

Revelation: The Church Triumphant Through Christ the Lamb of God

Based upon Jim McGuigan's work on the book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation: The Serpent and the Christ

Lesson Five

In this lesson, we will learn that ...

- The Devil had manifested himself against the people of God through the ages in various forms. In Revelation he shows himself in the form of the Roman Empire.
 - The good things or persons in Revelation always have an evil "shadow" following them. In the same way that original paintings have fakes floating around which appear to be original.
 - Jesus is pictured as a Rider on a white horse leading His army who also ride on white horses.
 - Christ can do more than expose and condemn sin. He can forgive and cure it.
-

The central message of the book of Revelation is that God alone is to be worshiped and served and that that truth is to be maintained when the Roman beast rises against the people of God. The central message of the book is that the Roman Empire is the expression of the world spirit (the Dragon, Satan) that opposes God's kingdom purpose as it shows itself in Jesus Christ and his followers. The central message is that when the smoke clears it's the followers of the Lord Christ that are triumphant and that his Lordship is made concrete and local here on the earth. The Roman Empire claims dominion but it's a satanic claim. They "prove" it by brutality and cruelty. The church insists that Jesus has dominion and they prove it (as followers of Christ) by outliving, out-suffering and out-lasting Rome.

We've glanced at two leading characters in the book of Revelation. We've looked at Rome, under the images of a sea-beast, an earth-beast and a prostitute/city. We've looked at the people of God as the 144,000 Israelites, a glorious Woman, a glorious City, and as two Witnesses. Now, we'll take a look at Satan and the Christ.

The Devil as a Seven-Headed Beast (12:3-4)

Satan is described as a beast with seven heads and ten horns. That's how Rome the sea-beast is described. Satan is described in the same way because it is Rome through which he expresses himself in the book of Revelation. Had the enemy of Christ and his church been described as having thirty-two heads and seven arms, that's how Satan would have been described because he is the power that inspires the enemy.

In Revelation Satan attacks the People of God through emperors and Roman allies in various ways and by various means. In even more ancient times he attacked God's people through Pharaohs and Assyrian kings. The names and the dates and cultures all differed but they were all the same old adversary. When you see Rome at work you see the Dragon at work because Rome exercises his authority (Revelation 13:2,4). The sea-beast and the Dragon are described alike because they have the same purpose—destroy the People of God and establish their own claim to dominion. You'll remember that the earth-beast looks like a lamb but speaks with the voice of a dragon (12:11).

When God buried the Roman Empire the Dragon's purpose *exercised in and through Rome* was permanently defeated. But as sure as the world spirit operated in Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome it operates in and through any power that sets itself up against God to hinder his purposes and destroy his People. *Suppose* some modern state openly undertook to bring Jesus down and destroy his people and suppose John wrote a letter about it. He would describe it in some form or other and he

would describe the Devil in the same way he describes the modern state. Revelation 20:7-10 makes the point that Satan though defeated in Rome will show himself in some other form. The book of Revelation assures us that whatever form he takes God defeats him, the People of God triumph and the world benefits. *It's important to keep in mind that all these powers have one character and purpose—they're anti-God and anti-life.* When God's People oppose these kingdoms and states they are opposing not only flesh and blood but also the world spirit that thrives in them (compare Ephesians 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 4:4).

The Devil as a fallen star (9:1-2,11)

The use of "a star" to represent people is common in scripture. Daniel 12:3 speaks of the righteous as stars and in Revelation 22:16 Jesus calls himself the Bright and Morning Star. Though this is common enough we're not to think of "people" every time we read the word star.

In Luke 10:18 Jesus speaks of Satan as "fallen from heaven like lightning." *Fallen* rather than falling. I think there's good reason to believe that he is the fallen star in Revelation 9:1.

Here's something of real importance in reflecting on the book. Mirror images occur all over the place. Here's what I mean. There's a Glorious Woman and there's an Evil Woman. There's a Glorious City and there's an Evil City. The followers of the Lamb have his name written on their foreheads (3:12 and 14:1) and the followers of the beast have the Beast's name written on their foreheads (13:16-17). The Christ claims to have been alive, dead and alive forever more (1:18) and there's a Beast that lived, died and lived again (13:3,14). And so on.

In this case we have a fallen star that has the key of the abyss (9:1,11) and we have the Bright and Morning Star that has the key of death and of Hades (1:18 and 22:16). The fallen star has the key of the pit of evil from which he lets loose evil scorpions to torment the people of the earth. In opening the abyss the fallen star pollutes the air with smoke out of which come the destroying scorpions (9:2-11 and see Ephesians 2:2). Everything this "fallen star" is the Bright and Morning Star is not.

Jesus Christ as the church's Leader (19:11-16)

Leading His people into battle is the King on the white horse! He is called the King of Kings (19:16). He is identified as the Word of God (19:13 and see John 1:1,14). When he makes war it is a righteous war (19:11). His followers and his Holy Father can depend on him because he is the Faithful and True (19:11). He leads the armies of heaven who wear white garments and ride white horses (19:14).

Jesus Christ as the Faithful Witness (1:5 and 19:11)

The days in which John wrote have been called "the age of the informer". A Roman historian called Tacitus said, "If a man had no enemies he was betrayed by a friend." In and out of the church people informed against each other to gain an advantage with the authorities. Sometimes they told blatant lies. But even if they told the truth they told it at someone's expense.

The word "witness" translates from the Greek word *martus*. We get the word "martyr" from it. Jesus was one of those who took his words so seriously that he was willing to shed his blood (be a martyr—more than that, of course) to confirm the truth of what he spoke. If he promised something they could be sure they'd get it because he was a *faithful* witness. He would never lie *to* them or *about* them.

Jesus Christ as the Resurrected Lord (1:17-18)

The People of God, who will face death need to know that their Lord has faced death, fully experienced it and overcame it. Because that is so it's possible for him to call his followers to be faithful unto death and he would give them life as a crown (2:8,10).

Jesus Christ as King of Kings (17:14 and 19:16)

John sees a throne in 4:2. It's the throne that rules the whole universe. The good news is that it is not in Italy, at Rome but in heaven. The good news is that on that throne that rules the universe no Roman Emperor sits. That is the throne of God and the kingdom (dominion) is the kingdom of heaven. At the center of that throne that rules the world John sees a Lamb (5:6). The Lamb bears the marks of having been slaughtered but it isn't lying dead! The Lamb that bears the slaughter wounds is "standing" at the heart of the throne.

The emperors would wade to the throne through the blood of others. The Lamb would gain his dominion through the free shedding of his own blood. They would lose their thrones when they died but the Lamb gained his through dying and was now deathless. They gained their thrones by laying down the lives of others and he gained his throne by laying down his own life for others (see Philippians 2:5-9).

Jesus Christ the Redeemer from Sin (1:5 and 5:9)

The Romans could offer jobs, roads, government, economic growth and even Roman citizenship to the right people but they couldn't give freedom from sin. Jesus can do more than talk about sin! He can do more than describe it, condemn it, threaten it, denounce it, avoid it, analyze or expose it—praise God he can forgive it! And cure it!

Exercises for Lesson Five

True or False?

1. The central message of Revelation is: misery for the people of God. F
2. Revelation 20:7-10 makes the point that Satan, defeated in Rome, is defeated forever. F
3. The Devil and Rome are described alike because the Devil operated in Rome at that time. T
4. The “fallen star” is the emperor Nero. F
5. Tacitus was a Roman historian. T
6. The rider on the white horse is the Antichrist. F
7. Christ is the bright and morning star in Revelation. T
8. Satan took the form of Egypt in the OT just as he took the form of Rome in the NT. T
9. It’s possible for Jesus’ followers to face death bravely because He has already beaten it. T
10. The invisible power behind the Roman Empire is Satan himself. T

Check off each of the following references after you have read it.

<u> </u> Revelation 12 & 13	<u> </u> Ephesians 6:10-18	<u> </u> Revelation 19:11-16
<small>Rome & God’s people described</small>	<small>Our spiritual war against Satan</small>	<small>Christ leading His army</small>
<u> </u> Philippians 2:5-9	<u> </u> I Timothy 6:13-16	<u> </u> Revelation 9:1-11
<small>Jesus gains Throne via self-sacrifice</small>	<small>King of kings, Lord of lords</small>	<small>Devil as a fallen star</small>

Complete the following statements.

1. The Lamb bears the marks of **having been slaughtered but it isn’t lying dead!** _____
2. In even more ancient times **he attacked God’s people through Pharaohs and Assyrian kings.** _____
3. Satan is described as a **beast with seven heads and ten horns.** _____
4. Leading His people into battle **is the King on the white horse!** _____
5. Mirror images **occur all over the place.** _____
6. The good news is that on that throne **that rules the universe no Roman Emperor sits.** _____

Underline the scripture ...

1. Where Christ sees Satan as fallen from Heaven.
Revelation 9:1 **Luke 10:18** Daniel 12:3
2. That says Satan is the prince of the power of the air.
Revelation 22:16 Revelation 19:13 **Ephesians 2:2**
3. That teaches the Devil attacked God’s people in OT times through Egypt.
Daniel 1:1 Philippians 2:5-9 **Exodus 1:8-22**
4. That says the harmless looking Earth-Beast spoke with a voice of a dragon.
Revelation 13:16-17 **Revelation 13:11** Revelation 1:5-6
5. That teaches Christ has authority over death.
Revelation 19:14 Revelation 5:6 **Revelation 1:17-18**