

Heavenly Perspective in Perilous Times

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2 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV) *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.”*

Revelation 19:1–10 (NKJV) *“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!’² For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.’³ Again they said, ‘Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!’⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Alleluia!’⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.⁹ Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”*

We are living in the last days prior to Christ’s second coming. The last days began after Christ’s first coming and will end on the “last day” when He comes to judge the earth. The last days are characterized by conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. What does the Bible say about the last days? In the last days God will pour out of His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17). In the last days perilous times will come (2 Timothy 3:1). In the last days scoffers will walk according to their own lusts and refuting as myth the promise of Christ’s second coming (2 Peter 3:3-4).

When we pick up our Bible it often seems like we are reading today’s newspaper. Older adults are most aware of the moral decline in our culture. The pace of moral and spiritual decline is accelerating so that the moral slide has become a moral avalanche. It is easy to give in to despair if we fail to maintain a heavenly perspective. It is easy to lose our sense of victory when we look at the spiritual and moral ground currently being possessed by God’s enemies. The good news is that bad news will not ultimately prevail. God has a plan and His people are on the winning side of that plan!

The Book of Revelation is an important book. It is situated at the end of the New Testament. It tells us the final outcome of history. The main theme of the Book of Revelation is “The Lord God Omnipotent reigns” (Revelation 19:6). This theme is validated in history by the victory of the Lamb who is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14). The main purpose of the book is to comfort the militant Church in its struggle against the forces of evil. This comfort extends to those who are suffering the effects of evil, to those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake, to those who are grieving losses to evil, and to those who are questioning the final outcome. It is also written to assure the saints that He is with them in the struggle: their tears are seen by Him (Revelation 7:17; 21:4), their prayers are influential in world affairs (Revelation 8:3, 4), their death is precious in His sight (Revelation 14:13), their final victory is certain (Revelation 15:2), their blood will be avenged (Revelation 19:2), and they will receive His reward (Revelation 11:18).

The Book of Revelation defines the reason for their suffering: those who follow the Lamb are involved in a continuous spiritual conflict. This conflict is with the Dragon (Satan) and his demons (Ephesians 6:12). This conflict includes human beings and systems under his influence and control (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The psalmist portrayed this conflict in vivid terms: *“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,³ ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision.⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure:⁶ ‘Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.’⁷ ‘I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.¹¹ Serve the*

*LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*¹

Christ's victory was made certain through His death on the Cross followed by His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God in heaven. The dragon (Satan), frustrated by his defeat at the Cross, along with the current restraints placed upon his activity, desperately seeks to undermine his inevitable doom.

The Book of Revelation reveals that the dragon has formed an unholy counterfeit trinity to wage war against the saints (Revelation 12:7). The first member of this counterfeit trinity is the Dragon of Revelation 12 who is the serpent of old is called the Devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He is a counterfeit to God the Father.

The second member of this counterfeit trinity is the Beast of Revelation 13:1-10 that rises out of the sea, i.e. out of the nations. He is known as the Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and the Man of Lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In defiance to the kingdom of God, the Antichrist forms a one world government under allegiance to the Dragon. Those whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life will accept the mark of this beast. The Antichrist is a counterfeit to the Son, Jesus Christ.

The third member of the counterfeit trinity is the Beast of Revelation 13:11-17 that rises out of the earth. He is the False Prophet who promotes a one world religion that worships the Antichrist as god and deceives the world by lying signs and wonders. His purpose is to validate the position and power of the Antichrist. The spirit operating in the False Prophet is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.

This spiritual conflict also involves a conflict between two spiritual cities—mystery Babylon and the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Mystery Babylon is found in Revelation 17 and 18. It is the spiritual headquarters of the anti-Christian religion, secular worldview, commerce of greed, and ungodly culture. The entire world is influenced by this city. Mystery Babylon is a counterfeit of the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem where the Lord and His Christ rule and reign in righteousness.

The Book of Revelation gives the militant Church insight, comfort, and encouragement to stand strong in the Lord in the face of current spiritual conflict. It equips us with a heavenly perspective for perilous times. This perspective clarifies that 1) Christ lives and reigns forever and forever (Revelation 11:15), 2) Christ governs the earth in the interest of the Church (Revelation 5:7, 8), and 3) Christ is coming again to take His people to Himself. There they will join Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9).

How then shall we live? First, we must recognize that the current struggle is a spiritual conflict with evil and its earthly pawns. Second, we must settle in our hearts Christ's ultimate victory. Third, we must understand God's created order for marriage, family, community, government, and economics. Fourth, we must submit to God's standard for righteousness, justice, morality, and ethics.

In the midst of spiritual conflict Christians must persistently pray for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done, steadfastly hold to God's order and standard, patiently accept and endure the consequences of obeying God, and courageously trust and encourage one another in the victory of Christ. In this way we can maintain a heavenly perspective in perilous times.

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¹ Psalm 2:1-12 (NKJV)