

REVELATION – SERMON 68

THE BEAST FULFILLING GOD’S WILL

Revelation 17:14-18

INTRODUCTION

- In 1532, Niccolò Machiavelli published his political treatise, *The Prince*, in which he lays out his methods of acquiring power and maintaining it
- In the book, he argues that immorality, deceit, cruelty, and any other evil is justified, in maintaining power; while seeing Christian piety as an obstacle to an ideal society
- His philosophies have inspired godless leaders ever since, such as Catherine de Medici, who led the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, where 50,000 French Huguenots were slaughtered
- Napoleon, Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler were all students of Machiavelli
- But there is a future prince, “the prince that shall come” (Daniel 9:26), who will be the ultimate embodiment of Machiavelli’s *prince*, possessing all the qualities of shrewdness, cunning, strategy, charisma, oratory and might that will bring the world to its knees in submission to him
- He is known as “the beast”, the final ruler over the seventh, and final world empire (Revelation 17:10-11), who, after his

seven years of power will be crushed by the Lord Jesus Christ at the battle of Armageddon

- In this chapter, John witnessed a woman astride this beast, the great whore of Babylon, representing the apostate religious system of antiquity, which continues unto this day, and will become a global ecumenical religion during the tribulation
- The beast will work with the whore to establish his dominion over world in the first part of the tribulation period
- But after three and a half years, he and his confederate kings will turn on her and destroy her
- In these verses we are shown the beast and the ten kings in their hostility towards Christ, their hatred of Babylon, and how God ultimately uses them to fulfil his will

I. THEIR FUTILE WAR AGAINST THE LAMB (14)

A. This will take place at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16)

1. Under the leading of devils, “the kings of the earth and of the whole world” will gather to go to war against Christ (Revelation 16:14)
2. Their motive is to be liberated from the “bands” and “cords” of God’s law, and his judgment (Psalm 2:2-3)
3. The details of this battle are found in 19:11-21

B. The Lamb overcomes them

1. The Lamb was indeed once slain (5:6) when he first came to this world
2. But when he returns in wrath, it is he that will slay the wicked (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 19:15)
3. The question asked by an admiring world, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (13:4) will be emphatically answered when the Lord returns in power and great glory
4. The Lord “shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath...he shall wound the heads over many countries.” (Psalm 110:5-6)
5. He is the true *Overcomer*
 - a. The beast will be allowed to overcome the saints for a brief time (13:7)
 - b. But Jesus will eternally overcome, and put all enemies under his feet (John 16:33; 1 Corinthians 15:25)
 - c. Those who are in Christ are also *overcomers* through him(1 John 4:4; Revelation 3:21)
6. He is Lord of lords, and King of kings
 - a. The beast will think to claim this title for himself, setting himself up as God before the world (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

- b. Yet him “the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

C. Christ is accompanied by his saints

1. When Christ returns he will be followed by the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:14)
2. He will come with ten thousands of his saints (Jude 14)
3. All the holy and mighty angels will be among them (Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7)
4. Church age believers will also be with Christ when he comes to earth to reign
 - a. The term “called” (*kletoi*) applies to those who were once lost, but were called by God to salvation, hence this cannot be angels (Romans 1:6; 8:28-30; 1 Peter 2:9)
 - b. Believers are “chosen” (*eklektoi*) by Christ, and are chosen *in* Christ (John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4-5)
 - c. True believers are also “faithful” (*pistoi*), even unto death (2:10)

II. THEIR FURIOUS WRATH AGAINST THE WHORE (16)

- A. Having used the whore to establish his rule, the beast and his kings then turn on her

1. This will take place at the midpoint of the tribulation
 - a. The beast will be mortally wounded, before being healed and energised by Satan (13:3)
 - b. He will slay the two witnesses (11:3-13)
 - c. He will commit the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15) when he breaks his covenant, halts the sacrifices in the temple and places his image there (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15)
 - d. Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven to the earth (12:7-12), where he seeks to persecute Israel who is protected by God in the wilderness (12:6,14-17)
 2. Her destruction is violent and absolute – they will desolate and strip her, eat her flesh and burn her with fire
- B. All worship will be directed to the dragon and the beast (13:4)
1. All the religions of the world will be dismantled and transformed to worship the beast and his image
 2. This will be overseen by the false prophet (13:12-15)
- C. Satan’s ultimate desire is that he be worshipped
1. He draws men away from worshipping the true God, rebelling against him (Genesis 3:1-5; Job 1:11; 2:5)

2. Idolatry is essentially a form of devil worship (1 Corinthians 10:20)
3. The devil was content to relinquish his dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, if only Christ would render worship to him (Matthew 4:8-9)
4. Through the beast, Satan will exalt “himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

III. THE FULFILMENT OF THE WILL OF GOD (17)

A. God is sovereignly accomplishing his plan for the ages (Isaiah 46:9-11; Ephesians 1:11)

1. That plan of redemption will be complete when the sin is destroyed, the curse is removed, Satan is damned, and man is fully reconciled to God (21:3-4)

B. God exercises his sovereignty over the affairs of men

1. Even the hearts of kings are in his hand, to turn them whithersoever he will (Deuteronomy 2:30; Ezra 7:27; Psalm 105:25; Proverbs 21:1)
2. Those who crucified the Lord Jesus did “whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:28)
3. The beast is presently being withheld by God (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8), will be granted a crown from God (Revelation 6:2), will be given power for forty-

two months by God (13:5), and will finally be cast into the lake of fire by God (19:20)

4. “Man proposes, God disposes”

C. God’s sovereignty does not negate human responsibility

1. While God uses even the evil actions of men to accomplish his will, they are still accountable for their actions

2. Joseph’s brethren are an example of this (Genesis 50:20)

CONCLUSION

1. We are reminded again that Christ will soon return to this world and establish his kingdom
2. Many will be destroyed in that day (2 Thessalonians 1:8), and many will be ashamed in that day (1 John 2:28)
3. Are you counted among the called, and chosen, and faithful, who will be with him on that day?
4. The great battle in the lives of all people, and in each of our hearts, is a battle for *worship*
5. The Father is seeking for true worshippers today (John 4:23)
6. The Lord Jesus answered Satan’s temptation by saying “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Matthew 4:10)

7. What idols in your life do you need to say, “Get thee hence!” to?
8. Whatever is causing you to offend, no matter how dear it may be to you, it must be cut out (Matthew 18:8-9)
9. It is a great comfort to know that God is sovereignly working out his plan in the world, but more importantly, in our own lives
10. If it is God’s will that we suffer, we can commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19)
11. The leaders of this world *unwittingly* and *unwillingly* fulfil the will of the Lord
12. How much more should we *wittingly* and *willingly* submit ourselves to obediently follow God’s will in our daily lives, “doing the will of God from the heart” (Ephesians 6:6)
13. May we say with our suffering Saviour, “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42)