

# Revelation as a Spiritual War Manual, part 1

Revelation 1-22B

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-12-09

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## Text

Revelation 12:7 War was declared in heaven; Michael and his angels were to wage war with the dragon; so the dragon and his angels made war, 8 but he was not strong enough; neither was there any place found for him in heaven any more. 9 So the great dragon was expelled, that ancient serpent, who is called Slanderer and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited world; he was thrown into the earth, and his angels were expelled with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in the heaven saying: “Now the salvation and the power have come, even the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not cherish their lives, even up to death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, yes, you who are dwelling in them! Woe to the earth and the sea! Because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has little time.”

## Introduction

The passage I just read has heaven declaring war against Satan, and verse 11 has the saints on earth joining in this great battle. And the phrase “make war” or “declare war” occurs several times throughout this book. There is not a single saint who is exempted from the call to war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Saints are either AWOL or they are involved, but there is no middle ground.

And what we are going to see this week and next week is that God’s Great War was not declared without detailed plans, purposes, tactics, and strategies, and character requirements, and reinforcement. Can you imagine our Lightning Football team going into battle without practice and without a plan and without a coach? Trevor walks back and forth with his battle plans in his hand. Can you imagine any general of the American army, or Navy, or any other branch going into battle without knowing at least what their own role in battle was? Everybody knows that would be ludicrous.

Yet Christians routinely go into battle without gaining any intelligence on their adversary. They know next to nothing about Satan and demons. They go into battle without knowing how to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, and they keep wondering why they keep falling into sin, or depression, or trouble over and over and over again. They go into battle without guidance, training, or backup. They go into battle without mastering the book of Revelation, which was designed by God to be (at least in part) the church’s war manual.

In our series we have covered every single verse and phrase of this amazing book, and we have looked at a lot of the detailed aspects of spiritual warfare. I won't take the time to repeat those today. Instead, I want to do in these last three sermons is to get out of the leaves of the trees and fly high enough above the forest that we can see the broader contours of the book.

We started the Revelation series that way with a bird's eye view of how it connected to the whole Bible and the general direction this book was going. And last week we started this high altitude look through the lens of the songs of Revelation and the prayers of Revelation and how they related to this great war. And because I dealt with those, I decided to skip the priestly actions of our war plan and the prophetic actions of our war plan. It would have taken way too long to go through those, so I will just put that outline up on the web.

Next week we will look at how the Father and the Spirit relate to us in this war and how we relate to them as foot-soldiers of the cross. And that is so important because just as the angels of heaven could not take on Satan and his forces alone, we on earth cannot take on the spiritual enemy on our own. We need the Triune God to lead us into battle, to equip us, and to empower us.

Today's focus will be on our relationship to the Son. We saw last week that the church of Laodicea is just one example of a church that had no power against the enemy in their prayers or their songs because Jesus was not present. He was outside that church knocking on the church door. And if Jesus is not present, nothing we do will get past the ceiling. Well, the same is true of spiritual warfare as a whole. If Jesus is not our General leading us in our warfare as the Greater Joshua, we will not succeed. If we do not clothe ourselves daily with His armor, we will be naked like the church of Laodicea was.

The work of Jesus in this book can be summed up in the words, prophet, priest, and king. There is not a page in this book of Revelation in which Jesus is not powerfully active in advancing the Great War and/or enjoying the fruits of His victory in the last chapters. And I struggled with knowing how best to present this information, and I ended up deciding that I would just give you a sampling of ideas under our kingship to give you a vision of how our battles are much more far reaching than personal holiness. So this will not be a complete survey. Nor will it give an adequate look at Jesus as King. That by itself would take a sermon. Instead, we will look at how His kingship mandates our kingship.

Because of our union with Jesus, this book declares that every believer has been made a king who has already been seated with Christ in the heavenlies. That's the only way we can be a king - by being seated with Christ. Secondly, every believer is called a priest who is reconciling man to God - again, because of our union with Jesus. There are no sacrifices to be made. Jesus finished that priestly work. But our priestly work is applying the once-and-for-all-time sacrifice of Jesus and interceding as His representatives.

But interestingly, there is not a single reference to every believer being a prophet. And some commentators have puzzled over that. If you listened to the sermon from two weeks ago, that is no puzzle. We saw that all true prophecy (in the technical definition) has ceased in AD 70, and what sometimes goes for prophecy today is not technically prophecy; it is the Lord's guidance. We saw that the way Revelation and the rest of the New Testament uses the term "prophecy" it always refers to inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative revelation from God to the church. Revelation speaks of the Scriptures as being the book of this prophecy. And our prophetic strategies are not to get more inspired revelation from God to bring against churches, states, and other entities. We do have a prophetic strategy (which we won't look at much today), but our prophetic strategy is to apply the prophetic Scriptures to all of life. And I may intersperse a few examples of our priestly and prophetic activities in today's sermon.

## **I. Our kingly activities**

But today, let's look at our kingly activities. They flow from Christ. Revelation 1:5 says that Jesus Christ is right now "the ruler of the kings of the earth." We are not waiting for Him to become King. And that passage indicates that this immediately sets up warfare between those kings who won't submit to His kingship and the people who do. Many Christians don't act like they are at spiritual war with the kings of the earth, but they should be. Revelation 11:7 says that the demonic beast who comes up out of the Abyss possesses Nero and later Titus and declares war on the saints. And chapter 17:14 says that the ten kings make war with the Lamb. So it does involve humans, but it is humans driven by the demonic.

But chapter 17 says of those first century humanistic kings, "They will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful." There are two reasons given why Jesus conquered them: 1) because He is King of kings and Lord of lords (it's part of His calling as King), and 2) because there are people with Him who are faithfully

advancing His cause. But this and many other verses show that kingship necessitates war, and our union with him necessitates us joining that war as His representative kings.

I think it would be helpful if you see what is involved in His Kingship first. The Shorter Catechism that we recently recited states,

Q: How doth Christ execute the office of a king? A: Christ executeth the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling, and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

The Larger Catechism #45 gives a much more complete answer to the same question. It says,

Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself (Acts 15:14–16, Isa. 55:4–5, Gen. 49:10, Ps. 110:3) [so there is a people that make up a growing army that Jesus uses], and giving them officers (Eph. 4:11–12, 1 Cor. 12:28) [So there is a hierarchy of representatives under King Jesus], laws [a kingdom without law is no kingdom, and this book shows that every nation that casts off His law has declared treason against the Almighty. It goes on:] (Isa. 33:22), and censures [this would be church discipline and/or penalties in the state - these are all examples of Christ's kingly office being exercised through His representatives. It goes on:], by which he visibly governs them (Matt. 18:17–18, 1 Cor. 5:4–5); in bestowing saving grace upon his elect (Acts 5:31), rewarding their obedience (Rev. 22:12, Rev. 2:10), and correcting them for their sins (Rev. 3:19), preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings (Isa. 63:9), restraining and overcoming all their enemies (1 Cor. 15:25, Ps. 110:1–2), and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory (Rom. 14:10–11), and their good (Rom. 8:28), and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1:8–9, Ps. 2:8–9)<sup>1</sup>

And of course, every one of those words and phrases has Scripture texts by which the Westminster writers showed why each item was an aspect of Christ's kingship. But they were clear that Christ's kingship is not just over the church. The church is the army by which He advances His kingdom of grace, but the kingdom is as broad as this universe and will one day experience a renovation of even the physical universe. And we've looked at all of those things in this book before.

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<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism: With Scripture Proofs. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

**A. Because Christ rules (1:5; 2:27; 3:14; 11:15,17; 12:5; 19:15; 20:6), those who are united with Christ are also called kings (1:6; 5:10), have been given kingly “authority” over the nations (2:26-28), reign with Him (2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4,6; 22:5) and wear crowns (2:10; 3:11; cf. 4:4). Throughout the book there are many characteristics of God’s people such as self-control, perseverance, boldness, patience, overcoming, etc that are associated with their kingship (cf. 2:2-3,7,10,11,17,26-28; 3:5,7,9,10,11,12,21; 4:4; 13:10; 21:7)**

But Revelation goes beyond this. I won’t go over all the Scriptures in your outline, but because Christ rules as king, those who are united to him are also called kings. You are a king, whether you are a male or a female; whether you are an adult or a child. After Christ’s ascension to heaven, chapter 5 praises God, saying about all believers, “You have made them kings and priests to our God, and they will reign...” (5:8) As we have seen repeatedly in this book, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies right now. Though most Christians in the church of Thyatira had already gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave), Christ said this to every overcomer who remained faithful within that church: “I will give him power over the nations.” That’s an astounding promise. If we claim our position as those who are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, we can have power over the nations. Why? Because we share in His kingship, are exercising His authority, are serving His interests, and advancing His cause. It is a shame that the church does not ask for God’s judgments upon the persecutors of the church. They have authority to do so, and the songs of Moses and of the Lamb give the specific words we can use.

I’ll just read the rest of your first subpoint. It says that Christians

... reign with Him (2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4,6; 22:5) and wear crowns (2:10; 3:11; cf. 4:4). Throughout the book there are many characteristics of God’s people such as self-control, perseverance, boldness, patience, overcoming, etc that are associated with their kingship (cf. 2:2-3,7,10,11,17,26-28; 3:5,7,9,10,11,12,21; 4:4; 13:10; 21:7).

Those latter character issues must be put on if we are to fully enter into our kingly authority. So that is just by way of introduction to our kingly calling. Now I want to give you a whirlwind tour of a mere sampling of some of the ways that this book shows that our kingship extends much more broadly than merely subduing our own sins.

## ***B. Representing Christ's kingship with the state***

**The 144,000 Jewish remnant (7:1-8) were “overcomers” (12:10-12) engaging in a tactical flight in order to regroup (12:13-17) and conquer the nations with the Gospel (14:1-5,14-16). At every point they obeyed Christ even when it came into conflict with man.**

One of the kingly groups that plays a big part in this story is the 144,000 Jewish believers who survived the Great Tribulation. Though you may question my interpretation that their fleeing Jerusalem in chapter 12:13-17 was kingly behavior, no one who studies their whole story can say that this flight was anything but a tactical retreat. It was not cowardice. In fact, it was obedience to their General, Jesus Christ, who had directly commanded them to flee the moment they saw armies surrounding Jerusalem. Let me read that. In Luke 21:20-21. Jesus said,

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

To disobey Christ's direct command would have been foolhardy and suicidal. You can resist the state's rebellion against Christ in many ways - by rebuking the state as John the Baptizer did, or serving in office as Daniel, Shadrack, Mesheck, and Abednego did, or by interposition as Rahab did when she hid and protected the spies, or in many other ways. But fleeing is also a form of a godly resistance. Why do I say it is resistance? Because neither Rome nor the Israelite government wanted them to flee. Blind submission would have meant they would turn themselves in to be tortured and killed. And that is not always the best way to build a church. Sometimes God ordains for the blood of the saints to be the seed of the church. But Jesus commanded His disciples to flee in some situations when possible. That is not contrary to their position as kings. He told His disciples in Matthew 10, “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (Matt. 10:23)

So fleeing for three and a half years was part of the overall strategy that Jesus, the King of all kings, had for these 144,000. And we saw the beautiful outcome of that tactical retreat. We saw that the very day the 144,000 Jewish believers escaped from Jerusalem, they traveled through an earthquake-produced pass on the Mount of Olives (that can still be seen to this day), and they lived in Pella for the next three and a half years. Good angels surrounded that area so that demons could not find them. Interestingly,

history tells us that they lived under the protection of King Herod Agrippa II, which is weird because Herod didn't like them either. In fact, three and a half years later Herod became Titus' enforcer who tortured and killed many believers. But Christ, the Great King was overseeing and subduing the hearts of even His enemies, and using one of His enemies to temporarily protect the church. There were only two reasons why King Herod Agrippa II allowed the 144,000 to settle in Pella. First, weeks before they fled to Pella, riots and massacres had completely emptied the cities of that region of people. They had all been killed off or had fled, and King Herod wanted that area populated again. Secondly, King Herod had been so disgraced and humiliated by those who controlled Jerusalem, that he hated them, and anyone who was the enemy of the rebels who had gained control of Jerusalem was at least temporarily his friend. So the 144,000 marched into cities that were full of food, clothing, and supplies that would sustain them for the next three and a half years - the first half of the seven year war. And they emerged from that hiding place as the greatest missionary army in the last 2000 years - 144,000 people totally sold out to conquering the world for King Jesus after AD 70. And they went all over the world preaching the Gospel. They did indeed have a kingly spirit, and they began turning the nations upside down with the Gospel.

But at every point that they were preaching, it was in direct disobedience to civil law. This is so important to understand. Blind submission to God-hating states is not Christian. I've had Christians tell me that smuggling Bibles into countries is sin because it's illegal. Well, evangelizing in a Muslim country is illegal. Does that nullify the Great Commission? Of course not. But these people treat all violation of human statutes as sin. The blasphemy of that statement is that it makes the state the determiner of right and wrong and of what is lawful, not God. That is a complete overthrowing of the Kingship of Christ because if He can't make the laws then He is not King. So when man's statutes compete with Christ's laws, Christ's laws always trump man's laws. So for example, when Herod Antipas told Jesus to immediately get out of his province in Luke 13, Jesus refused to leave until the third day. That was a direct disobedience to orders from an earlier Herod. Every time you evangelize in many Muslim countries, you are disobeying their Sharia Law. But those statutes are not lawful because they were in rebellion to the King of kings. And if we do not submit to the King of kings, then our submission to earthly kings is hollow.

Of course, the early Christians considered themselves to be law abiding citizens, and argued so every time they were martyred. But they understood

Romans 13 - that there is no authority if not from God. If God does not authorize the state to command them to stay, surrender, stop preaching, or to close down their church, or stop fleeing, stop influencing, or whatever the commands might be, they would look to the leader of their chain of command, Jesus (something that all kings and magistrates should do), and they would realize what our founding fathers realized - that resistance to tyrants on at least those issues is obedience to God. They were taking seriously what true kingship meant - it meant representing Jesus in His kingship and always obeying His commands. When you vote, you should be representing Christ's kingship. Your vote is a position of authority.

### **From AD 70-73 the Christians that refused to be tattooed with the mark of the beast and refused to worship His image (13:15-17)**

But chapter 13 shows that in the next three and a half years (from AD 70-73) there were challenges as well. Once the rebels were crushed, Herod was no longer a protector of Christians. Instead, he became the enforcer of Titus' harsh martial law during the time that Israel was occupied. That was the time that Titus enforced the mark of the beast on people's heads and/or hands. The higher classes just wore a coin there, others were tattooed or branded. People were afraid to buy or sell without government permission. So even on economic transactions, God's people were violating statutes because as kings they had to represent Christ's Kingship and not compromise it. According to the interim government, they were not supposed to buy or sell without the mark and without giving token worship. But they continued to buy and sell and trade with each other in a way that amounted to a black market. Revelation 13 authorizes a black market in certain circumstances - as a necessary implication of our kingship. For Christians in some muslim communities, it is the only way to survive. So I am just giving you samplings of how our kingship is lived out in real life.

And we saw first century documentation of how the two false Jewish prophets performed astounding miracles, including calling down fire from heaven and making an image speak. They used those along with their writings to justify their Talmudic rationalization of why wearing the mark of the beast was OK and offering incense to Caesar was not compromise so long as you didn't mean it. So most Jews went along with it, and those that didn't were tortured and killed. And of course, that included some of the 144,000 who stayed behind to evangelize in Israel.

Chapter 13:15-17 says,

15 And it was granted to him to give breath to the image of the Beast, so that the image of the Beast should actually speak, and should cause as many as would not worship the image of the Beast to be killed. 16 And he causes everyone—both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave—to receive marks on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 so that no one would be able to buy or sell who does not have the mark, the name of the Beast or the number of his name.

How does a kingly representative of Jesus respond to such blasphemous laws? He disregards them because they are not lawful and Romans 13 says that they have no authority to make such commands. People need to realize that Romans 13 describes the ideal government as a minister of God and Revelation describes the de facto governments of Nero and Titus as the demonic bestial governments of Satan; they were ministers of Satan, not of God. To say that Romans 13 describes the de facto government of Nero not only contradicts Revelation 13 but it contradicts Romans 13 itself. Nero's government did the exact opposite of Romans 13 by being a minister of the demonic beast from the Abyss, by being a terror to good works, supporting immoral works, and executing wrath upon Christians rather than upon evil men. The government described in Romans 13 never does that. So Romans 13 describes the ideal government as a minister of God who directly takes His orders from the Bible and Revelation 13 describes humanistic governments as ministers of demons.

But if that is true, that means the governments themselves must be conquered with the Gospel (that would be our priestly function), transformed with Scripture (that would be the prophetic function), and living out Christ's kingship in civics (that would be the kingly function). Our allegiance is not to the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, or any other party. While parties may be used, our allegiance is to Jesus. As kings, we must (as Romans 13 words it) be "God's minister" in every area of life. Even though Romans 13 is referring to literal ideal rulers, it still applies by principle to us. If we are kings, we must exercise our role as ministers of God. And when humanistic kings war against our kingship, we need to look up the chain of command to see if those kings are stepping outside their line of authority and to see what we ought to do. That's the practical outworking of our kingship.

We can't go through every principle of kingship that Revelation teaches, but if the modern church would once again take seriously this War Manual for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, our politics would be different, our culture would be different. Only Jesus, the Great King can make our efforts succeed, but He has given us a war manual that governs not only our behavior but our plans. And if we ignore it, why would He honor us with success?

## **“overcome” state resistance to the gospel (17:14; 2:13,17; 15:2)**

The next point really reiterates some of what I have already said - that when the ungodly state alliances make a direct war upon Jesus, Christians may not submit. To submit is to lose our own authority; to leave our own kingship under Jesus. There are too many compromised Christian politicians who have lost all credibility and all authority. They simply do not have Christ's authority in their politics. They do not engage in politics as those seated with Christ in the heavenlies. They fail to recognize that our real war goes beyond flesh and blood to principalities and powers of demonic forces. Revelation 17:14 says of the ten kings (who clearly had ten demons behind them) that supported and stood behind Titus,

They will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful.

This passage says that Jesus will conquer the ten provinces that had made this pact with the Beast. He will conquer them. Did He do it? Yes. The Roman empire sustained disaster after disaster from Christ's hand, and church history tells us that Christians were there to pick up the pieces and to share the Gospel, so that city after city, and then province after province became Christian until Rome itself eventually declared itself to be Christian. But it came by following the orders of King Jesus, not blindly following every order of a God-hating magistrate. If their focus had been on supporting the lesser of two evils, they would not have made the advancements that they did. If you read the church fathers like Athanasius, you realize that their vision went far beyond that. They were determined to see all of culture completely changed by Gospel and Law. This book calls us to have a long term plan that involves evangelism, comprehensive discipleship, being salt and light, and never compromising the Scriptures. Incremental compromise with paganism just leaves you with a slightly nicer form of paganism, which still does not honor God. God calls us to influence politics as Kings who represent Jesus when they vote or when they govern, as Priests who apply the Gospel to everything they do, and as prophets who are governed by the Word of God.

## **flee from a state's oversight (12:6,14)**

I will skip over the next point since I've already dealt with it.

**distinguish between a state functioning as a “minister of God” and a state that acts like a “beast” in character (11:7; 13:1,2,3,4,5,8,11,23, 14,15,17,18; 14:9,11;15:2; 16:2,10,13; 17:3,7,8,11,12,13,16,17; 19:19; 19:20; 20:4; 20:10). Because we have the Word, we have that authority.**

But one of the things that people have written about is the way Revelation defines humanistic politics as a lair of demons who manipulate and control behind the scenes and eventually move politicians to persecute Christians. It becomes a beast. It is fascinating that Daniel (from whom Revelation gets its imagery) describes the pagan world empires with the figure of beasts, each of those empires having a fallen demon-beast overseeing it. The righteous beasts of Revelation and Ezekiel are a third category of angel, and some of those beasts fell. The beast from the Abyss that controlled Nero and then Titus was that kind of fallen angel. Anyway, politics is not neutral. It is either for Christ or against Christ.

And in this book, because the saints based all their decision-making upon the Word of God, they had the courage and the wisdom to be able to distinguish between a state that was functioning as a true minister of God and a state that was acting like a beast. I give a number of Scriptures that show the term beast being used to describe the demon-possessed rulers of Nero, Titus, and Herod. To live as citizens in two kingdoms requires great discernment.

**Trust that God is in control of whether we are captured and killed or whether we are protected (6:9-11; 7:1-8; etc.). We are invincible until it is God’s purpose for us to go.**

And it may result in martyrdom, but these saints trusted that they were secure in Christ’s kingdom whether they were captured or killed. If captured, they were (as Paul worded it) prisoners of Christ, not of Rome. If killed, they simply transition from the church on earth to the church in heaven, which also joins in the warfare through their prayers. So there is no extinguishing this great battle. Demons will fight to the death and Christians who understand their position in Christ will resist those demons to the death.

In any case, if you investigate these and many other verses in Revelation you will discover that many of the saints showed all the marks of a true king in the social arena. A true king is first and foremost a representative of Jesus, not a representative of the political machine. A true king advances Christ’s kingdom, not his own. A true king operates in terms of Christ’s laws, not his own. A true king wants others to submit to Jesus, not Himself. A true king has conquered his own fleshly desires and has the purity of the 144,000. A

true king organizes and governs his family affairs, church affairs, and civic affairs according to the Word of God. If (as the catechism says) Jesus as king is “conquering all his and our enemies” through the Gospel, we too should apply the Gospel to everything that is at enmity with Jesus. No square inch of planet earth is exempted from the plans of this War Manual. All must bow before King Jesus.

### **But this book resists anarchy as much as it does tyranny (8-11)**

I’ll skip over the next point since I dealt with it adequately in my verse-by-verse exposition. It simply states that it isn’t simply bestial governments that this book opposes; it also opposes the revolutionary anarchists in Israel who wanted no government over themselves. But they ended up being far worse than the tyrannical governments that they opposed. If you want two fascinating studies of how unrealistic anarchism is, read Josephus’ description of the rebels who overthrew the government of Rome and Jerusalem in AD 67 and look at the Radical Anabaptists of Munster at the time of the Reformation. They didn’t believe in any government over them, but when they got into power, all hell broke loose. It was far worse than the tyranny they were opposing.

### ***C. Representing Christ’s kingship in the church***

#### **a responsibility to test those in the church claiming to be apostles (2:2)**

But let’s move on to the Kingly actions within the church. It is not just the political realm and the cultural realm that is at odds with King Jesus. If we as kings are burning with a holy jealousy for Christ’s name, then we must oppose rebellion to Christ wherever it may be found. And church discipline is an aspect of representing Christ’s kingship. Of course, discipline can be abused just as civics can. When pastors become abusive with their leadership like Diotrephes did in 3 John, and when they use discipline to protect their own turf rather than Christ’s glory, they are not representing Christ’s leadership and should step down from office. On the other hand, when pastors refuse to discipline rebels, they too are in rebellion to Jesus and should repent or step down from office. And even members of a church that coddle rebels are failing to live out their function as kings representing Jesus. Even members have kingly authority to at least rebuke rebellion that they witness in the church. Leviticus 19:17 says that failure to rebuke a brother in sins is to hate him. Luke 17:3 says, “If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; if he repents, forgive him.” Rebuke is one of many kingly

functions that every man, woman, and child is called to in the Scripture.

The whole Church of Ephesus was praised in chapter 2:2 in these words: “And you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not, and found them to be liars...” Here was a church that was properly representing Christ even when it was uncomfortable to do so. Church discipline is never comfortable, but it is essential for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom.

**a refusal to bear with those in the church who are evil (2:2);  
opposition to immorality in the church (2:6,14-15,20-23)**

He praises them in the same verse for not putting up with evil in the church, saying, “you cannot stand those who are evil.” I talked to a pastor in town who claims to be an evangelical who admits practicing homosexuals to the Lord’s Table. I asked him why, and he said, “Well, the Lord’s Table represents the Gospel invitation which is to whosoever will.” You can imagine the argument that ensued. Obviously the Gospel is to whosoever will, but once they believe the Gospel and abandon the army of Satan and give an unconditional surrender to King Jesus, they are in a different army and follow different laws. Here was a session of elders that were not ruling under Christ; they were ruling under a foreign god called political correctness.

In contrast, Christ praised Ephesus, saying, “you cannot stand those who are evil.” He liked that about the church. He praises them for hating the immoral deeds of the Nicolaitans in 2:6. Certain kinds of hate are church virtues. God calls us to hate Satan, to hate abortion, to hate incest. In chapter 2:6, He praises the church of Ephesus saying, “But you do have this, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” On the other hand, He rips into Pergamos and Thyatira for being too kind to the same dangerous heretics on the same immorality. This issue of church discipline is in part a kingly function that judges, a priestly function that hopes the discipline will bring reconciliation, and a prophetic function that brings God’s Word to bear on every facet. In one sense I have done a disservice by separating our kingly, priestly, and prophetic functions. You can distinguish them, but you can’t separate them. They all belong together. But kings have to make tough decisions. They have to go to war. They have to make uncomfortable changes for a church before the church is ready for those changes. And if we are kings, we must war against our own flesh, our own cowardice, as well as the evil that comes into our jurisdictions. And of course, I haven’t mentioned the different jurisdictions that kings have. Some of you have hats of mothers, and some as children, or siblings. Some have hats of fathers and husbands.

Elders add another hat. But there are different jurisdictions.

### **a willingness to name apostate churches and oppose them (2:9; 3:9)**

Some of the courageous kingly actions that John was taking was to name apostate churches and oppose them. That's just not nice, is it? It's not politically correct. You get a lot of criticism when you do that. But John realizes that when Jesus is no longer in a church, demons fill the vacuum and he calls the apostate church of the first century a synagogue of Satan. He recognizes that there were still true believers there, but he still calls it a synagogue or gathering place of Satan. Would you want to attend a church where there are more demons than there are people? Well, that is the state of many churches today. Even making that statement is standing in opposition to Christ's enemies and is protecting the sheep who might otherwise wander into congregations shepherded by wolves. If pastors aren't metaphorically killing wolves and pulling sheep out of cisterns and rescuing them from dangerous areas, they are failing to exercise their kingly, priestly, and prophetic functions.

But Romans says that every one of you has a similar function as you exhort and encourage and even rebuke each other. Paul told the Roman congregation that they were competent to counsel one another. So your counseling involves kingly, priestly, and prophetic functions.

### **Refusing to tolerate or "allow" false prophets or prophetesses (2:14-15,20)**

In chapter 2 John tells Pergamos and Thyatira that they were AWOL in Christ's army because they were refusing to engage in church discipline and were allowing false prophets and prophetesses to spread their message in their congregations. Kings must protect.

### **Standing boldly for the truth even with the threat of imprisonment (2:10) or death (2:13).**

In chapter 2:10, Jesus ties boldly standing for truth in the face of imprisonment and death with a kingly crown. He says to Smyrna, Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer: Take note, the devil is really about to throw some of you into prison, so that you may be tested, and you will have an affliction of ten days. Stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life. A crown of life is given to those with kingly actions. He tells Pergamos, 'I know your works, and where you live, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to my name and did not deny my faith during the days in which Antipas was my faithful

witness, who was killed among you, where Satan lives.

Kings advance the kingdom even when it means danger and the possible loss of their own lives. Kings have this kind of courage. Our church has actually lost some of its evangelistic zeal. At one point most of the church was engaged in evangelism, and that needs to be restored. Evangelism involves kingly courage, priestly compassion and prayer, and prophetic handling of the Scriptures.

### **Leaving false churches (11:1; 18:4; 2:9; 3:7-9)**

Even leaving false churches is a kingly action when those churches have compromised the heart of the faith. In Revelation 18:4 he tells true believers that still had not left the apostate church, “Come out of her, my people, so as not to participate in her sins and so as not to receive of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4) To leave a church that your ancestors have been in for over a hundred years is really tough for some people, but if you are a king under Christ, you must represent Christ well by the church you attend.

### **Being unmoved by excommunication from an apostate church (3:7-12)**

But while excommunicating those who truly deserve it is a kingly function, being unmoved by an ungodly excommunication also takes a kingly spirit. And the church of Philadelphia had that. The church of Philadelphia had been excommunicated by the Jewish church, and Jesus said, 7 “And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy, the True, He who has the key of David, who opens and no one can shut it, except He who opens, and no one can open: 8 ‘I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, that no one is able to shut; because you have a little strength and have kept my Word and have not denied my name. 9 See, I am determining that some of the synagogue of Satan, those who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—yes, I will cause them to come and do obeisance at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. John was telling them not to worry about the fact that doors had been slammed in their face. He would open doors that no man could shut. Down through history, when the Bible believers have gotten soft and refused to discipline the liberals in churches, the liberals eventually took over. Up until they get into power, the liberals always plead for love, patience, and tolerance, and “can’t we just all get along.” But once they get in power, they have zero tolerance for uncompromising believers. That’s why J. Gresham Machen got excommunicated by a church that hadn’t excommunicated anyone since the 1800s. They were willing to tolerate anything except for people who maintained antithesis and called the liberal compromisers non-Christian. Francis Schaeffer said that you have not really stood for truth until

you condemn the error as false. That's when the fur flies. Obviously that involves a prophetic function as well as a kingly one. But the more we immerse ourselves in the Scripture, the more prophetic actions of rebuke, instruction, exhortation, and comfort will take place. The more we immerse ourselves in the Gospel, the more our priestly functions will take place and we will want to reconcile people to Christ. And the more we immerse ourselves in the Scriptural calls to justice and holiness, the more we will take our kingly calls seriously. All three must always be in harmony with each other.

#### ***D. Representing Christ's kingship and authority over Satan/demons***

#### **Taking on the strongholds of Satan (2:13) by means of spiritual warfare (9; 12:7-17)**

There is one more sub point under our kingship, and that is resisting Satan and his kingdom. Kingly resistance against Satan and demons was so emphasized in my verse-by-verse exposition that I won't get into it much today. In chapter 2:13, the church of Pergamos was so bold that they had penetrated the strongest stronghold - the throne of Satan himself. When we looked at chapter 9, we saw that the primary issue that was facing the first century church was not the flesh and blood persecutors. It was the billions of demons that had been unleashed in chapter 9. And chapter 12 shows how the church had joined with the angels of heaven in declaring war upon Satan and his hosts. Declaring war is a kingly function. Ignoring the demonic is being AWOL from our commander's battlefield.

#### **Confidence in our power over demons (9:4)**

Chapter 9:4 shows the confidence that believers can have in the face of enormous demonic hordes. While those demons were afflicting unbelievers, verse 4 shows that demons could only go as far as God allowed them to go. The demon hordes were told...

not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green plant, nor any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Just as Ezekiel saw an angel who marked those who wept and grieved over the evil of Israel, and that mark protected them, all believers have such authority in Jesus that demons cannot touch them. 1 John 5:18 says, "We know that whoever is born of God does not keep on sinning; but he who has been born of God, while guarding himself, the wicked one does not touch him." It's not automatic, but while guarding himself. It is this protection that

we have when walking in the light as Jesus is in the light that gives us boldness to cast out demons and resist all their work. But you cannot do that kingly work of casting out demons if you do not have faith that you are a king who is seated with Christ in the heavenlies. We have true kingly authority over demons because we are seated with Christ, have authority from the Father, and are filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **Conquering with the power of the blood of Christ and the Scripture on our lips (12:11)**

How do we guard ourselves? Chapter 12:11 says by being cleansed with the blood of the Lamb. Chapter 12:11 says that the saints “conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” Conquering is kingly conduct, using the blood of the Lamb is priestly conduct, and using Scripture on our lips in the same way that Jesus resisted Satan with Scripture is prophetic conduct.

### **Casting demons into pit (20:1-3,7-10)**

But the last kingly action that I want to remind you of is that of binding demons in the pit. Jesus bound the strongman (Satan) legally at the cross, and chapter 20:1-3 shows that he bound him physically to the Abyss in AD 70. Though other demons continue to be around, Satan has not been with us since AD 70. But having bound the strongman, it is the church’s duty to plunder Satan’s house. And this involves binding other strongmen and other demons to the pit in similar ways. Jesus gave us a paradigm to follow, and Zechariah says that eventually there will be no demons in the world. Why? Because the church has been busy in binding demons to the Abyss over history. I talked a lot about that in the past, but it is part of our kingly function.

And in all of these actions, we must not only represent Christ well, but we must have Christ living His kingship through us. We also need to balance our kingly work with our priestly and prophetic work. And my online outline will give samples of all three - of our kingly, priestly, and prophetic activities. But may God enable us to be better and better at representing Christ’s authority as kings within our own jurisdictions. Amen.