

- A spiritual battle – Satan is trying to destroy the church

Revelation 11:19–15:4 is a section of the book of Revelation in which we are taken more deeply into what is happening in the world. A spiritual battle is taking place. Satan has tried to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ and now he is trying to destroy the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan makes use of persecuting pagan governments

Satan makes use of persecuting pagan governments. In 12:18 (which is really the beginning of Revelation 13) the dragon looks for help from a beast arising from the sea. ^{18/1} *And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea* (12:18 in some translations, 13:1a in other translations). The translations which have ‘And I stood’ use inferior manuscripts). The text continues: *And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, and it had ten crowns on its horns. And written on each head were names that insulted God.*

- A beast from the sea

The symbolism of this vision comes from Daniel chapter 7. The sea is a picture of humanity. The many peoples of the world are tossing and turning like the sea. Out of this restless wickedness human kingdoms arise. Worldly kingdoms are thrown up like rubbish from the restlessness of human wickedness. In the book of Revelation the beast from the sea represents all worldly governments that are opposed to God. It is the persecutions of Satan the dragon assisted by the persecutions of those governments that hate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Symbolism from Daniel 7

- Worldly governments opposed to God

- Persecutions

² *The beast that I saw looked like a leopard, but it had feet like the feet of a bear and it had a mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave the beast its power and its throne and its great authority.* The four beasts of Daniel chapter 7 have become one beast. It represents any situation where a government becomes a persecuting power. In John’s day it was especially being experienced in the form of the Roman Empire.

- In John’s day the Roman Empire

³ *Then I saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed to have received a death-blow, but its apparently fatal wound was healed. And the whole world was amazed and followed the beast.* This verse alludes to Nero, the emperor who ruled the Roman Empire from AD 54 to 68. There was a time when Nero became a fierce persecutor. But then suddenly in AD 68 Nero committed suicide and one might have hoped that the Roman persecutions would be finished. For a while people treated the Roman emperor almost as divine. ⁴ *People worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast. And people worshipped the beast, and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? And who can make war against him?’* Rome was famous for its power, and there were many times when Rome used its cruel power to oppress Christians. ⁵ *The beast was given a mouth to speak proud words and blasphemies. And there was given to him authority to exercise power for forty-two months.* The ‘forty-two months’ is a symbol of the gospel-age but it seems especially to have in mind the time **within** the gospel-age when powerful opposition arises against the church, a time causing havoc in the world also. It is the same as the three and a half years and 1,260 days mentioned elsewhere. The

- Nero

- Emperor worship

- 42 months – a time within the gospel age of powerful opposition

imagery comes from the time of Elijah's conflict with the prophets of Baal.

⁶*The beast opened his mouth to speak blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, the people who dwell in heaven.* John knew that his own sufferings were typical of what would come in the future of the world. He knew there would come a time when such conflicts would be intensified. ⁷*And permission was given to the beast to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. He was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.* ⁸*All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was killed from the foundation of the world.*^a The beast's hatred of the people of God will have side effects and every kind of person will be affected throughout the entire earth.

• *A time of intense conflict will come*

• *Affecting the whole earth*

Amidst fierce persecutions the people of God may know they are safe

• *Suffering is part of God's long-appointed plan*

John calls us to face the future with confidence

• *Perseverance*

• *Faithfulness tested through suffering*

Amidst fierce persecutions the people of God may know they are safe. There will be times (says the prophecy) when the entire world will be anti-Christian. 'All who dwell on the earth will worship him'. But the people of God are safe because their names are written in God's list of his true people. Our Lord Jesus Christ is 'the Lamb that was killed from the foundation of the world'. The wording reminds us that suffering is part of God's long-appointed plan. It tells us too that we are following in the pathway of Jesus himself in any trial we endure for his sake.

John calls us to face the future with confidence. He says to us: hear God's Word. ⁹*If anyone has an ear, let him hear.* He says to us: be confident in God's plan. ¹⁰*If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.* There are times when faithful servants of God have to accept that God is putting them through a time of suffering for the sake of his gospel. Of course we are allowed to avoid suffering as much as possible, but when God's will for us becomes clear we must accept it. *Here is perseverance and the faithfulness of holy people.* A time of suffering tests our willingness to persevere, and it tests our faithfulness to God and his gospel'

Note

a. The translation 'the Lamb killed before the foundation of the world' is less likely. God's elect were chosen before the foundation of the world. But Jesus did not actually-and-historically die before the foundation of the world.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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