

The Beast and his Number, Part 1
Last Things
By Bob Vincent

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Bible Text: Revelation 13:1-4; Luke 4:5-8
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Robert Benn Vincent
80 Hickory Hill Drive
Boyce, LA 71409

Website: www.rbvincent.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Well, the first thing we notice about this passage of Scripture is that we can't look at it without going back to chapter 12 because we see in verse 1 of Revelation 13, "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea," so we want to look back at chapter 12 just for a moment, not in detail. So, turning back to page 1,925 we read there in verse 1,

1 A great [and wondrous] sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. 4 Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Now, let's think about this just for a moment. The first thing that we note here is that this a distinct vision that's separate from chapter 11, and that seems to end in the end of chapter 14, and what we have here clearly is a reference to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who would rule over all nations and he will fulfill that by the time of his Second Coming.

And we see something else, we see here the dragon is clearly identified. We're told that the dragon is Satan, that he is the one who hates God. We see in verse 3, "Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon." Who is that red dragon? Well, we discover as we read down in verse 9,

9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Now we understand just this bit about Satan, and I don't want to get off on all kinds of things because I want to get to the point, but Satan was not created as Satan. Satan was an anointed cherub. He was one of the guardian beings around the throne of God maintaining the holiness of God. The throne of God in heaven is surrounded by cherubs and seraphs and so Satan was once one of those. And we won't go into all of that today, of course, but he's clearly identified here as the great red dragon and so what we see is this: this particular vision which is kind of the central vision of the book of Revelation, begins in a way long before the birth of Christ but it clearly does focus on the birth of Christ. And you see something here: Satan, the great red dragon, sought to eat up the baby Jesus but God delivered the baby Jesus from Satan.

Now we see something else here. God works through second causes. Satan works through second causes. Think of that crazy lunatic who was a descendant of Esau as well as of Jacob, I'm thinking of Herod the Great who was as nutty as, of course, a Corsicana fruitcake, and he was the tool that Satan used to try to kill the baby Jesus. But we're told something else here and that is that the Lord Jesus was caught up to heaven. And so, Jesus' birth, life and his ascension to the right hand of the Father are all right there in the very beginning of this.

Then we are told that Satan who realizes he's been defeated and who's cast out of heaven, if you look there in verse 7, and there was war, this is Revelation 12:7,

7 There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. [And we're told then] 8 But he was not strong enough, and they

lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

And they went off to persecute the people of God. I'm not going to get into trying to figure out who the woman is, is she Israel, is she the virgin Mary, is she simply the people of God? I don't want to get into that today. The point I want to make is, as we look at Revelation 13:1, that what's in view in the 13th chapter of Revelation is a continuation of the story that begins in chapter 12 and that's the persecution of the people of God by Satan himself.

Now let's notice something else. We look at Revelation 13:1 and you skip down to the second sentence, "And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea." Coming out of the sea, and if you think about the book of Daniel, what you have here is simply the beasts of the book of Daniel combined into one. That's what you have. That's why he has this particular beast is like a leopard, like a bear, like the lion, but the thing I want us to focus on is the next sentence, "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority."

What you have in Revelation 13 is a fake trinity. A fake trinity. Satan is functioning as if he's God the Father. The beast, notice the beast has been slaughtered but lives, and the same word is described of the Lord Jesus where we read over in verse 8, Revelation 13:8, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." So just as the Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, he is the ruler of individuals and of nations. He is Lord of history, so Satan has a candidate to be lord of history, and just as the Lord Jesus was crucified, he was slaughtered, buried, rose again the third day and entered into his glory, so Satan's candidate for messiah, a satanic messiah, was slaughtered as well. Same Greek word. Jesus is slaughtered, the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world, Satan's candidate is slaughtered as well but recovers. And then as you have the Holy Spirit who comes to work in the hearts of men and women, you have the false prophet who works. So, we're just looking at that for a moment.

Now where we want to go today is this, we want to look at what we're told here in the second verse, the second sentence, "The dragon gave the beast

his power and his throne and great authority." Now what does that remind you of? Think about it. You remember the Lord Jesus? And by the way, if you want just one verse that teaches the doctrine of the Trinity very clearly, it is the baptism of Jesus. Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and heaven is opened when he comes up, and a voice comes out of heaven, "This is my beloved Son," that means that Jesus is the Son of the person speaking from heaven, and the Holy Spirit taking on the appearance of a dove comes from the Father to the Son to anoint him. And right after that, what happens? Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he would be tempted. He's led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he will be tempted.

So, I want you to look with me for a moment at the gospel of Luke 4. Let's look at one of the temptations that Satan threw at the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's Luke 4, beginning at verse 5. Luke 4:5, page 1,595. Remember in Revelation 13, the beast who is an amalgam or a composite of all of the beasts of Daniel; he is given his authority by Satan himself. Now look at what we read here. This is striking, page 1, 595. Luke 4:5,

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours."

There is so much in that and it really helps us understand Revelation 13. Does the devil really control elections on earth? Sure. Why are we in the fix we're in? Satan is in these things manipulating nations, manipulating parishes in Louisiana and counties in Texas and Arkansas, manipulating state governments, doing all these things. Satan is eager to wipe out every reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and to annihilate the seed of the woman, that is, Christ and all who are in him.

So, world politics is clearly Satan's domain, but we have to add this always, Satan can only do what God sovereignly has ordained for his own glory and for the good of his people. Satan can only do what God has sovereignly ordained for God's own glory and the good of his people. That's why as we read here, Satan is telling a truth that's not the whole truth when he says in verse 6 of Luke 4, "And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor for it has been given to me.'" Is that exactly the truth? No, it isn't exactly the truth. It's a half-truth. What is a half-truth? It's a half-lie.

Satan found a vacant piece of real estate and decided to exercise squatter's rights. You know, that's an interesting thing. When Jesus tells the parable of the haunted house, are you familiar with the parable of the haunted house? That's the human being and Jesus talks about a person having had a demon cast out of himself, and his house then becomes swept and clean and put in order, but nature doesn't like a vacuum and so what happens is the spirit that was expelled by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ goes wandering throughout the waterless places looking for rest and he can't find it because just like the boll weevil, demons are looking for a home. And so, when he returns, he said, "Wow, man, the neighborhood's been cleaned up." It's like what you see in some neighborhoods that were really rundown and then investors got together and gutted many of the houses and rebuilt and turned what was a slum into a beautiful new neighborhood and that's what the demon discovers. He finds his old house has been swept and cleaned and put in order, and then Jesus tells in that story that he brings along with himself seven other demon spirits more evil than himself.

Do you know there are relatively good demons and relatively bad demons? Now, there's no good demon, let me make that very plain, but some demons are far worse than other demons. For example, let's talk about religious demons for a moment. When you get goosebumps because of the aesthetics of a church and its services and all of that, sometimes that is demonic, and it's designed to keep people in bondage to religious traditions rather than to worshiping the one true God. And then you encounter the demon that was in Ted Bundy. Wow, Ted Bundy was demon possessed. He certainly was and he described it as he was interviewed by James Dobson as something coming over him. He was a nice guy; you would have liked him to have been your neighbor. Maybe you would have thought, "Well, I've got a single daughter. Ted would be a great candidate for a son-in-law," because all the outward things, Ted was great. He was a conversationalist. He was friendly. He was outgoing. He was a nice-looking guy. But from time to time something would happen, and he described it to Dr. Dobson as something coming over him and what it is, it was a wicked spirit of violence and murder and rage and terrible things that he did.

So, you have relatively polite, religious demons, if you will, and you have really terrible, brutal, violent, murderous spirits, the kind that are taking over major cities in the United States right now. That's the truth. Violence is taking our cities in an unprecedented way and why are people acting the way

they're acting? You have to look at the spirits, the evil spirits that are under the control of Satan and what is Satan trying to do in the world today, in the United States today, in Texas and Arkansas and Louisiana today? What is he trying to do? He wants to bring chaos because he has a plan, because out of chaos he will provide the solution.

So, we see here that the devil says, "This has all been given to me." In Matthew 4:6, "I will give you all their authority and splendor for it has been given to me." What happened is when Adam forfeited his role as the guardian and protector of the earth because he wasn't simply there to take care of the garden that God had planted, he was there to keep watch over it and to protect it and to protect his wife, and when he failed in his duty and he let his wife do her own thing, he didn't intervene when the evil one who entered inside of a beautiful animal that did not look at all like snakes look today, this animal could walk, this animal was beautiful and gorgeous and it was highly intelligent, Satan entered into that particular animal and he deceived and tricked Eve when Adam was not around. Adam forfeited his role. Adam forfeited his place and when he did, he and his wife Eve are driven out of the garden by cherubs. So, what happens is the garden is vacant. Man is no longer there to tend to it. Man is no longer there to protect it, to guard it, and so Satan moves in.

I remember when I bought a piece of property years ago for one of my children to live on, we had a neighbor that right across the fence, he had horses but according to the deed that land was ours. And so, I hated to do it, I called my son, the attorney, and I said, "Son, Ben, what do you think?" And he said, "Dad, you need to let that man know that that is your property otherwise if he goes on using those six acres for his horses, in the course of time he can lay claim to it." Do you understand what I'm saying? And so, I wrote the man a letter and I let him know that that was our property and that we would like for him to remove his horses in time. Also, they were pretty dangerous because the fence was very weak. You remember that, Brian? Oh, yes. So anyhow, so we served notice and the man vacated that land.

Now this is the garden of Eden. Adam has forfeited his place. He's forfeited his place as the ruler over the earth and all its animals and all its land because he disobeyed God, and so into that vacuum Satan came riding his horses, if you want to put it that way, and he said, "This is mine. I'm claiming squatter's rights." And so that's what he's saying in verse 6, Luke

4:6, "he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want.'"

Donald Trump. Joe Biden. Ronald Reagan. Bill Clinton. Barack Obama. Franklin Roosevelt. George Washington? I want to make a point: human government tends towards the demonic, because human government appeals to something and what it appeals to is -- I don't know about Rusty, but I know about me: I want to be worshiped. I want attention. I want power. That's human nature. That's why there are things in marriages sometimes that don't go well because there's that fight for dominance instead of the beautiful balance that God created when he created Adam and Eve.

So, Satan is the arch-person who wants to be worshiped and that's what he's saying to Jesus here. "I can give it to you. This can be yours today. We'll just have mail-in ballots." I always vote in person. And because I mailed a certified letter to an insurance company on a Friday, registered priority mail that was supposed to be delivered to my insurance company in Illinois on Monday, and it didn't get delivered for almost a month, and it was registered mail with a number, and it had that tracking number, and it was priority mail and it took that long to get to Illinois, because Chicago, well . . . I'm just saying, I'm going to vote in person as I recently did. But that's an aside.

The important thing I want you to understand is that politics has always been something that appeals to people's lust for power, for wealth. You cannot serve God and mammon. I wish I had a candidate to vote for who said, "I don't want this," because what Satan is saying to Jesus is something that has happened throughout history. People sell their souls to get power and wealth. They do. There are wonderful exceptions if you study history here and there, but I'm going to submit to you that as we study human history, those exceptions are very rare. So, will I vote in November? Yes, I will. Who will I vote for? I won't tell you, but I'll tell you how I vote. I want to vote for somebody that believes in my nation. I want to vote for somebody who believes in sound borders. I want to vote for somebody who supports the military but not in a way that uses them up, so their friends get enriched off of military spending.

So, who is that? I don't know, but all I'm saying to you is this: people sell their souls for wealth and power. They do. They don't always know what they're doing when they do it. It's subtle, isn't it? Recently I watched all three Godfather movies and it's an amazing story how a young man who was a

Marine in World War II and a war hero ends up becoming a cold, calculating killer who in the third film confesses to the man who would become Pope John Paul and who was murdered because of the Vatican Bank, who confesses to the pope, and this is fictitious but before he's a pope, he begins to weep and sob and he said, "And I killed my own brother, my mother's son, my father's son. I murdered him." And he says, "I swear on my children's graves, if I can change," and at the end it's sad, on his daughter's grave.

Redemption is only possible through Jesus Christ and that's the great missing thing as we go back for a moment to Revelation 13. Satan gives what he has promised, what he offered to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see there on page 1,927 in that last sentence of verse 2, "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority."

So, where are we in human history as we attempt to wrap up this first part of the beast and his number? Where I think we are in human history is a preparation for the final manifestation of the beast, because the beast here very clearly is human government that goes back to the time of Daniel. It's the same beast. It comes up out of the sea. Like I say, it's an amalgam, it's a composite of all those governments, and in a final form, something wonderful happens. Hear me out for just a moment.

What's wonderful is this: out of the chaos of the United States in 2020 and an election that will be contested no matter who wins, out of the violence and murder and burning in cities, there's going to be a need for a peacemaker, somebody who has the answers. Do you sit sometimes and wring your hands and say, "If only...."? Well, I'm telling you something wonderful, "If only" is going to happen, except it's going to be what happened when Adam and Eve reached and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a half-truth of Satan, a half-lie from Satan. They discovered the sad reality. Their eyes were opened, and they ran from God and they hid.

Dear ones in the Lord Jesus Christ, history is going somewhere, it's moving somewhere. Satan has attempted to do this over and over again. Satan is behind the chaos in our cities. Satan is behind the COVID-19 and all of the things it's brought about. Satan is behind the upheaval in our world, the economic troubles, the collapse of nations, famine in various places, rage welling up in people. And what is his goal? His goal is that people will

gladly accept the final form of a beast and, in particular, the man of sin, because when he comes, he isn't going to be wearing a set of red pajamas with a little red tail hanging behind him and carrying a pitchfork; when he comes he's going to be charming and debonair. He's going to have the appeal of the greatest movie stars that we've known. He is going to be charming. He is going to be persuasive, and if it were possible, he will deceive even the elect, but he can't. And we'll continue this, God willing, next week.

May we pray.

Lord, I pray as we gather as your people, as we worship you, the one, true, living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in a world where increasingly in modern America people hate you, they despise you, they despise your Son, they hate the name of Jesus. Lord, it's amazing as I look at my brief lifespan, far briefer than that of Mr. Joe and Miss Norma Jean, Lord, as I look at my brief lifespan, all the things that have happened, the complete overthrow of Christian civilization in place after place after place, Lord, living in deceptive times, protect us, give us to be people who study the Bible, give us to be people who pray, give us to be people who hold on to the old truths, and if there's anybody here today who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, may today be that day because, Lord, without knowing the Lord Jesus Christ personally, when this final form of wickedness takes over the whole earth, everybody who is not a believer is going to be deceived and take the mark of the beast. Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us and grant us your peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.