July 26, 2015 a.m.

AT WAR WITH THE SAINTS

**Read Revelation 13**

**THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA (The Roman Empire)**

* In prophetic language, the sea often represented the nations of the world.
* *“And four great beasts came up from the sea….”* **(Dan. 7:3)**
* The characteristics of the empire were much like the dragon.
* The devil gave them their power. (see **Luke 4:6)**
* *On his heads, a blasphemous name.*
* “Beginning with Julius Caesar, Roman emperors had been deified, that is, were given the status and worship due to a god, the early ones after their death, but later emperors even during their lifetime.” (Metzger, p. 75)
* Consider how Paul described the man of sin in **2 Thess. 2:3-4**.
* Wallace and others believed this person to be Nero.
* *All the world marveled and followed the beast.*
* The Roman Empire was powerful as a *bear*, strong as a *lion* and swift as a *leopard*.
* *They worshiped the beast … Who is able to make war with him?*
* The world stood in awe of the Romans because of their military might.
  + This is a poor reason for any earthly government to be held in high esteem.
  + It is certainly not what the Lord esteems and he has shown on numerous occasions that regardless of military strength, He can bring a nation down.
* Remember Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. (and Tyre, Assyria, the Persians)
* *Opened his mouth in blasphemy against God … make war with the saints*
* The Romans thought nothing of the God of the Jews or His laws.
* Is this a reference to the persecution of Christians at the hands of the Romans?
* Speaking of Nero, Ogden wrote, “He blasphemed God, the name of God, His tabernacle (church), and the dead. None of The emperors were of sterling character, but Nero was the worst of all.” (p. 283)
* *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*
* The Christians needed patience as they faced persecutions (Jews and Romans).
* They needed to keep the faith.

**THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH** **(*the false prophet* in Rev. 19:20)**

* False teachers, the religious leaders from among the Jews?
* The pagan religions practiced throughout the empire? Emperor worship?
* He has *two horns like a lamb*
* Like wolves *in sheep’s clothing*. **(Mt. 7:15)**
* This beast was capable of deceiving people.
* **2 Cor. 11:14; Mt. 24:24; Acts 8:9-10; 2 Thess. 2:9**
* This beast also worked for Satan.(see **Rev. 2:9**)
* He speaks *“like a dragon*.”
* The beast appears religious, pious, God-like (loving).

**There was an alliance between Rome and the beast out of the earth.**

* The Jews encouraged the Romans to persecute Christians.
* The Romans allowed them to do so under their own watch.
* Eventually, there was an unholy alliance between the Empire and “Christians.”
* The Holy Roman Empire (The pope had more power than just about anyone else).
* Any alliance that any government has with any church/religion should be a concern.
* Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Christian.
* Allows false religion to spread. Is militantly enforced. (Crusades, Jihad)

**Let’s be reminded of what the Lord told our first century brethren living in the Roman Empire and amongst the unbelieving Jews and the pagan worshipers.**

* **Matthew 22:17-21; John 18:36; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-8; 1 Peter 2:11-17**
* It is humbling to be reminded, especially with the concerns we have had with our own government, that the first century Christians were told to pay taxes to and to be respectful of those (the Roman rulers) that ruled over them.
* Our first century brethren were never promised that the government and the Jews and idol worshipers around them would be supportive of the moral values they were to uphold.
* Alas, many churches (not all) today no longer hold the moral values that are biblical.
* The leadership (folks in the news) may not but at the grass roots level, some still do.
* Let’s stop complaining about losing what we were never promised in the first place.
* “I want to live in a nation that believes the bible” (Facebook post)
* I do! (Again, from the vantage point of this world, God never promised us this.)
* What they were told was that they had a battle on their hands.
* It may be time that we will have to prepare to do battle, not with carnal weapons (**2 Cor. 10:4**), but with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.
* And we are commanded to so with meekness and reverence. (**1 Peter 3:15**)
* Carnal weapons – anger, name-calling, insults, put-downs.
* We are at war against the dragon, the beast out of the sea and the beast from the earth which respectively represent the devil, the government and false religion.

**IT’S OUR CHANCE…**

* …to let our lights shine midst a crooked and perverse generation. (**Phil. 2:15**)
* …for others to know what’s most important to us. (**Col. 3:1-2**)
* …for others to know that we know that this world is not our home. (Let’s act like we sing.)
* Very little of this world is like heaven.
* …to let others know that our citizenship is in heaven. (**Phil. 3:20**)
* …to let others know that Jesus is our King. (**1 Tim. 6:15**)
* …to let others know that this kingdom or nation will never fall. (**Dan. 2:44; 1 Pet. 2**)
* …to stand united in love for one another. (**Gal. 5:13-15**)
* …to be tested, to even die for our faith. (**Rev. 2:10; 13**)
* Will we patiently endure and keep the faith?
* “Recognizing that our cause is, and will be, combated by mighty, determined and relentless forces, we will, trusting in him who is the Prince of Peace, meet argument with argument, misjudgment with patience, denunciations with kindness, and all our difficulties and dangers with prayer” (Frances Elizabeth Caroline Willard). (Reaching Forward, July 22, On Being Battle-Ready, Gary Henry)