

Date: 06.05.2020

Time: 7.30pm

Prayer Meeting taken by: Rev Gavino Fioretti

Psalm: Psalm 62:7-end (Scottish Psalter)

Scripture: Revelation 13

Outline: The Church

a) Introduction

1. God's enemies

2. God's sovereignty

3. God's warnings

- **Introduction**

Who are the two beasts? There are two beasts in this chapter who are working together. They are not representing individuals. There are several heads and horns in the pictures, suggesting plurality. The two beasts are pictures of two systems, or powers: one a civil power, one a religious power. The two beasts work together against God and against His people. This is a reminder that our battle is a spiritual one.

The times that we see the beasts at work, and active against God's people, is not so much in the future, but in the present. This is after the birth of Jesus. The beasts are at work now. The beast is not one person, or even one organisation, but powers at work at times against God's kingdom.

1) God's enemies

They claim God's place: The two beasts claim God's place and want to be worshipped. They want to be God and claim to be God. They have power to do things and are able to do wonders and miracles.

The dragon and two beasts make up an unholy, demonic trinity. They want to rob God of His glory, and to take that glory that belongs to God.

An anti-Christ doesn't mean against Christ, but in the place of Christ. An anti-Christ tries to look like God and claims to be God. The devil dresses like an angel of light, robbing God of His place.

They blaspheme God's name: The beasts blaspheme by challenging and fighting against God. They oppose His Word and His will and rob Him of His glory.

They persecute God's people: The beasts persecute God's people.

7 is the number symbolising God, symbolising perfection. The number 6 is the mark of man. The mark of the devil isn't a physical mark or a bracelet – the mark is the acceptance of these beasts as

god, submitting to them and obeying them. The mark of the Christian is being faithful to Jesus and even being willing to die for Him.

It's only by God's grace that His church is preserved. The beasts will make war with God's people and we might experience persecution. It's interesting that false religion and political opposition can come together against God's people (like Pilate and Herod coming together against Jesus). As the world hates God, so will God's people be hated.

God's kingdom is in a war against the devil's kingdom. In a battle, we don't expect to receive mercy. Soldiers die in battle and in this battle, Christian soldiers will die.

2) God's sovereignty

Demanded: We see two kingdoms at war, both claiming to have authority.

God's sovereignty is commanded. He calls His enemies to leave the rule of the devil and to come under God's care and authority. When the gospel is preached, people are being called to come under God's sovereignty and authority. God offers reconciliation, to take you into His family. We're called to accept Jesus as Lord and King.

Rejected: People want to be free. They don't want to accept Jesus' sovereignty and lordship over their lives and so live as enemies of God.

Absolute: God's sovereignty is absolute. The authority the beast has is from God. He gives permission for persecution. Consider how Job was hurt by the devil. The beast's authority is however limited in how far it will go and how intense it will be.

Behind everything is God. Even in persecution, God is in control and has a plan. Stephen's death in the New Testament looked like defeat; one of the best preachers was dead and the church was scattered – this meant that the gospel was spread and the church was grown. The suffering of God's people is not bad luck; it is part of a divine plan.

3) God's warnings

Be faithful: Let's be faithful, endure and not give up. Be ready for battle, even if it means that you have to give your life for Jesus. Be ready to receive whatever He has planned for you. We will suffer. We will experience persecution, but let's be faithful. It's not out of His control. The Christian life is not an easy one because no battle is easy or good.

Be wise: Be wise in how you fight this battle. Be aware. Be careful. Be watchful of signs and examine what's happening in light of Revelation. Be wise. Don't be misled. Don't surrender. Be prayerful.

The devil is very subtle. At times he makes us think he does not exist or is not powerful – he does this in order to devour us in the battle.

A good general reads a situation and is able to change plans accordingly in a battle. Be wise in how you fight this battle. Remember that God is in control. Our enemies have been defeated. We will have the victory.