

# “Beast Games” // Revelation 12–13 //

## *Revelation #9<sup>1</sup> (11:15CPC)*

### Announcement

If you’re a college student, stand up! At some of our campuses, nearly the entire room stood up just now... but whether there are any college students at your campus or not, let’s put our hands together and welcome them back. There is no Summit Church apart from college students, and it’s just not the same around here when you guys are gone. It’s so adult; so *boring*... and so we always love it when you’re back.

Speaking of college, we just wrapped up **something called Fresh10 (PICS)**—which is 10 straight days of events designed to meet and engage new students. It includes everything from ice cream socials to volleyball tournaments to an epic hot dog eating contest and even the now infamous Cookout Quartermiler (where students had to chug a Cookout milkshake then run a quarter mile!). I asked if I could do the first part but not the second and they said ‘no, it’s a package deal.’ And, there’s some worship nights thrown in there, too. Get this, through these worship nights, we’ve already seen 72 students make decisions for Christ.

**We do all of this for one reason: we love students and want to do everything we can to help you discover the life God has for you in the 4, 5, 6, 10 years you spend here as a student.**

**To our students, let me say this:** Make a local church an essential part of your college experience! The most impactful part of your college years will be the friendships you build—and we want to help you connect with other believers who will help you discover the fullness of the life God has for you. *So, at the end of the service today, at every campus, you’ll hear how you can get plugged in with other students on your campus.*

### Intro

**Alright, Bibles OUT... Revelation chapter 12.** Warning, I am about to give spoilers for the movies *Mission Impossible 1*; *Matrix*; *The Sixth Sense*; *Lost*; *The Wizard of Oz* and *Scoobie Doo*. And I feel like this is not a problem, because the newest movie (or show) on that list is older than every single one of our college students. For perspective--each of these movies came out before the EURO was a currency AND before the airing of the last episode of *Friends*! So, I feel like this info is all in the public domain now. BUT, ***if you were planning to go home this afternoon and watch one of these movies for the first time***, please close your ears for the next 30 seconds and I’ll wave at you like this (jazz hands) when you can open them again.

<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: Tim Chester, *Revelation for You: Seeing History from Heaven’s Perspective* (London: The Good Book Company, 2019); Tim Mackie and Jon Collins, “[The Dragon of Revelation](#)”, December 4, 2023, The Bible Project; Tim Mackie, “[The Book of Revelation - Part 2](#)”, December 14, 2016, The Bible Project; Skip Heitzig, “[The Antichrist Revealed](#)”, June 25, 2023, Calvary Church; Pete Grieg, “[Bended Knees](#)”, November 7, 2022, Emmaus Road Church; Matt Chandler, “Your Enemy in

Focus”, Session 5 of The Overcomers Bible Study of the Book of Revelation, rightnow Media and Harper Christian Resources, May 7, 2024; Louie Giglio, “[A Cosmic Collision and a Ready Church](#)”, June 23, 2024, Passion Church; Jen Wilkin, “Seven Histories”, Session 6 of Revelation: Eternal King, Everlasting Kingdom Bible Study, July 1, 2024; Bryan Lorrits, “[Walking in Victory](#)”, November 18, 2023, One Community Church. And others as noted throughout.

One of my favorite things in movies has always been the “**unmasking moment**,” when you discover that something else has been going on behind what you’ve been seeing.

- Like, in the original *Mission Impossible* movie when Claire, the wife of the bad guy, Jim, comes into the baggage car and confesses to Jim how she’s betrayed Ethan Hunt (played by Tom Cruise, of course), and then “Jim” reaches up and slowly peels off his face, and underneath is Ethan Hunt.
- Or in *The Matrix* when you realize that the whole world as we know it is just a simulated mind meld.
- Or *The Sixth Sense* when you figure out Bruce Willis is dead.
- Or in the last episode of *Lost*, when you’re not quite sure what happened, only that you’ve wasted 7 years of your life that you’ll never get back.
- Or that scene in *Wizard of Oz* when they pull back the curtain and reveal that the big powerful wizard is actually just a scrawny old man with a megaphone.
- For me, I think my love for these was born when I was watching the greatest cartoon series of all time, *Scooby-Doo*, and the gang would unmask the “monster” at the end of the show, only to reveal it was really just Old Man Jenkins the whole time. (And he would’ve gotten away with it, *if it weren’t for those meddlin’ kids!* Scooby Doo fans, anybody?)

**OK, we’re done.** (WAVE). I know, I may have set the record for most spoilers in 60 seconds. But like I said, every single show on that list came out before the airing of the last episode of *Friends!* (Rachel and Ross end up together, btw. She gets off the plane.)

Revelation is the unmasking of history, revealing the forces at work behind the powers on earth. God put Revelation in our Bibles to show us how it all ends, so that we can watch history unfold in front of us with a sense of calm and understanding. After reading Revelation, you should be able to go through life like watching one of those suspenseful movies *for the second time*. You ever done that? The first

time, you were on the edge of your seat, wondering what was going to happen, and when the big reveal happened, you were like, “What...? I didn’t see that coming!” But the 2nd time, you were calm, cool and collected--because you knew: ***None of this is real; that monster... is really just Old Man Jenkins.*** God wants us to watch history unfold around us with that kind of patience, peace and even joy because we know how it ends.

**Today, we’re going to see 2 mysterious characters unmasked:** The Antichrist and the False Prophet. The Apostle John wants us to recognize them when we see them--to know who they are, what they’re up to, and where they get their power from.

**But first, in chapter 12, he tells us a parable about a mysterious woman and a dragon**--because to understand the Antichrist and the False Prophet, you have to understand this dragon.

**This woman** gives birth to a child, vs 5, and this child is destined to rule the nations. Immediately, upon his birth, the dragon tries to kill the child, but God protects him, eventually carrying him up to heaven. The woman then has to flee for her life into the wilderness, where she hides for 1260 days, or 3.5 years.

**So, the child obviously is Jesus, but who is this woman, and who is the dragon?**

- **Is she... Mary?** She seems an obvious answer, since she gave birth to Jesus. So does that mean the dragon is a reference to how Herod tried to kill Jesus the moment he was born?
  - (BTW, how many of you have a dragon in your nativity sets? One day I’m going to get rich selling a biblically accurate nativity set, one that includes a ferocious dragon you put in the scene. That’s what we need at Christmas--MORE dragons.)
- **Or, maybe the woman represents more than just Mary;** maybe it’s all of ...**Israel?** After all, the woman here wears a crown of 12 stars, and 12 in Revelation usually indicates the people of God, so

these stars would be the 12 tribes of Israel.<sup>2</sup> And that would make Pharaoh the dragon, because Pharaoh tried to destroy the woman at the Red Sea. BTW, look down at vs 14. It says, **But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness.** That is direct language from the Exodus. Exodus 19:4 says that when Pharaoh tried to kill Israel, God delivered them to himself “on eagles’ wings” into the wilderness. And, furthermore, one of Pharaoh’s main symbols was a serpent--on his headdress he had a little emblem of a serpent--so they were literally fleeing from a serpent. So, is the woman Israel?

- **Or maybe this woman symbolizes the church in the Great Tribulation?** I mean, it says she’s nourished for 1260 days, or 3.5 years, which is an obvious reference to the first half of the Great Tribulation we’ve been learning about. If that’s the case, then the 12 stars around her head represent not just the 12 tribes of Israel but also the 12 Apostles—both Old and New Testament believers.<sup>3</sup>

**So which of these is it--Is the woman Mary (Team Mary?), Israel, or The Church of the Tribulation?** And the answer is... YES. This parable in **chapter 12** is a metaphor for all of biblical history.

**The dragon obviously is Satan**, who at every point of history is trying to destroy Jesus and his people. **Notice, this dragon is given some odd characteristics:** he has 7 heads w/ 7 crowns and 10 horns. This is **imagery from the book of Daniel** depicting world empires. Horns in the Bible always represent power.

- *Some scholars tie this imagery to specific world empires. There have been 7 global empires in history--Egypt; Assyria; Babylon;*

*Persia; Greece; Rome; and then some future final empire (Antichrist)*

- *Others say the 7 heads are a reference to Rome itself, which famously had 7 hills (like 7 heads), and the 10 horns represent a revived Roman Empire coming in the future.<sup>4</sup> #Fresh10*
- Both of those observations have some validity. But here’s the thing: If you count up all the beasts Daniel prophesies about in his book, you’ll come up with 7 heads and 10 horn--representing different empires in history. Here in Revelation we have ONE beast with 7 heads and 10 horns, so it’s kinda like John is saying the dragon is an amalgamation of all the beasts in Daniel’s prophecy. **A sort of super-monster.**

He’s been present in all of biblical history, and throughout all of biblical history, he has warred against the people of God and tried to destroy them.

- He **manifested himself as the serpent in the Garden** who tried to deceive and destroy God’s first created offspring, Adam and Eve.
- He **manifested himself in Pharaoh**, the serpent, trying to destroy God’s son Israel in the Exodus.
- He **manifested himself through Herod**, trying to kill the Christ child who had just been born.
- That **dragon manifested himself throughout Christian history through empires** trying to wipe out the people of God--whether that’s the Roman Empire of the 1st century or Communist and Islamic regimes in later centuries.
- He manifests himself today through forces trying to oppose and discourage the church--forces both big and small

**That sets us up for chapter 13:** **13:1** **And I saw a beast rising out of the sea** (‘sea’ in the book of Revelation represents chaos), **with ten**

<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, John says she’s clothed with the sun and the moon is under her feet, which is similar to how Joseph describes Israel in Gen 37.

<sup>3</sup> One challenge here is that we don’t typically think of the church as giving birth to Christ.

<sup>4</sup> The church father Irenaeus taught this.

horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads... The 7 heads & 10 horns, of course, immediately connect this new beast to the dragon of chap 12.<sup>5</sup>

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. (This beast, who is the Antichrist, goes through some kind of miraculous-looking death and resurrection simulation; we'll talk more about that in a minute).

**Jump down to vs. 5:** And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months... (42 mos, would be 3.5 years, the beast rules in an unchallenged way) 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them... 8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it... (except for believers, of course, who at this point will be living in hiding.)

11 Then I saw **another beast** rising out of the earth (now we have a 2nd beast). It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. (BTW, this is the only time in Revelation that "lamb" doesn't refer to Jesus. He looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. He looks like Jesus but speaks like Satan). 12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast... This 2nd beast is who we call "the false prophet," who works alongside the Antichrist and compels people to worship him.

13 (This second beast) 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...

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.

OK, everybody take a deep breath. This chapter has inspired endless conspiracy theories, some bestselling books, and some really appalling heavy metal albums. **Just for fun, this week I typed** "Who is the Antichrist?" **into a Google search** and got 130M hits. And some of the sites it led me to were AMAZING.

- Pro-Internet-Search-Tip: If you visit a website and everything on it is in all CAP, bright red letters w/ flames coming out both sides of the web page, you'll want to stay away from that one.
- **And don't even think about typing in "What is 666?"** Your computer will probably melt down right in front of you.
- I've got an old book in my library from the late 80's called **666: The Final Warning**. It was written during the Reagan administration, and in its conclusion it says, and I quote: *"The goal of this book was to enlighten my readers with what I personally feel the Lord has shared with me over the past 12 years as I've studied his word regarding end time events and the possible key players involved. Does this book prove that Ronald Wilson Reagan (6/6/6) is the prophesied Antichrist and that Pope John Paul 2 (which in Latin, you can also get to add up to 666) will become*

<sup>5</sup> Vs 2 says it explicitly: And to it (this beast coming out of the sea) the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

the false prophet? In my opinion, the evidence offered in this book is overwhelmingly in favor of them being history's prime candidates for these unholy positions."

The book didn't really age well. **So, let's ask:**

Who are The Antichrist and The False Prophet?

**Write this down:** *More important than WHO they are is WHAT they are.*

(Let me give you a handful of characteristics. And, btw, for our purposes, I'm going to treat the Antichrist and False Prophet together, since they work together as a team).

1. **They are Satan's earthly vessels** (That's clear.)
2. **They are an imitation Christ** (The false prophet looks like a lamb and does miracles, and the Antichrist goes through some kind of resurrection--he has a deadly wound that gets healed. See how this is all an imitation of Jesus? And that's not a surprise, since antichrist means "fake Messiah.")
3. **Their primary objective is to redirect worship away from God and onto man**
  - From the beginning, Satan has recycled one lie to men over and over: **"You (man) can be like God."**
  - It was what **he said to Eve in the Garden of Eden**, Gen 3
  - It was what **he moved the population of the earth to attempt at the Tower of Babel** in Genesis 11--to build a tower that would connect man to the heavens.
  - It's what Satan moved Nebuchadnezzar to attempt in Daniel 3 in **history's first global empire--the Babylonian empire.**

Nebuchadnezzar set up a gold statue of himself and commanded the whole world to worship it.

- Caesars in the **Apostle John's day demanded to be worshipped as the Son of God**. In 40 AD, Caligula even threatened to place an image of himself in the Temple of Jerusalem for Jews to worship.
- 4. **They bring peace and prosperity (at first)** (Revelation tells us that the 7 year tribulation starts peacefully because the Antichrist brings stability and prosperity. The prophet Daniel even indicates that the Antichrist will broker a peace deal in the Middle East that will restore the Temple to the Jews.<sup>6</sup>)
- 5. **They do miracles** (Vs 13 tells us the false prophet does great signs, even making fire come down from heaven. V 15 tells us he even gives breath to some kind of image of the Antichrist that makes it look alive).
- All this might be confusing because you say, "But *can't God alone do miracles?*")
  - **Well, first, realize that** throughout history Satan has always done imitation miracles. Pharaoh's magicians mimicked Moses's plagues; Nebuchadnezzar's wise men mimicked Daniel's prophecies. These 'miracles' end up being a combination of clever magic tricks as well as, sometimes, demonically empowered stuff. Demons can give some miraculous powers, but there's a limit to what demons can do. Think of demonic miracles as like **"Grade B miracles."**
  - **But second, and this is fascinating, some scholars** have speculated that what we're seeing here may point to the **miraculous** potential of modern technologies. Notice the description in **vs 15** says that this image of the beast is given breath *like* he's alive; it never says **he's actually alive**. John Lennox, an Oxford University mathematician and philosopher, wrote this fascinating book I just finished called **2084** (It's written in the fashion of George Orwell's *1984*, only this version focuses on the changes AI is bringing in the next 100

<sup>6</sup> Daniel 9:27; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.



years). In that book, Lennox speculates that what John is pointing to here is things AI will be able to do in the future:<sup>7</sup> Things like simulated consciousness. God-like knowledge.

- **Is that what is being alluded to here?** Technology so incredible that it almost feels miraculous, life-like--and that technology *fuels this old Satanic lie that we can be like God*, to the point we don't even think we need him anymore? I don't know about you, but using ChatGPT right now makes me feel like a divine genius, especially if I'm w/ some older person who doesn't really know how it works. They ask me a question and I turn off to the side and ask my best friend Chat and in 30 seconds I've got an organized, detailed answer complete w/ made-up footnotes.
- One of the most popular AI projects right now is even called "**Homo Deus**," or "Man God."<sup>8</sup> The author of the project, Yuval Harari, said: *Human history as we know it began when humans invented gods; it will evolve into the next stage when humans become gods.*<sup>9</sup>
- **John Lennox believes** AI is a crucial part of fulfilling a lot of these prophecies in Revelation, and he's probably right.

#### 6. Their number is 666

- **OK, here we go: tin foil hat time.** Nothing in Christian history has prompted more speculation than this.
- Early Christians wondered if this number referred to Nero. See, in Hebrew, every letter is assigned a number, and if you add up the number values of the letters in Nero's name you come up with 666. So, some early church history tied this to Nero.
- But as I showed you, people have figured out how to do that with other world leaders, too. **In the 90's it became really popular** to say this number represented the internet because "w" in our

alphabet corresponds to the Hebrew "Vav," which is the sixth letter of their alphabet, so 666. That means every time you type in [www.summitchurch.com](http://www.summitchurch.com), in Hebrew you're typing in [666.summitchurch.com](http://666.summitchurch.com), and there's nothing I can do about that.

- This number is not given to us as some kind of secret Bible code to figure out. John says, **vs 18** that this number calls for wisdom, not speculation--it is "the number of a man." 6 in the Bible is the number of man, because man was created on the 6th day. Basically what this means is that this number centers of man. It highlights man's power. Man's might. Man's ingenuity. Man's glory.

#### 7. They control commerce

- **Vs. 17** says, "No one can buy or sell unless he has the mark." In early church days, in order to buy and sell in the marketplace, some of the Caesars required you to get a "libellus," which literally meant "permission to buy and sell." And to get it, all you had to do is offer a pinch of incense at an altar to Caesar and say, "Caesar is Lord." John surely was thinking about this when he wrote these things.
- **In his book 2084, which I referred to earlier**, John Lennox describes a program called **SoCS—which stands for Social Credit Score**—that was tested in China a few years ago. Basically, every citizen and corporation gets a unique ID and a starting score, say 300 points. You gain points for "approved" behaviors like paying your debts on time, volunteering, recycling--or reporting suspicious activity and avoiding people the state deems "bad actors." You lose points for "problematic" behaviors—like associating with the wrong groups or posting the wrong things online. The result is an inescapable moral credit rating that determines your job options, what kinds of schools your kids get into, how easily you can get loans, even the level of medical care

<sup>7</sup> See his book *2084 and the AI Revolution*; also <https://undeceptions.com/podcast/homo-deus/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/culture/hi-john-will-artificial-intelligence-replace-humanity-by-2084/>. Israeli historian Yuval Harari says, "History began when humans invented gods and will end when humans become gods."

<sup>9</sup> Slightly edited for clarity

you have access to. With modern technology, implementing such a system becomes frighteningly easy.

**8. They are two *actual* individuals. Probably.** (Now, I put “probably” on this one, because as I’ve acknowledged throughout this series, Christians I respect disagree on this. Some think all this stuff about the antichrist and the false prophet refers to a general anti-Christian spirit that has been at work in the world. And that’s true. **1 John 4:3:** The spirit of antichrist is already here). But, I believe it **ALSO** refers to 2 actual people coming in the future, and I believe that because both Paul<sup>10</sup> and John<sup>11</sup> refer to the Antichrist as a person. Paul’s name for the Antichrist is “the man of lawlessness”, and when he refers to him, like he does in **2 Thessalonians 2:9** he uses the DEFINITE article: he talks about “**the coming (future) of THE lawless one,**” THE lawless one--a specific guy, not just a general antichrist spirit already at work in the world.)

So you’ve got a page full of notes and you now know more about the Antichrist than ever. **But so what?** What does that mean for how we live *now*?

## (How Shall We Then Live?)

I want you to write down 3 important words that should shape your attitude to the world we live in now. These apply not only to those alive when the *actual Antichrist* (capital A) comes, but apply to those of us alive now when *the spirit of antichrist is here.* You see, as I’ve shown you, the dragon is just as much at work in our generation as he will be then. The Great Tribulation is just an intensification of what is already happening. Here we go:

## I. Skepticism

- In 2 decades of pastoring here, I’m not sure I’ve ever expressed what I’m about to say, but here goes: I am always skeptical of concentrated political power, especially on a global scale, and a big reason for that is what I see in Revelation. I’m also skeptical of big corporations like Facebook and Netflix that control commerce and media intake on a global scale. Hear me: I didn’t say I’m automatically opposed to all those things, and please don’t interpret what I’m about to say as some kind of blanket, anti-UN statement. There are a lot of good things the UN does that I appreciate; things that make sense in a complex world like ours.
- That said, I am always skeptical of those things because of how Revelation shows me these things have always been key ingredients in the dragon’s playbook.
- His influence has always sought to be all-encompassing, invasive, and controlling. His trajectories are always toward centralization and control.
- For those Christians alive on earth when the Antichrist comes and who oppose this kind of all-encompassing control, they will be treated as social enemies, much like Christians are today in North Korea and China--they’ll be depicted as the enemies to progress, peace, and public unity. This is nothing new, btw: in ancient Rome, the earliest Christians were called “atheists” and anarchists because they wouldn’t get behind supreme loyalty to Caesar.
- This is an area which will require discernment, because, like I said, obviously not all government or big commerce is bad--Romans 13 tells us government is a gift of God to us. That said, I have no qualms with saying that we should always be skeptical and extremely cautious with powerful, centralized control because Revelation 13 shows us how the dragon uses that as an essential part of his gameplan.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Thess 2:1–12

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 4:3

Here's the second word that should shape your attitude to the world; it flows right out of that first one.

## II. Realism

- Almost every week I've made this point in some form. Expect suffering. The dragon is in charge of all the world systems and we are challenging him!
- I love how **Lesslie Newbigin** (a British missionary to India who ended up saying that England now needs missionaries as much as India) says it, "The so-called secular society is not a neutral area into which we can project the Christian message. It is an area already occupied by other gods."
- The Christian message is not just an alternative religious approach; it's a direct attack on the gods of this age. And for that reason, you should expect to be wildly countercultural. In fact, if you're not, are you even doing anything? Jesus said, "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you"<sup>12</sup>-- meaning, if the demons aren't bothered by you, you probably aren't causing them any problems!
- Listen, as Leonard Ravenhill says, *"I want to live in a way that when I die, all of hell rejoices that I am out of the fight."*<sup>13</sup> *"When my alarm clock goes off in the morning, I want hell to say, 'Oh no, he's up!'"*
- And if I live that way, I should expect their fierce opposition while I'm working on earth.
- Listen: ***obedience attracts opposition.***

<sup>12</sup> Luke 6:26

## III. Defiance

- Here's the question all of us are going to have to consider: Who are we most loyal to?
- One thing that is interesting if you study the history of global empires: most don't care if you worship Jesus, as long as you acknowledge their authority over the religious landscape.
- For example, Rome didn't care if Christians worshiped Jesus and followed his teachings, as long as they would offer a pinch of incense at the altar and say "Caesar is Lord." The Pantheon in Rome housed statues of gods from all over the Roman Empire. They didn't care what God you worshipped. But the emblem on the top of the Pantheon said Caesar was, "The King of Kings and Lords of Lords." And you had to acknowledge that.
- Hear me: we're probably not going to be told "Stop following Jesus" anytime soon. No one is going to care if we "practice the way." What we're going to be told is "Just don't say that Jesus is the only Lord, the only way of salvation." Acknowledge man's sovereignty over the religious sphere. The way you worship is a matter of personal preference, and all approaches are equally good.
- We're already being told that. For example, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, one of America's spiritual gurus, the kind that used to show up on Oprah all the time, says that when you say someone else's moral or spiritual approach is wrong, that amounts to "spiritual racism. . . . a kind of religious hatred." That means when I say that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except by him, that's considered by him to be hate speech. And why wouldn't that be outlawed?
- Or, **Dr. Charles Kimball**, who was the former chair of the dept of religion at Wake Forest University--a great school. Dr. Kimball was an ordained Baptist minister who graduated from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In his book, *When*

<sup>13</sup> Leonard Ravenhill



*Religion Becomes Evil* he said: The first characteristic of an evil religion is “*absolute truth claims.*” True theology, he said, leaves us with more “questions” than answers. And churches like ours, Summit, he said, are among the worst proponents of evil religion, because we claim that Jesus is Lord over everything and that he alone can provide the way of salvation.

- You see, the spirit of the false prophet is already here. Worship Jesus (!), they say, but acknowledge man’s sovereignty over all of it. But we can’t do that. See, our Savior says, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father except by me,” and he’s the only one who raised from the dead, which means we have to follow him and him alone, regardless of what Caesar says the rules are.

**So, there you have it. The Antichrist and the False Prophet unmasked.** So, let’s return to chapter 12 where John tell us how we are to overcome them and the dragon behind them.

**Rev 12:11:** “And they overcame him (him being the dragon, in every era) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, because they loved not their lives to the death.”

3 ways we overcome the dragon:

First, “**...By the blood of the Lamb.**” This is our primary weapon. The finished work of Christ. On the cross, Paul explains, Jesus unmasked the powers of evil and defeated them. The last thing Jesus said from the cross was “*tetelestai*,” a word that archaeologists have found scrawled across Roman tax receipts after the tax had been fully paid. Tetelestai: It is finished. It is done. We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, by the announcement that the power of sin and death have been broken and Satan has been defeated.

**Which leads me to the 2nd phrase: “...and by the word of their testimony,”**

- It’s our **proclamation** of this finished work that overcomes Satan. It’s the foolishness of preaching--us proclaiming to each other, and to the world, the finished work of Christ.
- Testimony is also a very personal word, pointing not just to who Jesus was in the past, but what he’s doing in your life now.
- Y’all, growing up one of my favorite nights in our small church was TESTIMONY night--we went to church 3x a week and sometimes the pastor didn’t want to prepare a sermon, so he’d just open up the mic for testimony night, and I remember how important those nights were in my own faith development. I’d hear stories about what God was doing in people’s lives; how he answered prayer, and I’d feel my trust in God’s faithfulness grow. It’s kind of like when my kids were young, they’d climb up a couple of the stairs, and I would tell them to jump off into my arms, and at first they’d be scared to try, and they’d just sort of all into my arms, but I’d catch them say, “I got you.” And then, parents, what do they want? “Again, Daddy.” “Again.” And then they’d go a little higher. “Again.” And a little higher. “Again!” What gave them the confidence to take greater and greater risks was their experience of my faithfulness in the past. Testimonies are how God says to us, “I’ve got you,” that inspire us to trust him more.

Third, “**...because they loved not their lives to the death.**”

God has ordained that his gospel will only go forward in the world through the laying down of our lives. Through our toil, our sacrifice, our pain, and even our death.

You might know the story of Martin Luther, and what his boldness and courage unleashed into the world. The part of Luther’s story you may not know anything about is the role of a man named John Hus in his life.

John Hus lived about 100 years before Luther in a city called Prague. Hus began reading the Bible for himself and became convinced that salvation was not something you could obtain by church attendance and taking the sacraments, as the church at his time taught, but comes only through a relationship with Christ through faith in his finished work. He started preaching these things in the city of Prague. The established church of his time declared him a heretic and sentenced him to be burned at the stake. They piled the wood up to his shoulders and asked him if he had any final words. Hus replied, very simply, **“What I taught with my lips I now seal with my blood. Bring on the fire.”** On July 6, 1415, they burned him alive together with all of his writings. And as the smoke went up from that burning pyre, it looked like Hus’s discovery, and the small movement it started, was finished.

Except that a few years later, however, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther was in the library of his monastery, deeply in turmoil, wondering how he could have peace with God, when he came across some of the banned writings of John Hus that had been hidden in the monastery library. He secretly devoured them, and the more he read, the more he became convinced that Hus had been right. In fact, later, when Luther was being questioned by the Roman Catholic Church, Luther admitted, “We’re all Hussites now.”<sup>14</sup>

And so, on a cold German day, October 31, 1517, when Luther hammered his 95 theses to the door of a cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany, the fires of revival and reformation that had been lit over the body of John Hus flared up throughout all of Europe. What John Hus had preached with his life he sealed with his blood. That’s how they overcame Satan in their generation, and you and I are here because of it.

And yet, there’s still so many people who don’t have access to this Bible. How is the gospel going to get into places like North Korea? Or China? Or Russia? Sudan? Saudi Arabia? Kuala Lumpur? Hollywood? New York? Your college campus? Your friend group?

**“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, because they loved not their lives to the death.”**

If you’ve been around this church for any time, you know that reaching Muslim peoples with the gospel is very important to us. Islam is the one big people group that has yet to see massive breakthroughs with the gospel. How are we going to overcome the dragon’s hold in places like that?

**“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, because they loved not their lives to the death.”**

One of my friends says, “What do you think will happen when a religion that says, in some places, ‘serves God and kill,’ meets one who says, “Serve God and die.” Mohammad said, “Take life in the service of Allah.” Jesus said, “Lay down your life for the sake of the world.” There’s only one way to overcome the dragon: by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by loving not your lives to the death.

### VAMP

Well, I could end the message right there, and maybe I should, but I want to make one more observation, because it’s so striking, and so counter-intuitive, but so important, and it’s tucked right in there before vs 11 and you probably read right over it.

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<sup>14</sup> Leipzig, 1519.

Vs 10, talking about the defeat of Satan, John says, **10 ...the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."**

Keep in mind: we're talking about a global struggle between the antichrist and God's people and Satan's ultimate defeat. We're talking about big massive political things, seismic shifts on earth; turmoil and natural disasters and 666. If you had to identify Satan's primary means of attack, what would you say it is: Persecution? Martyrdom? Social marginalization? Nuclear bombs? Revelation shows us he uses all those things.

And yet, vs 10, John, when describing the work of our great enemy--identifies as his #1 weapon, none of those things, but a small, quiet voice, deep in your subconscious, whispering in your heart, accusing you:

- You'll never amount to anything
- You don't have what it takes
- You've messed up too many times
- You'll just fail again, you always do.
- No one likes you
- You're ugly; you're a failure

**What if the enemy's primary strategy** against you was not cancer or persecution but a small voice whispering inside of your heart discouraging and accusing you?

I saw some tweets this week about anxiety and discouragement. And some of them were a little humorous (bear with me a for minute):

**BRAIN: hey whachya doin**

ME: nothing just relaxing

BRAIN: would u like to think about all of ur failures

ME: what no

BRAIN: and away we go

**anxiety: they hate you**

me: who hates me

anxiety: they

**Great news! I found the cure for my anxiety!! All I need is for everyone I know to tell me definitively that they aren't mad at me, once every fifteen seconds, forever** — Sarah Gailey (@gaileyfrey)  
[February 19, 2020](#)

Now, like I said, those are funny, but for many of you, struggles with the voices of doubt and accusation inside of you are not funny at all. And obviously, I'm not saying that all anxiety is the voice of Satan, but what if that is part of his strategy? ***Amplifying*** those voices of accusation and worry: You're unliked; you're forgotten; you're bad; you're damaged goods. End it today." Some of you hear that stuff all the time! **What if that's his voice? How do you overcome *that*?**

**Hear me: By my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ!** I stand before you to tell you that ***YOU ARE loved***--loved so much that God gave his only Son to save you. ***YOU ARE special***: God saved you and chose you for good works; he's appointed you for a purpose, to prosper you and to make you a blessing. ***You are not forgotten!*** Isaiah says even if it were possible for a nursing mother to forget the baby in her arms, he would not forget you. He's engraved you on the palms of his hands. Literally. *(His thoughts for you outnumber the sands on the sea. If you made your bed in hell, he'd come to find you.)*

If you will simply receive his love--and that's the great news, all you have to do is receive it!--you can rest assured in all your troubles that you are safe in him and that nothing can separate you from his love or his plan or his gracious care over your life.

Overcoming him out there starts with overcoming him in here.

#### BOW HEADS

- Where is the Enemy speaking to you in your heart right now? Where do you need to resist him and believe the gospel? Come down and pray.
- Is God calling you to some sacrifice? Say yes.
- To whom is he calling you to testify--to try and break the power of the dragon over someone's life? Come down and pray for them.
- One more: Have you received him as Savior? It's the main point of Revelation. There is a Savior who died for you to save you from judgment. He offers himself to you freely if you'll receive that. Come down and we'll show you how to do that.