

# Like a Lamb, Like a Dragon

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

Written By: Pastor John T. Anderson

Delivered On: March 12, 2011

*This Sermon is available in audio format for listening or downloading on our [Audio Sermons web page](#).*

Because of the momentous times in which we live, last Sabbath we began a series dealing with last day prophecies. We found that the Bible encourages us to be aware of the “signs of the times” given by God. He has a plan for this planet; He knows the secrets of the future; He “reveals” (remember that that word is literally “gives an apocalypse,” or “removes the cover”) His secrets through His prophets (not the horoscope, not the séance). Therefore Jesus’ words to His followers have deep meaning for us when He said, “When you see the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet (whoever reads, let him understand), then flee to the mountains.”

The three vital components of that instruction are see, understand and act. We need to have our eyes open to those signs Jesus has given us. We need to be “in the prophetic Word” to understand, and then we need to respond appropriately when the time comes. The wise men at Jesus’ birth modeled this formula. They saw the heavenly star, they understood the prophecies of Daniel and Balaam, and they moved accordingly.

We noted that almost all of the prophecies given in Scripture are fulfilled, including the ones given in Matthew 24, II Timothy 3 and II Thessalonians 2. Only a few remaining prophecies have yet to unfold, one of which is given in the last part of Revelation 13. It contains a prophecy that is startling and almost unbelievable. But we saw that sin has a pattern of being mysterious in its ability to change someone or something noble and innocent, and transform it into evil.

Four examples in the Bible of this are: Lucifer the “covering angel,” who first cherished sin in his heart became Satan. Saul, Israel’s first king who was so shy at his own coronation that he hid himself “in the baggage,” became the tyrant Saul who threw spears at David, consulted a spiritualistic medium and eventually committed suicide. In the same way the nation of Israel, planted by God in the place of His choosing, the custodian of Scripture and sanctuary, by adhering to sin, murdered Her Monarch and Messiah Jesus.

In the same way the New Testament church, the cradle of Christ’s teachings, turned into something that made it a crime to own a Bible, subverted nearly every teaching Christ gave to her, made boastful claims about being equal with God and having authority to change the Scriptures, even the Ten Commandments and hunted down dissenters like animals, persecuting and killing them. How could all this be? It would seem impossible! Yet, through sin, all these things came to be. Revelation 13 predicts another transformation of this type; a beast which changes from being like a lamb to being like a dragon.

The first part of Revelation 13 outlines the behavior of the Church during the middle ages when these characteristics became prominent. The beast that came from the “sea” (remember that “water” in prophetic symbolism stands for “multitudes”) represents the historical papacy. All the clues precisely fit that interpretation, and it was understood in this way for hundreds of years by all the great reformers who broke from the Church. Only in relatively recent times has Protestantism wavered on this view. If you read from a Bible that has notes in it, be very careful! Protestantism today is not the Protestantism of yesterday. Martin Luther had no question as to whom Revelation 13:1-10 or the horn power of Daniel 7 pointed.

The papacy ruled through the middle ages, the great period of 1260 years foretold by prophecy 7 times, until it received a deadly setback when Pope Pius VI was taken captive by Napoleon’s general Berthier in 1798 and it seemed to many that the papacy had come to its end. The prophecy of Revelation 13:10 was fulfilled, “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity.” However, prophecy also predicted a resurgence of this power. The “wound” seemed to be mortal, but there would be a recovery. The “deadly wound” would be “healed,” and eventually “all the world marveled and followed the beast.” Revelation 13:3. All this has been confirmed in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, among which, by the way, there are yet many God-fearing Christians. Prophecy speaks to the system of the papacy.

But at the time of the deadly setback, toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, another beast was seen by the prophet John arising, not from the “sea,” but from the “earth,” indicating that it came from a sparsely populated area. This beast gave forth a peaceful demeanor, having two horns like a lamb. This second beast unquestioningly represents the United States of America. The two horns “like a lamb” accurately portray the twin powers of civil and religious freedom, upon which our country was founded.

Here’s where we come to another of those “mysterious” transformations. One day those twin powers will be attacked and come crashing down just like the twin towers did 10 years ago. “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.” Revelation 13:11. From a “lamb” to a “dragon”! Shocking! In Revelation, Jesus is the “Lamb” and the devil is the “dragon.” America the peaceful; America the freedom-loving nation embracing Christian principles is said to become America the diabolical; America the freedom-restricting persecuting nation. Even though it may seem hard to believe today, with the Constitution and Bill of Rights, we are told that America will one day copy the behavior and practices of the papacy of the middle ages, one of the chief characteristics of which was persecution and the compelling of the conscience. The Scripture “cannot be broken.”

Prophecy portrays this shift with these words. “And he (the second beast, America) exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the best, telling those

who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.” Revelation 13:11-15.

“Dragon-like” characteristics are portrayed in the use of the tools of force and deception. “He deceives those who dwell on earth.” From the very beginning the devil has been the master deceiver. We see that the actions of the second beast are done in favor of and devotion to the first beast. It causes those on earth “to worship the first beast.” Thus the “image” it makes is an image “to” the beast. It is done with the intent to give worship, devotion and obeisance to the first beast. Its intent is that all give their obedience and allegiance to the first beast. Remember that obedience is the highest form of worship. It is an image to the beast.

At the same time, the actions of this second beast create an image “of” the beast, stressing the fact that it is duplicating and copying the behaviors of the first beast. It is a copy of it. That’s what an “image” is. It is a copy or replica. Keep in mind these two facts; the book of Revelation has roots which go all the way back to Genesis and whatever God does, Satan counterfeits. For every true, there is a false. Satan has his version of everything, including the creation story. Revelation tells about something made as an “image” which is “given breath” and lives. That’s what it says in verse 15: “He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast.” Does that remind you of something? What do we find in Genesis? We read, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Let them have dominion.’ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Genesis 1:26; 2:7.

Genesis tells us about an “image” that was given “breath” and came to life. Something noble and wonderful happened when Adam was made in the image or likeness of God. God breathed His breath into him and Adam came to life. Revelation 13 is Satan’s version of this account. Its purpose and results are totally different than God’s! Man, made in the image of God and receiving His breath, was made to have dominion over creation in the godly administration of loving rulership. The worship of the Creator God was implicit in the story of Genesis.

Revelation 13 is presenting something completely different. The “image” that is made here is not in the likeness of God, but of the first beast of that chapter. It is something you wouldn’t want copied! It is for the purpose of exercising a dominion that is not authorized by God. It is that which invades the personal chambers of the conscience. It is a duplication of the system which brought forth the horrors of the Inquisition centuries ago.

What this is telling us is that the second beast, America, will inject its breath; its energy, its vitality and influence into creating something on the order of what existed during the centuries of oppression under papal domination. Its result will not be to give honor to the Creator God, but to the author of sin. Does it seem beyond imagination? Remember! The pattern of sin is to take that which is noble and innocent and transform it into something satanic. Though it is a “mystery,” nevertheless it is reality.

Because the subject of Revelation 13 and 14 is “worship,” that word appearing 14 times in these two chapters; because Catholicism has consistently stated that the changing of the Ten Commandments testifies to her authority as being above Scripture; because the substitution of Sunday, a common working day according to the Bible, for the seventh-day Sabbath, the only day sanctified by the Bible is the “mark” of her authority in ecclesiastical matters (according to her own words), we understand that the last great issue will revolve around which day of worship one chooses. Will it be the day sanctified by Scripture, in honor of the Creator God, the day specified by the fourth commandment? Or will it be the day set apart by mere human authority, in contradiction of Sacred Writ? The day in allegiance of a man-made institution? That will be the great question as we near the end of time. One day all will “pledge their allegiance” by choosing either God’s day, the Sabbath, or man’s day, Sunday.

The story of Earth began with a test involving two trees; it will end with a test involving two days. Those who love Jesus supremely and appreciate all that He has done to secure their salvation; those who have made a commitment to vindicate His name by refusing to bow to anything made by man will display their fidelity by obeying His holy commandments, even if it means that one can’t buy or sell; even if it means loss of property or life itself. The “faith of Jesus” will live in the heart of the one surrendered to Him, and the honor of His name will take precedence above all else.

What do you call it when you bow down and worship something that man has made? Think of that for just a moment. In Old Testament times, God’s people were constantly being challenged by the worship practices of their pagan neighbors. In their worship, they employed objects made by their hands to “help” them visualize the deities. Against this practice God gave clear prohibitions. The reason is that if we make something with our own hand which is supposed to represent the infinite, it can only lower our perceptions of the divine. The Ten Commandments speak clearly against this practice.

At the foot of Mt. Sinai, from which God had thundered His holy law, Israel fell into idolatry, inducing Aaron to fashion for them a golden calf similar to what they had seen in Egypt. Centuries later, they still seemed fatally attracted to this pagan practice. Idolatry played a major role in their apostasy, God eventually allowing them to suffer the discipline of captivity. If you read Isaiah 40-50, you will see a clear contrast between the futility of worshiping gods of wood and stone, and the worship of the One Who created heaven and earth. Carefully read those chapters in the light of what we next consider.

Some might say, “Well, that was good advice for the people back then, but it doesn’t really apply to our modern world today.” Really? Think through this carefully! What do you call it when you worship something that is made by man? That is idolatry, isn’t it? Does it make a difference if what is made by man is a tangible object, such as an image carved from wood or chiseled from stone, or if it is an intangible institution? From God’s point of view are they any different? It is idolatry whether what I worship is a tangible thing made by man, or a conceptual institution made by man. If my worship involves a man-made institution rather than what is divinely established,

am I not an idolater? “Oh, that’s such a harsh word,” one might say. “Does it really make any difference?” But look at it from God’s point of view.

That is the picture that Revelation 13 is drawing. Through the actions of the second beast, America, working in cooperation with the first beast, the papacy, all will be compelled to bow before an image, to “worship the image of the beast,” and all who refuse to do so will fall under the sentence of death. The parallels between this Scripture and the story in Daniel 3 are unmistakable. How could this ever happen in America? How could the “lamb” become a “dragon”? How could the United States with its constitutional guarantees ever legislate against the conscience? How could a law uplifting the worship of Sunday on pain of death ever gain traction?

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” The same serpent who disguised himself in the Garden will speak to the minds of men and lead them where they do not know. Deception is the devil’s tool of choice. There will come a time in America, in the not too distant future, when under the pressure of adverse circumstances a call will come forth to return to the heritage of the past. Beset by a failed economy and tortured by every type of pestilence and disaster; surrounded by sin and evil, voices will be raised calling for revival.

Is this wrong? No! It is good and right. But a revival that is not based on the clear teachings of God’s word is subject to being hijacked by the master deceiver. Make note of it: someday the call to “return to our roots” will include the need for a national day of rest, a day that will bring together all components of society. The case will be made that it will be necessary to set aside whatever differences there might be and join together to save the nation from the deplorable state into which she has fallen. It could include a call to save the nation against an enemy that seeks to swallow it up. When desperate times come, men do desperate things. We may be having troubles now, but wait until things get worse. We’re not used to going to the store and finding empty shelves. It will be Satan’s energy working through men who are not founded on the truths of the Bible, seeking to overthrow the law of God once and for all.

As I relate to you some ideas I heard a couple of weeks ago, please keep a few things in mind. We do not condemn the men whose words are referred to below. We believe them to be sincere in their passion, earnest in their zeal. But at present these men do not have the complete picture that the Bible reveals. They do not understand the fact that Satan has been at work from the beginning to overthrow the law of God; that it was Satan who worked through the papacy to change the Ten Commandments and substitute the day of man for the true “Lord’s Day,” the Sabbath. They do not understand that obedience to all of God’s law is required and that “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10. They do not understand that Satan hates the Sabbath, the sign of God’s creatorship and authority, the token of His power to change us. They do not understand that Satan plans to hijack just such a movement as they would like to see take place, take it over and insert within it his masterful deception, bringing the world to bow at his feet.

Sitting around a table on February 25 were David Barton, an attorney and American historian, Rabbi Daniel Lapin, President of the American Alliance for Jews and Christians, Pastor James Robison, head of Life Outreach International, and Dave Roever, decorated Vietnam veteran, Christian motivational speaker. The discussion was hosted by Glenn Beck. (If you wish to read the entire transcript, click on this link: <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/glenn-beck/transcript/beck-practice-what-you-preach>.)

Beck described what he calls the “perfect storm,” the coming together of many challenges to our country at the same time. We’ve experienced war, failing economies, energy challenges, border troubles, and issues with labor and capital before. But not all at once. He stated that we are coming into a perfect storm of problems, which calls for a revival; a return to our Christian values. Barton cited the sad statistics of divorce in America, noting that divorce within the “Christian” community is more frequent than among atheists. He spoke about those claiming to be Christians but not living their faith in areas of pornography, abortion, astrology and many other areas of life. He recalled what is called the *Black Robe Regiment*, a movement among pastors more than 200 years ago which was the catalyst for the American Revolution. The preachers back then led the way for political and social reform; preachers need to do the same today. If you go to their website you will find this “call to action.” “The entire Christian community must now unite in opposition to the erosion of our founding principles and return this nation back to the divinely inspired constitutional precepts and values that facilitated America’s rise to greatness. We are calling on all church leaders to join with us in building a united community of constitutionally minded and Christ based patriots thirsting for truth in God’s plan for us and willing to push back against an overreaching federal government and secular society. Please join the Black Robe Regiment and invite others as well. Use the resources and initiatives here to educate, motivate and activate your congregations into action. Time is running short and we must awaken and make our stand and have our voices heard!!” <http://www.blackrobereg.org/calls-to-action.html>

Pastor Robison called for Christians everywhere to live as a light to the world. He made a comparison between the current weakened status of Christianity in America, burying its head in the sand to the evil surrounding it, and those Christians in Germany during World War II, who sang louder so they wouldn’t hear the cries of persecuted Jews. Pastor Robison noted that sitting at the same table were a Mormon, Presbyterian, Baptist and a Jewish rabbi, but that they could come together for a common purpose. He called all of Christianity to set aside their differences, stop squabbling and join together for a common cause. Roever also called for a return to our spiritual heritage, going back to our roots, the beliefs of our founding fathers.

There was talk about the Ten Commandments, and their importance. Glenn asked people in the audience to recite them, with some success. But the Sabbath issue was never addressed specifically. Beck stated that the country needs to be fixed and get back to the Ten Commandments. He closed the program with an appeal to return being people, as George Washington said “of merit,” and when we do, we can again repair what is wrong with our country and make a positive impact on the world.

Is there truth in the ideas of these men? Yes. Is our country on a slide to perversion? Yes! But be aware that Satan is lurking to work through the endeavors of those who don't cherish a love for all of God's commandments and bring in his last day masterpiece of deception. America the lamb will become America the dragon. Everyone who refuses to go along with the new revival will be branded unpatriotic and heretical. Every verse of Revelation 13 will be fulfilled.

Jesus loves us with an everlasting love. He came to die for us that we might be forgiven and cleansed of all sin. Today He holds out His hands, His nail-pierced hands, and asks us if we will surrender to Him and be His followers and through His grace obey all His commandments. We can't on our own, but by His Spirit He will enable us to be victors. What a privilege to live for the honor of His name!