Triumph by the Blood of the Lamb

Revelation 12:1-13:18

Key Verse: 12:11 “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

 In Revelation 6-11 we have studied the wrath of God and his salvation through the events of the Seven Seals (6-7) and of the Seven Trumpets (8-11). When each seal was opened and each trumpet was sounded, the intensity of God’s wrath was escalating. Through these two cycles of the tribulation and salvation God showed us what is going to happen in the future and what kind of life we should live. Last week we learned that when the last trumpet, the Seventh Trumpet, was sounded, we heard the voice from heaven that the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. (11:15) It is amazing to hear that the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. We have been praying for the establishment of God’s kingdom on this earth. We are waiting for this moment since we believe in Jesus. So, with this hope we must endure hardships and preach the gospel to the end of the earth until the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. I personally pray every day with this prayer topic, “*Your kingdom come and your will be done.*” (Lk 11:2) Amen!

 Chapter 12-19 shows us the seven signs. Three signs appear in heaven (12:1,3; 15:1) and four signs on earth (13:13-14;16:14; 19:20). Only one is a sign of good (12:1), and the other six signs are omens of evil or judgment from God. In chapter 12 we study two signs in heaven and in chapter 13, two signs on earth. Let’s see what signs John saw through his vision? Look at verses 1-2. “***A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth***.” The first sign is a pregnant woman who is going to give birth to a child. She is not an ordinary woman because she is clothed with the sun, putting the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of the twelve stars on her head. Who is this woman? We can figure out who she can be after seeing the second sign. Look at verses 3-6. “***Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.***” The second sign is a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. In China dragon is branded as a good-fortuned animal which brings them blessing and prosperity. So Chinese dragon dancing is popular. Someone even calls China a Red Dragon. But in the Bible dragon is a Satanic animal. Look at verse 9. “***The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him***.” This huge red dragon has power to throw a third of stars in the sky. Here stars imply angels. This dragon was waiting for the moment of the woman’s delivering the baby so that it could devour the baby. Who is the baby? Verse 5 explains about the baby boy. “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “*will rule all the nations with an iron scepter*.” Jesus mentioned the same in his message to the Church of Thyatira in 2:27. Jesus promised to give this ruling authority to those who are victorious. Here the scepter symbolizes kingship. So, we figure out who the male child is and who the woman is from these verses. Some say that the woman is a church and her child is suffering Christians. The Jewish believers say that the woman is Israel and the child is the Israelites. But most believe that the woman indicates the Mother Mary and her male child is Jesus. As we studied in Matthew’s gospel, King Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus while Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt via the wilderness. Later Jesus was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven and sat at the throne of God.

 Look at verses 7-9. “***Then the war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him***.” There is a great war between the holy angels and the evil angels, and the holy angels with Michael won. The chief evil angel, called Satan, and his angels were hurled down to the earth. Someone wrote a song about this with titled, “*The devil came down to Georgia*.” I don’t know why the devil came down to Georgia, but thank God that the devil didn’t come down to St. Louis. The Bible identifies who Satan is. Jude 6 says, “*And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day*.” We know that Satan was cast out from heaven because he rebelled against God. So, in Genesis 3 Satan tempted the woman to rebel against God by deceiving her that she could be like God. (Ge 3:5) Satan is the one who desired the position of God in heaven. Jesus identified Satan as a murderer and a liar in John 8:44, “*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*” Satan is a liar and those who lie become children of the liar. According to Jesus’ word, if you hate someone and keep hostility in you, you are not children of God, but children of the murderer. Satan is a liar, deceiver, tempter, and murderer. He was a trouble-maker in heaven and now came down to the earth to make this world full of troubles. But we don’t have to worry about this. As Jude 6 says, he will be bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Amen!

 Right after the dragon was hurled down to the earth, there was a great song of victory in heaven. Look at verses 10-12. “***Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short***.” The victory of the holy angles over Satan results in the ejection of the dragon and his evil angels to earth from heaven. Then in heaven God’s salvation, God’s power, and God’s kingdom came. There is no more power or influence of the dragon in heaven. Satan is an accuser. He accused the woman in the Garden who was deceived by Satan. But the accuser was cast out to the earth. Those who had been accused by Satan triumphed over him because of the blood of the Lamb and by the powerful word of God. We, Christians, triumph over our accuser Satan because we participate in the cross of Jesus. The blood of Jesus sets us free from all accusations because Jesus paid the price of our sin by his blood. Satan cannot accuse us anymore because Jesus was condemned in our place, and he paid the price of our sins on the cross. So Paul said in Romans 8:1-2, “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death*.” Many people become depressed and suffer from mental illness because of self-condemnation caused by their past mistakes or wrongdoings. But this is Satan’s lie and his accusation against God’s people. Remember, brothers and sisters, there is no accusation in Christ because he has already done on the cross. We Christians triumphed over Satan with him. Amen!

 People also tend to find the cause of tragedy and misery from their own or other’s sin. But we Christians believe God’s sovereignty and his goodness in all situations. In John 9 when Jesus’ disciples saw a born-blind man, they felt pity on him and asked Jesus whose sin caused him to be blind. Jesus taught them that no one’s sin caused him to be blind, but he became blind in order to display the work of God in his life. (Jn 9:1-3) Paul said in Romans 8:28 that in all things and in all occasions, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. The word of God is a powerful weapon for Christians to defeat Satan’s accusation and deception. Those who memorize the word of God day and night overcome Satan’s temptation and deception and live victorious life. Amen!

 There is peace and joy in heaven after the dragon was hurled down to earth. But, woe to the inhabitants on the earth and the sea because the devil, full of fury, is seeking for his prey to devour. Look at verses 13-17. “***When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpents’ reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus***.” Now there was a war between the dragon and the woman on this earth. The dragon pursued the woman to devour her, but she fled with her two strong wings. The dragon attempted to swallow the woman by water, but the earth helped her to escape. When his plan was frustrated, the dragon began to fight against her offspring, those who keep God’s commands and testimony of Jesus. The dragon knows and we know that the time of God’s judgment on the dragon is at hand.

 In chapter 13 there appear two beasts, one out of the sea and the other out of the earth, in order to go astray this world. The first beast who came out of the sea had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast looks like the dragon in chapter 12, but it resembles a leopard with a bear’s feet and a lion’s mouth. The dragon gave his power, throne, and authority to the beast. One of the heads of the beast has a fatal wound, but the fatal wound is healed. (13:1-3) This wound of his head is known as the wound by the count blow when Jesus strikes his head through his resurrection. God already said in Genesis 3:15. “…*he will crush your head*…” Look at verse 3b-4. “***The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it***?” Who, then, is the beast? The beast is a powerful anti-Christ. The anti-Christ deceives and misleads people with his power and authority. People who are deceived by his power worship the beast. The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. (5) This first beast is a blasphemous anti-Christ. Look at verse 6. “***It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven***.” In 1966 one of the Four Fabs, the Beatles, made a public announcement that they are greater than Jesus. He continued to blasphemed God until he was shot to death by one of his fans. Powerful, popular, and strong anti-Christ misleads people to worship them. These days people say that Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be the strong and powerful anti-Christ who blasphemes God and his name. Indeed, many atheistic scientists and inventors challenge the authority of God through their high-tech and scientific achievements. I was surprised that Amazon company has plan to build its 2nd headquarter building in Arlington, Virginia as a copy of the Babel Tower. (show the picture)

 This powerful beast wages war against God’s holy people and conquer them. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain. (7-8) The targets for the beast are those whose names are not written in the book of life. As we studied in chapter 3, people’s names are written in the book of life through faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain. (3:5,5:12) The beast will attack those whose names are not in the book of life and those who worship the beast. Verse 10 teaches us what kind of attitude we, our holy people, should have at that moment. “***If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.” This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people***.” (10) Jesus said to his disciples who were afraid of coming sufferings from their enemies, “*Don’t be afraid of those who kill the body but can not kill the soul! Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Mt 10:28, Lk 12:4) To God’s holy people patient endurance and faithfulness is required. We should not be afraid of suffering or martyrdom, because suffering on this earth is short and life in heaven is eternal. Amen.

 Verses 11-18 shows us John’s vision about the second beast. The second beast came out of the earth. It is a deceiver. It looked like a lamb with two horns, but it spoke like a dragon. It is like the wolf in sheep’s clothing in Aesop’ Fables. The second beast exercised all the authority of the first beast and performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. (13) It acted like a magician. Verse 14 says that because of the signs it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. The beast also killed people who refused to worship the beasts. (15) Look at verses 16-17. “***It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666***.” The beast forced all people to receive a mark of the beast on parts of their bodies, on their right hands or on their foreheads. Without this mark of the beast no one can buy or sell. People say that this mark of beast can be Bar Code or QR Code. Indeed, without these codes we can’t buy or sell in markets or stores. Ironically when we interpret the codes, the number comes out with 666. People worry that Satan begins to control people’s life with these secret codes. Others refuse to implanting microchip in their body believing that the chip could be the mark of the beast. In fact, in 2010 Obamacare law required a RFID chip in all human bodies. These days some refuse to receive even the virus vaccine thinking that someone may manipulate our DNA and control the whole world. It is not difficult to hear all these kinds of rumors and news from medias. But when we interpret the number 666 symbolically, it indicates imperfectness and incompleteness whereas the number 777 is perfect number. The number 666 looks perfect, but not really. This number deceives people as if it is perfect. So, the number 666 is a deceitful number as the beast is the deceiver. Therefore, as John warned that we need wisdom. Here wisdom is spiritual insight to tell fake from truth. We need spiritual insight to choose what is real from what is fake. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to reject the false Messiah and follow the true Messiah Jesus.

 This world today is very deceitful and confusing world. We often don’t know who is right, which news is true, and where we have to stand on because Satan works hard to deceive people through the beasts. Let us pray that God may give us wisdom and spiritual insight to reject the evil and to receive the true. May God cast out the evilness from this country so that only truth may march on until America becomes a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Help us to fight a good fight until the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Christ. Amen!