's the light of the earth. She's the light-bearer in the earth. But in great pain, she gave birth to a son and as that is happening set adjacent to this sign is another sign of the worst kind of foe and monster that John could come up with to have us consider the history of warfare, cosmic, that has been going on from the beginning. A dragon, fierce, breathing fire. He's out of control. He's red in color. He's swinging his tail. He's causing nothing but upheaval. He's out of control, wild, and ready to devour that child as soon as that child is born. And we looked at last time, that's the story of history, isn't it? That's the story of Israel throughout history having all the hardship to bring forth her Messiah. We looked at that. Satan's great effort in the Old

Testament was to overcome what was spoken to him in Genesis 3 that the woman's seed would crush his head so he's trying to bruise the heel the whole time and stop it. It's the Old Testament. That captures the story of the Old Testament. Every time, he was hitting the line trying to prevent the male child from being born.

Well, it came to an ugly head and we go back, Egypt from all the time when Pharaoh's casting babies into the Nile, we jump ahead, same story. Herod tries to wipe out the Messiah when he's finally born and has come. But he was destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron, and up to God in his throne he went, and he's reigning. All of this vision of chapter 12 celebrated the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as a great victory that we've won. He ascended, he was seated, house cleaning went on in heaven, and down came the devil for good, no more to make any accusation against you. All done. He's beat. And Revelation 12's message was, think about this, "Woe to you, earth and sea," two categories, "for the devil has come down to you having great wrath, for he knows he has a short time." Ah, there's the issue. That's why things are so bad right now. He's like a mad hornet in the earth. He's like the fish I talked about last time, swimming sideways in the bowl, ready to be flushed. Christians needed to understand this. This is why things are so hard right now. This is why the earth is in such turmoil right now. This is why people hate one another. It's hate upon hate, and he's good at it. We tend to look at things only in what's in front of us and Revelation 12 was saying, "No, no, no. This is all the result of a cosmic battle. That's why the inhabitants of the earth are in such woe, because the devil's come down to them furious. But you in the heavens," as Revelation has made the distinction, "should rejoice. Your place is secure."

Well, Revelation gave us that cosmic perspective. Every tactic of the devil even going on in the earth, here was the last point we left with last time, everything he's doing right now as a roaring lion roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour next, as he's causing all this turmoil, as the locusts come up out of the pit, chapter 9, as he's stirring up the peoples of the earth, he has one great goal, he's all coming for one people. He's coming after the offspring of the woman. That's what all this turmoil we're seeing ultimately has a goal of. That's what Revelation 12 was helping us with. Now we have to understand this lest we end up forgetting we belong to a heavenly kingdom, lest we start getting wrapped up in all the world's problems, and lest we start seeking to overcome the river of hate and division that Satan is spewing in the earth with the world's solutions and bringing that to the church thinking we're going to solve that. You're not stopping this. Christ is bringing in a kingdom of righteousness. What Revelation 13 now is doing is unmasking how Satan is doing this in the earth. Revelation is in a sense saying, 13, "I'm going to show you now his generals. I'm going to show you his warriors. I'll give you a good picture of them," Revelation, the beasts as they're called in Revelation 13, that Satan has specifically chosen to deceive the world and it has the effect of helping us see it so that we don't fall into it. It's a very important chapter, even though it's somewhat a complex chapter. It's a very important chapter in terms of exposure. This chapter is unmasking what Satan's doing in the earth so we're looking then at the identity of these beasts, their deception, and their success. That's all that chapter 13 is doing and so by the time we get to chapter 14, we have it all countered by a lamb slain who is standing and redeeming.

Well, let's look into this, and I think the best place to begin is with, in the ESV, chapter 12, the very last sentence there, and it's important to say that in chapter 12, the last little phrase there, "and he stood on the sand of the sea," many translations put at the beginning of chapter 13, and I do think that's correct, chapter breaks are not inspired, but it's a natural lead to what he's now describing. And so, you'll notice there, if we back up and look at Revelation chapter 12 verse 17, this is what we read. "Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring," that you, "on those who keep the commandments of God," and assault their moral stances, "and on those who hold to the testimony of Jesus." He's going to assault their gospel. moral stances, and gospel. And here's the link, "And he went and he stood on the sand of the sea." So the link is, he went to make war on us. How did he do it? John says, I watched him, and he goes out and he stands on the sand of the sea, the dragon. The imagery is a furious, fire-breathing, tail-swinging dragon who is now standing on the edge of the sea. I don't think that's a coincidence for when the Pharaoh and his armies had been defeated, it was Moses who stood on the sand of the sea and looked back and saw the thing go calm. Satan now is looking back at the defeat and here's what he's doing. I can't whistle, but it would be something like... And the sea starts stirring. And all you see, notice it, "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. 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. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority." He is furious, the dragon and the answer to his anger is to summon up some generals, to summon up some warriors.

So he stands out there and he whistles, if you will, and there the sea begins to churn and break and something begins to come up out of the sea. This is, boys and girls, a monster of indescribable horror that begins to rise up and come in view. You've never seen anything like this. Nobody's ever captured something this hideous, this horror-filled. John says, "I looked, and the worst-looking thing I've ever seen begins to come up. This beast had seven heads, and on those horns, you'll notice there, on those heads, ten horns, and this thing had a great blasphemy written there." I'll come back to that. "It kept coming up. I saw the head first, and it kept coming up," and then John says, "the most ferocious kinds of animals in this earth that we know this thing was made of. Its body was like a leopard. Its feet were like bear's feet with the claws that crush and swipe. Its mouth was like a lion's mouth, roaring as this thing came up, growling, ready to attack." It has the effect of, uh-oh. Movies try to capture this. Lord of the Rings tries to do this when you have Smaug and Sauron, right? And that's what some of you are thinking about. Ugly beasts. Dragon, Smaug, and here's Sauron, and you're thinking, "Who can fight that beast?" No one can touch that beast. He goes and he begins to take all worship for himself, this beast.

Now, as we pause and consider a little bit of beginning to start unfolding the meaning here, we have to remember that sea in the Scriptures is often described as the nations. Isaiah talks about this when he says, "Ah, the thunder of many peoples like the thunder of the thundering of the sea. Ah, the roaring of nations, they roar like the roaring of many waters." Whatever it is, it comes out of the nations and it demands absolute loyalty and worship, this beast. That's what's captured here. You'll notice that the whole earth is

worshiping this beast. All who dwell on the earth, except those written in the Lamb's Book of Life, everyone dwelling on the earth worships this beast.

Before we consider what this beast is and how it shows itself, let's just for a moment consider the second beast. Look at verse 11. John says, "I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb," much more deceptive, "but when he spoke his voice was like the voice of a dragon. It had all the authority," says John, "of the first beast, but its effect, its goal, its mission was to make all the peoples in the earth through its mouth," that's the emphasis here, "worship the first beast. He does all kinds of miraculous things with great power and awe to make everyone worship the beast by making even an image of the beast. He's the mouthpiece of the beast." What do we have here? Well, I was thinking a lot about this and considering everything that we've ever learned in the Christian faith and I thought, you know, this is all very familiar, isn't it? You say, "What do you mean, familiar?" Oh, you know this. I'm doing it again. You know this. A dragon who controls and orders all the events in the earth, attempts to. He proceeds to send forth two beasts, a beast that then demands all worship and another beast who is the mouthpiece of the first beast who bears witness of him and leads all peoples to worship him. Sound familiar? It's a false trinity. You have a false God the Father figure in the dragon, a false Christ figure, and a false Holy Spirit figure that's described for us in all the categories we're familiar with. This is where I think Revelation promises a blessing to those who read and understand because things are shown to you that you've always known now in a counterfeit system of the world that you can begin to identify and see. If you see this, it has the greatest preserving effect on you because now you understand the devil's tactics. Now you understand his agenda. You understand his system. Everything God has done, the devil's counterfeiting in the earth.

So to understand this, you've got to have a good understanding of the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit, everything the Christian faith has always taught you, and it helps then to understand why we're saying creeds and confessions. Revelation is saying, use the framework and think through what a counterfeit to that work that you know would look like in the earth. That'll help you. That's Satan's business. He's the greatest counterfeit ever. If you can know the work of the Trinity, understand the Trinity, and then apply Satan's counterfeiting activity, it's going to greatly help you with what's going on. Then it's not that hard. And there are markers and there are symbols here to help us with that.

So let's look at these figures. If you ask me to identify the first beast in the earth, there is something that is said of the first beast that the second beast is trying to advance, that the second beast is bearing witness to. What is it? It's probably the most difficult verse here, but it is the key. It's verse 3. First beast, and I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded and his deadly wound was healed, and the second beast is bearing witness to the healing of the deadly wound. These are the very same words in Revelation already that described Jesus. Remember the vision of chapter 5, "I saw a lamb as if it had been slain." You know, these are the very same words that are used here? Very same Greek words. He was slain. He came to life. Now, we come to a section that says the beast was slain and his wound was healed. He came to life. Same words. John wants us to

draw the connection. He's giving us a gift here. He had a fatal blow, came to life. Verse 8 says all those on earth worship this beast, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. Same word. The Lamb who was slain. The counterfeit. The world marveled at this. The world's taken by this beast who was killed and came to life.

Now, what does verse 2 say that the dragon, false God the Father, gave him? A kingdom and all authority. It says that. You can look at verse 2 there where it says, he goes on, actually, it's actually verse 4, "And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast." The authority of the beast. This is so important. And he was given all authority over every tribe and nation and language and kingdom there, you'll notice there. In verse 2, it also says, and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. He keeps emphasizing this. He gave it to him. Sound familiar? Of course it sounds familiar. You confess it every Sunday night. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, who," taking bits and pieces here, "for us men and our salvation came down from heaven. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, whose kingdom shall have no end," we say. You know all this, don't you?

Now, to this one who has all power and authority, this beast, the second beast testifies. He has the mouthpiece of the first beast. Everything the second beast does, everything is aimed to make the peoples of the earth worship the first beast. That sounds familiar too. And I believe in the Holy Spirit. The Lord and giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified who spoke by the prophets. He's the mouth. He's the mouth. Now, you know the real story. God the Father, Creator and Sustainer in his wonderful providence of all things, he orders and providentially provides and sends forth his judgments into the earth and he sends forth as a gift to this world his eternal Son who was slain and rose victorious. And that message is cherished in the earth by you. It's your life. You marvel at that message. It's marveled by those who are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is worshiped, and he is working right now to testify as the mouthpiece in his church through all of his servants to preach and bear witness to the Son. This is it. Upon his ascension, authority and power, Jesus said, has been given to me. Go therefore to all the nations and preach the gospel. This beast is trying to control all the nations. Here's the greatest counterfeit of history, the dragon counterfeiting the Father, the beast counterfeiting the Son of God, the Antichrist, and the second beast is a great false prophet in the earth counterfeiting the Holy Spirit. It's really wonderful too, as a side note, to say your doctrine of the Trinity is just proven right here, isn't it? It's Satan's activity to counter it in every way. It's really remarkable to consider it that way.

The question, of course, is what exact form now does this take? That's what I was sitting thinking about. That's what you want to know. Where is he? Who is this? How do we identify this? And this is where things could go in many different directions. The two most prominent views being that this is either a demonized government or the Antichrist. Remember I said that this first beast is reigning the entire time of the woman going out

into the wilderness? He's been alive a long time and well. Who is he? Well, this is what Revelation is about doing for us, unmasking and I was thinking to answer that particular question, what is one of the greatest threats to us as Christians? I think if you can look at things this way, or if we could put it this way. If I were to say, with my own children right now, I've got four little children, what am I worried about with my children? What am I concerned about with my children? They have a choice, right? They have a choice. They are either going to, as they've been raised with all these many benefits and blessings, they are going to profess their faith in Jesus, the Jesus of Scripture, bow their knee to him, believe the gospel, repent of their sins, identify with him, which their baptism signifies, be united to him by faith, and follow him. That's my prayer, right? That's what I want. That's what we're all after. All of you. That's our goal in ministry. Everyone here. That you identify there. That you bow to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. They have a choice, of course, don't they? What's the other choice? Well, I think if I asked that, many of you would say, unbelief. And this is where Revelation's saying, no, no, no, no, no. It's not unbelief. It's not unbelief. You know what Paul said, the apostle, how he viewed the work of Satan? And I'm looking at this in broader categories. It certainly is unbelief in terms of not believing in Jesus, but constantly, the New Testament writers are categorizing what we call unbelief with being taken captive. Paul said this when he was thinking about people who have chosen a path of disobedience in life when he said that we should pray for them that these people may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil having been captured by him to do his will. This is why Jesus was telling people you have your father the devil. False father.

What is the contrary path? I'm always telling my children, we're always trying to tell people what? Don't love the world. What does that mean? What does that mean? I'm not talking about a globe. I'm talking about its values and its system, aren't I? This thing of the beast is demanding your heart and trying to capture a loyalty to it. And that's helping us a little bit because the author of Revelation here, John, wrote the gospel of John, 1 John, what did he keep saying throughout the other books? Take something in 1 John. "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies under the power of the evil one." There's power here. Do you know what he links together with that power? Listen to it. I don't know of a better verse than 1 John 2, "Do not love the world or the things in the world," and he goes on, "the desires of the eyes, the pride of life. It's not from the Father, but it's from the world and the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Children, it is the last hour and as you have heard, that antichrist is coming, so right now, many antichrists have come." He just said, linking together with a love of the world is all the stuff of the antichrist. Right now. Right now living and reigning, taking captive people's hearts. That's how you know it's the last hour. He just said, "I know you were told the antichrist is coming," and everyone tries to play pin the tail on the antichrist. But John just said, you need to think about this, "Don't love the world because its entire influence is governed by the stuff of the antichrist that's already here. He is right now demanding your loyalty." Revelation 13 makes that connection since this beast reigns 42 months, same time as the woman's witness.

There have been a million ways this takes shape throughout this age. A million ways. You can understand why the Reformers would say the Pope was the antichrist.

Muhammad the false prophet. Why? Well, because that was the greatest manifestation of it at the moment. That's what they saw. That's what they lived. At the moment, those were the strongest expressions of this beast showing itself in the earth, its system of deceiving people, its system of taking people captive and loyalties to a false gospel. In history, the highest expressions of authority is found where? Governments. Governments. What would the devil love to make you do? Trust it as a savior. And if it can't just naturally do that by giving you everything it has under the sun, forcing it. Let me give you a prime example. Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, and the counselors, and the treasurers, and the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the province gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. All this is borrowed right here in Revelation 13 from Daniel, by the way. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and a herald proclaimed. Here's the voice. There's the second beast all of a sudden. Image, second beast, speaks. Herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, the bagpipe, and every kind of music," it's power there, "you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar has set up." Boys and girls, you know what happened, right, to Daniel's friends? They said, "No way." And into the fire they went.

That's a formidable antichrist that was set up that the whole kingdom was bowing to. Whatever form he can do it, he wants the loyalty of your hearts. He wants it. How many people have been tempted to look to a nation and a leader as a savior? What does the world promise you? Deliverance. There are a million mouths out there constantly telling you to follow this, listen to this, as they lead you away from Jesus. In fact, do you know where Satan's trying to do it most? Right here in the church. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." So it's no surprise if his servants disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. He's got pastors everywhere making people and pushing them to the beast and we just sit there and say, "Oh, it's all in the name of Jesus. It's okay." Counterfeits are everywhere. And there's great power by a false Holy Spirit who can woo with everything under the sun. He can dazzle with words. He can dazzle with power, lying signs, and lying wonders, and take your hearts captive. Do you notice the connection with idolatry? Do you notice that's his key ingredient? What do we say idolatry is? Trusting in anything we put our trust in place of or alongside of the only true God.

So here are my children. I'm preaching Jesus to them. I'm leading them to the Christ of the Bible as the Scriptures have revealed him. I'm pressing them. Think of all the false voices that are coming at them all the time. Think of it. Think of all the pressures that are coming at us all the time. Ask a preschooler what they want to be. Preschooler. You know what they'll tell you? A rock star. It's in them. It's in them. That's what they want to be. It's the system. Here's the beast in front of them offering everything. All the sex you want. All the highs you can get. All the things that will make for whatever to demand the loyalty of our hearts. Oh, when you reject Jesus, you're not in some neutral state. You're bowing. You're bowing. He wants to own you. He's trying to purchase you. There's an

ownership issue going on and a false Holy Spirit is opening his mouth constantly, hitting them with everything he can use of this world, hitting them constantly, pulling them to the beast. The world promises you it all. Immediate gratification. "Go ahead. This Jesus of Scripture is way too strict. You can have it all. They're fundamentalists." That's how it's gone now. They are from the beginning trying to be owned by this system.

That's Revelation 13. You and your children from the beginning are trying to be owned. Don't you see it? It's the power and grip of this allure of darkness and for them to give allegiance to it and then the Bible says they've accepted the lie. They fell into the deceitfulness of sin. Listen to Romans 1, they've exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who's forever blessed. That's what it is, it's worship. It's worship. That's why Revelation is showing you a contrast of worship.

The section closes by giving us the end game to all of this. There's a goal. Notice it in verse 16, and this beast, false prophet, "causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked," we've been talking a lot about marking in Revelation, haven't we, "on the right hand or on the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666." If you understand that in context, that is really clear. You're not in a neutral category. You have either come to the Father through the Son by the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of Jesus and you take great delight in that message. That has captured your hearts, hasn't it? Hasn't the gospel captured your hearts today of God's unfailing love? And you're so thankful for that. You know what you are. You follow. Your desire of your hearts have all changed, haven't they? The desire of your hearts has changed, hasn't it? You want to love him. You want to follow. You're mesmerized by the wonderful forgiveness that God gave his Son to do this. Then, then, or you've accepted the counterfeit system. Your heart and your loyalties are in an entirely different place. You've got to think about that. Your heart and your loyalties are in an entirely different place. You have either been marked by God. What would you consider? Sealed? Measured? Written on by God himself in the Lamb's book of life slain from the foundation of the world, that's where you are. Or you have loved the world. accepted what it has offered you, and you've given allegiance to a false trinity, one that is fueled on deception, one that has been taken captive by Satan, demanding your heart as you fall under the mouthpiece and voice of deception that's all over this earth.

Now, I find that to be the most helpful exposure in the book of Revelation because the encouragement here, and exposure is so important in the Scriptures, this is what it's doing for us, but I want you to notice here that the goal of it is to say, when the devil is standing on the seashore and saying... and here they come, I see it. Don't you see it? Can't you see it all around you? Do you see this beast and the mouth all around you? Can't you feel its pull? It's stressing you out all the time. This is what's causing all your heartache. But verse 9 says something really to help you. Here's the patience of the saints. These ruthless foes may take into captivity, may kill by the sword, but here's the patience. Christ's

kingdom comes and nothing stops it. I love hearing from the end of Jude, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy." Nothing changes what's now to come in the next chapter.

We'll close with this thought. Look at verse 1 of chapter 14. Then I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion and there with him are all the elect, having his Father's name written on their foreheads, the true Father. These were redeemed from among men being the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. He bought you. He purchased you. That's next time. That's next time. But I want to say here this morning that anyone struggling with the position of belief in Jesus, maybe it's a young person, maybe it's you today, don't believe the lie. You can have a lot of fun spending money you don't have, can't you? Sure you can. But one day, the bill collector's going to come and call for the debt, isn't he? What happens when you have nothing to pay with? Satan in this world is pushing for your identity to take you captive, and it's a lie. You don't want to make that mistake.

I think you should be able to see this so clearly, can't you? It's actually one of the benefits of a turbulent time that we live. It's one of the benefits of going through this right now. It's going to strip away false Christians and it's going to make us see things very clearly. I say today then come to the true King of kings and Lord of lords. You know what that blasphemous name is on the beast's head? King of kings and Lord of lords. This is that Jesus preached to you the true King of kings and Lord of lords, and the Holy Spirit bears witness of him today. He will sanctify you and he will keep you by his powerful word.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we are grateful for your wonderful exposure that you gave us today and since we've known it all our life, we've just not been able to categorize it and understand it in these terms, but it's right in front of us. And thank you for giving us a framework to understand it. How sad it is that there would be this kind of counterfeit system of the work of the Triune God in the earth. And yet, through it all, we see your power to keep your people, that even though this enemy is so formidable, and so powerful and has such allure, the power of the Holy Spirit testifying to the work of Christ who lived and died and rose again is much more powerful as we come to a Father who loves us and is able to keep us. Thank you for hearing us today and answering us and encourage your sheep in your word that gives them light in this present darkness. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.