

51 Dealing with the Devil – Fear Not

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DEALING WITH THE DEVIL AND THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time” (Rev. 20:1-3).

In chapter 19, we saw the great white horse and his rider. In this chapter, we will see the Great White Throne of Judgment and balancing of the moral scales. As a reminder, Christ is here on earth and has removed the Beast and False Prophet by throwing them into the lake of fire. Now we start this wonderful chapter with Christ binding and sending Satan to the pit for a thousand years. He is removing all distractions and potential conflict, as He sets the stage for Judgment. But before I commentate on chapter 20, I want to address a common factor “Christians” struggle with in reading the final two chapters of Revelation – fear.

FEAR NOT MY CHILD

In Matthew 24:4-6, Christ mentions the appearing of false prophets three times. Jesus said to His disciples, *“See to it that no one misleads you (vs 4). For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many (vs. 5). You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end” (vs. 6).*

In Matthew 24:4, Christ foretells the going forth of deceivers. He begins with a caution, *“See to it that no one misleads you.”* The disciples expected to be told when these things should be, to be let in on the secret. But this caution only piqued their curiosity. Christ wanted the disciples to mind their duty, follow Him, and not be seduced from following Him. The fact is that Christ conceals much prophetic knowledge because of evildoers, not Bridal members. If Christ had revealed what the Father has concealed, the lawless men would use it to mislead many. Most inquisitive types need to be kept away from the secret things of God; otherwise, they will use them to seduce.

Christ reveals that seducers are more dangerous enemies to the Church than are persecutors. Second Thess. 2:3-4 tells us: *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”*

This is the message for the Bride: we will be perfected by “staying on our toes.”

APOSTASY MUST COME

Most conservative Christians are annoyed by other “Christians” who are liberal in their thinking - not believing the Word to be literal. In the end-times, many Bridal members will view the Word of God to be primarily “cultural” - not literal and absolute. Christ warned us of these times. (By the way, we are in those times right now.) This period of Christianity is called the Apostasy. First, there will come a falling away. We may not be in the middle of the Great Apostasy, but we certainly are entering the warm-up phase.

The primary evidence we need to watch for is Bridal members becoming more offended by what Christ says than what non-Christians say. This is why the divorce rate in America is higher within the Christian church than in the world. Bridal members are abusing the Scriptures to prove their human “rights.” I have seen this in my overall experience as a counselor. I have much better working relationships with non-believers than I do most Christians. These are the “birth pangs” of apostasy.

This apostasy will not be within civil government; but in spiritual or religious (Christ) matters, from sound doctrine, instituted worship, church government, and a holy (living by His absolutes) life. The apostle (Paul) speaks of a very great apostasy, not only of some converted Jews or Gentiles, but such as will be with Christians in general, although it will be gradual. The purpose of the apostasy is to reveal the rise of the Antichrist, Satan. Take note: no sooner was Christianity planted and rooted in the world than there began to be a defection in the Christian church. Whenever God lays absolutes down, Satan starts an apostasy. It was so in the Old Testament church and continues to this day.

The warning for those of us, who believe God and in what He says, must be prepared for Satan to create in us a “falling away” each time we decide to “put our foot down.” Apostasy always follows covenant, unless blocked by embracing absolutes.

James 1:2-4 tells us: *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

The suffering state of the Bride of Christ in this world is represented in this passage. In a very instructive manner: if we attend to what is plainly and necessarily implied, together with what is fully expressed, we will experience joy.

It is implied that troubles and afflictions may be the lot in life for most Christians, even those who have a “spoiled” or “overprotective” lifestyle. Actually, we can walk in a constant state of joy, yet endure very grievous afflictions. Joy does not mean living a pain-free life. The Bride of Christ must not think it strange if they encounter troubles. These outward afflictions and troubles can only provide a temptation to walk in despair; they cannot force us to give up our joy. Satan uses hardship and sufferings to draw men to sin, and deter them from their duties as Bridal members.

Our afflictions are in God's hands. They are intended for the trial and improvement of our walk in Christ. The only way to remove the impurities in raw gold is to purify it by fire. So it is with the Christians; we, too, must be baptized by fire. It is a part of our commitment to the Groom. Our trials may be of many and different kinds. Therefore, we need to put on the whole armor of God. We must be armed on every side, because temptations lie on all sides. The trials of a good man are such as he does not create to himself, nor sinfully pull upon himself.

All of that is to say: do not fear any of the details Revelation unfolds, particularly the last three chapters of our study. The truth is, the story has a “happy ending” for those who are in Christ. With that said, let’s look at chapter twenty.

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