

Pursuing Resilience in Revelation

Facing Giants (Part 1)

Revelation 13:1-10

Intro

“One ring to rule them all.” -Tolkein

In the Lord of the Rings saga we meet a character named Sauron. Sauron once belonged to a class of pure and good beings known as the maiar. These maiar (essentially the angels of Tolkein’s mythology) serve the great God of Tolkein’s fictional world and work with him to bring his will into reality. They serve and guide the creatures he has made, helping them to choose righteously and fulfill their proper destiny. Sauron, Tom Bombadil, Gandalf, and Saruman are all examples of these sorts of beings.

Yet Sauron was tempted by his own desire for glory and power and rebelled against his master, hoping to take Middle Earth as his own possession. He crafted rings of power which he deceptively gave to the kings and rulers of the world from various ethnicities and cultures. Many took these because they shared Sauron’s lust for power and pleasure. They believed that Sauron was empowering them for their good. What they did not know was that Sauron had also crafted a particular ring which is called the “One Ring” in the LOTR mythos. This One Ring gave Sauron power to corrupt and control all who wore his rings of power. What seemed like a path to the good life was swiftly exposed as being a path to ultimate destruction and a fate worse than death, but their minds were too warped by evil and lust to see it. All who wore these rings would slowly and painfully morph from men into demon-like characters called wraiths which could never die and were enslaved to the wicked Sauron. They were doomed to walk the Earth lifelessly and mindlessly doing his bidding. As these once great kings were corrupted, the kingdoms they once ruled fell into corruption and decay also.

I love Tolkein’s fiction because not only was he a master of writing, but he was a master of allegorizing truth from our world in a way that helps us better understand who we are and what we face as we read his stories. The real world we live in is not all that different from Middle Earth. Like in that place, we have a Dragon, a great fallen angel with many fallen servants who seek together to corrupt the kings and peoples of this world. Like in Middle Earth, many sell themselves over to the Dragon in exchange for power, authority, and glory but this allegiance only ever leads to suffering, corruption, and decay. Satan is a liar. He never intends to deliver what he promises through sin and allegiance to him. His offerings are only deceptions which serve to give him an in to corrupt and destroy us. He is fighting to demonize and corrupt the nations of this world and has a great deal of success, but all who trust in Christ and persevere in

Him will be delivered from this evil age and will avoid falling into the ultimate corrupting grasp of Satan.

Discover

I. The secular kingdoms of this world are a great beast united under one wicked ruler (1-2)

This beast resembles the beast of Daniel 7.

- A. The beast rises out of the sea meaning its origin point is worldly rather than heavenly.
 - 1. The water here is a symbol of naval power, military might, and the powers of this earth in a more general sense.
 - 2. Just in the last chapter we saw that the Dragon attempts to use water from its mouth to drown the woman and her offspring.
 - a) This water is the water of deception. It could be that John is insinuating that the beast arises directly out of the Dragon's water of deception.
- B. This is certainly the beast that Daniel saw in his visions.
 - 1. It has the traits of various animals.
 - 2. Its names mock the Lord and show definitive resistance against Him.
 - 3. The power and authority the beast carries is the power and authority Satan stole from Adam.

II. Wicked kingdoms fall and rise, but their ultimate resolution remains unchanged (3-4)

- A. Throughout history there have been many times in which it seemed that the kingdom of Satan was doomed and would never arise again, and yet he always rises out of the dust of revival and renewal.
 - 1. Satan is the master of deception. The floodwaters from his mouth spread over the earth.
 - 2. In every culture which turns to Christ in mass, there tends to arise in time people who do not remember the Lord. This happens for a variety of reasons. Perhaps a generation arises in which parents do not pass the word down to their children, or for which church becomes just a little less important than youth sports, lake time, or some other hobby. The effects do not take long because within only a couple of generations you will have a vast number of people whose grandparents oriented their lives around God's word yet they barely know who He is.
 - a) In this way Satan arises from the ashes of revival, the ashes which were one coals which God's people did not properly tend to.

3. People for who's king Satan is rejoice and celebrate at the rise of secularism, paganism, or any supposedly godless form of society and culture.
 - a) They will think that they have been liberated from God by secular culture and they will rejoice. They may not even realize that they are worshiping that great dragon Satan, the chief of all thieves and liars. Yet that is exactly who they worship.
 - b) We worship Satan through our obsession with celebrities and their lives, through our obsession with secular politics, through our obsession with musicians, even our obsession with certain religious practices, and frankly by obsessing over anything that is not Christ Himself (Romans 14:23).

III. The beast will exercise its power for a limited season and over a limited people (5-8)

- A. If the season of the church age (or the millennial reign of Christ through His church) here is represented by a period of 7 years, consistent with the context of the previous chapters, then it is very significant that the Beast only gets 3.5 years to work within.
 1. The tyrannical reign of the Beast is marked by pride and the utter disrespect of God.
 2. Though terrible, his rule is temporary and likely not contiguous.
 - a) Kingdoms rise and fall. Some are good, others bad. Some are outright demonized and this is the rule of the Beast. His season only makes up half of the total time allotted to this age.
 3. He is allowed to attack the Church, but not to destroy her or to take away her inheritance which is secure in Christ.
 - a) John 16:33
 - b) Every saint will overcome the Beast by holding fast to Christ and to our good testimony regarding Him.
 4. His rule is exercised only over the kingdoms of this world and over people of this world who do not follow Christ.
 - a) These Christ-less people worship the Beast because they have forsaken their God but they are still designed for worship.
 - b) When a creature designed for worship has forsaken the object of his or her worship, there is an innate and uncontrollable drive to worship something. Humans cannot help but to worship and if we do not worship God, we will worship something unholy which will twist us into an evil and corrupted version of ourselves.
 - (1) We were made in God's likeness. By sin we have rejected God's rule and protection over us and made ourselves a target for evil. Satan is hell bent on twisting and destroying God's image.

IV. The church must persevere (9-10)

- A. No one can escape the evil and corruption of this world entirely during this present age.
 - 1. Sin has corrupted this world and the cancer has metastasized into every place; far, deep, and wide.
 - a) Sickness, pain, and death are simply a part of the corruption Adam invited into this world.
 - (1) We battle against these effects through prayer and the demonstration of Christ's kingdom, but these effects will not be entirely eliminated until He finally returns.
 - 2. Satan has great influence on people who have not given their lives to Christ and they are easily corrupted for evil and the mistreatment of the saints.
- B. If we endure this evil season and persevere in Christ, holding to our faith come what may, we will overcome this world and will receive the crown of life which Christ has purchased for all of his dearly beloved saints.

Nurture

Who is God? He is the Lord who opposes the wicked reign of Satan.

What has He done? He has rescued His church by his blood and empty tomb, He granted them the gift of life forever in Him, and grants them power to persevere by faith to the end.

Who are we? We are the saints of the Lord whose names have been written in His book of life by grace through faith.

What is God calling us to do? He is calling us to endure and persevere till we meet Him face to face.

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