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The Lamb Versus the Beast

By WALTER F. SPECHT

ONE OF THE prominent themes of the book of Revelation is the conflict between God and His kingdom and the great adversary with his forces of evil. John was writing to Christian communities who were facing persecution because of their loyalty to Jesus Christ. The Roman state was demanding that the reigning Roman emperor, as embodying the spirit of Rome, be worshiped as a god. It was incumbent upon every citizen to appear before the magistrate to offer a few grains of incense to the divinity of the emperor and to confess, "Caesar is Lord."

The purpose of this act was to tie the empire together and make it a unity. To refuse was an act of political disloyalty. Apart from Caligula, a megalomaniac, the first emperor to take his divinity seriously and to demand Caesar-worship was Domitian (A.D. 81-96). He loved to be addressed as "our Lord and God Domitian."

Christians were thus confronted with a dilemma: they must either worship Caesar or face death. But they could not compromise their faith by saying, "Caesar is Lord." For them there was only one Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:5, 6). What hope did they have against the might of Rome, against which no nation or people had ever been able to stand?

The book of Revelation was designed to bring them courage and hope. It gives a clarion call to Christians to be faithful to death. It assures them that ultimately the cause of Christ will triumph gloriously! It shows them that the struggles and persecutions they were enduring were part of a larger conflict. They

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were involved in a great cosmic struggle between the kingdom of God and the rival kingdom of Satan.

This cosmic struggle is vividly portrayed in the vision of the woman, the child, and the dragon (Revelation 12). John sees "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (verse 1; all texts are from the Revised Standard Version). This radiant woman is a symbol of the people of God. She represents the church considered in its broadest possible manner, including the redeemed of both Old and New Testament times.

For a proper interpretation of the vision we must recognize the unity and continuity of the people of God in both the Old and New Testament eras. The church is one in all ages. "All of God's people upon the earth are one body, from the beginning to the end of time. They have one Head that directs and governs the body." ¹

An Expectant Mother

The church in this vision is represented as an expectant mother: "She was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery" (verse 2). Thus is symbolized the state of waiting, suffering, and hoping for a coming Deliverer. The child the woman bore is, of course, the Christ, for it is He who was destined "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (verse 5; cf. Ps. 2:7-9; Rev. 19:15). It was He who "was caught up to God and to his throne." When the time for the birth of Christ drew near, God's people were in a special state of expectancy (Luke 2:25, 38; 3:15). The church was crying out with the agony of birth pangs.

A great red dragon stood before the woman, waiting to devour the child as soon as He was born (Rev. 12:3, 4). This dragon is identified

as the "ancient serpent" who tempted Adam and Eve in Paradise, and is called "the Devil and Satan" (these terms identify him as accuser and adversary; verse 9). He is "the deceiver of the whole world" whose course ever since his defection in heaven "has been one of perpetual deception and harshness." ² He has "many agents ready to present any and every kind of error to ensnare souls." ³

The color of the dragon depicts his belligerent and bloodthirsty character. He is at war with Christ, His church, and the government of heaven. Behind his persecution of Christians is the struggle between Christ with His forces of good and Satan with his forces of evil. This is vividly presented by the surrealistic picture of Michael and His angels fighting against the dragon and his angels (verses 7-11). In this struggle Christ is the victor, and the devil is thrown down to the earth along with his angels (verse 9).

The dragon tried to destroy Christ at His birth, and after our Lord was "caught up to God and to his throne," and was therefore beyond the adversary's reach, he turned his wrath against the church. But the church was nourished in the wilderness for 1260 prophetic days (verses 6, 13-16). His special wrath is to be directed against the faithful remnant "who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus" (verse 17).

As manifested on this earth the great cosmic struggle against God according to the Apocalypse is carried on by an evil triumverate consisting of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (see Rev. 16:13). Until near the climax of human history Satan does not appear in person, but carries on his work through human, political, and religious organizations and movements. At the time when Jesus was born and during the early Christian centuries he worked through the Roman Empire, which was pagan in religion. "Thus while the dragon, primarily, represents Satan, it is, in a secondary sense, a symbol of pagan Rome." ⁴

John saw the dragon standing on the sand of the sea, and there arose from the sea a beast to which "the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority" (chap. 13:2). Thus we are introduced to a symbol of the great Antichrist. Christ is represented as a lamb, who had the marks of death upon Him. The picture suggests innocence, patience, harmlessness, and self-giving.

Antichrist, however, is repre-

sented by a beast combining the ferociousness and savagery of a leopard, a bear, and a lion. The beast has seven heads and ten horns, which, whatever else they mean, suggest great cleverness and terrific power. The blasphemous name or names⁵ upon the head of the beast indicate that he claims the attributes and assumes the prerogatives of God. He has "a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words" (verses 5, 6). And he makes war on the saints, and claims the worship of the whole world (verses 7, 8).

Thus while the Lamb (*arnion*) stands for self-sacrificing love, for redemptive self-giving, and humble service, the beast (*thērion*) represents the principles of self-exaltation, self-deification, and conquest by force and cunning deception.

The two-horned beast unites with it in speaking as a dragon, and makes an image to it. Finally, by the sanctions of economic boycott and the threat of the death penalty, it forces the world to receive the mark of the beast (verses 11ff.). On the other hand, God sends the third angel's message, warning: "If any

one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb'" (chap. 14: 9-11).

Thus the issue is sharply drawn, and men will be forced to choose to obey either God or the beast. To obey God means to be threatened with death by the beast and the false prophet. To obey the beast means to incur the wrath of God and the Lamb. "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (verse 12).

To comfort and reassure God's people, John is shown the final victory and deliverance of the faithful. On Mount Zion stand the triumphant Lamb and a great company, having, instead of the mark of the beast, "his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (verse 1; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p.

752). That name symbolizes that they belong to the Lamb, and that they reflect the divine character of love. They have been loyal to Him and now they are singing a new song of victory. It is a song in which no one can join who has not had this experience. They are the first fruits of the great harvest of the redeemed. They have steadily maintained their allegiance to the Lamb even in the face of death.

In a similar victory scene (chap. 15) John beheld "those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Whether this means two songs or one song with two themes is not important. Moses triumphantly led the Hebrews through the Red Sea, and the pursuing hosts of the Egyptians were destroyed. What a victory it was!

Moses then led the people in a great song of triumph. That song not only celebrated the immediate deliverance but also pointed forward "to the destruction of all the

When You're Young

By MIRIAM WOOD

Questions and Answers

Q. *What women in public life today do you most admire and why?*

A. In no particular order here are my top three: Queen Elizabeth of England, because of her serene dignity, devotion to duty, and staunch portrayal of values in living that a large segment of society delights in denigrating; Coretta King, because of her indomitable spirit, and her refusal to be crushed by cruelty and tragedy; Ladybird Johnson, because of her courage, strength, and lifelong adherence to high principles of thought and conduct. I would add several others to this list were it not for the fact that this periodical circulates all over the world. Situations in some countries are exceedingly tense, and my character endorsement might be construed as a political ploy.

Q. *How do you feel about the current practice in many periodicals, including SDA college and university papers, of referring to women by their last names only?*

A. I feel totally negative. I suppose this practice is an outgrowth of the Women's Lib movement. I certainly won't put the latter down completely, because much of what is said represents basic good sense. I have always been a strong protagonist of equal pay for equal work—and if a woman can learn typing, so can a man—and I suppose that if a man can learn about engines, so can a woman. Having said this, however, I must protest the frantic and strident voices of the more militant advocates of W. L. I will always believe that woman occupies a very special place in the scheme of things, that she is to be accorded deference, that she is unique. In her determination to be treated fairly in working

relationships, it does not follow that she must hurl herself headlong into the dusty arena of life's grittiness, thereby giving up her "specialness." I just hope that no one refers to me by my last name. I'll resent it.

For that matter, in our religious journals I don't like to see men referred to by last names only.

Q. *Have you followed Watergate closely, and if so, what is your opinion?*

A. Yes, I have followed Watergate closely and shall continue to do so. My opinion is that this is not the place to state my opinion.

Q. *I have a strong reason to suspect that a friend of mine is a homosexual. How can I handle this? What is my responsibility?*

A. Since you didn't sign your name, I don't know whether you're male or female. You've used the term *homosexual*, which, by common consent, refers to males; the companion term for females is *lesbian*. But to answer your question, I would do a great deal of soul searching before doing anything. This is a most serious charge. If a person is wrongfully labeled a homosexual it can ruin his life. Remember that external mannerisms are not necessarily a barometer of sexual habits. However, if you feel that the evidence cannot be pushed aside, then I suggest that you turn to your pastor, a trusted teacher, or an older friend and seek advice. As a matter of fact, I would ask this chosen counselor to take over the responsibility of further action. Then I would put the matter out of my mind.

foes of righteousness and the final victory of the Israel of God.”⁶ So also the Lamb has conquered all opposing forces, even death. The theme of the song of the Lamb is the theme of “grace and redemption.”⁷ And so they sing:

“Great and wonderful are thy deeds,
O Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are thy ways,
O King of the ages!”

The final battle in the great conflict between the forces of God and the forces of His adversary is called the “battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (chap. 16:12-16). From the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet there issued demonic spirits to inspire the kings of

the earth to engage in a final rebellion against God. Demonically inspired hosts of evil men are gathered.

In another place John pictures the attack of the ten kings and the beast thus: (chap. 17:14) “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

All the might of the antichrist and those who have given their power to him cannot withstand the Lamb. John even speaks of the “wrath of the Lamb.” It is the reaction of the Lamb’s holiness to evil and the wrath of wounded love. Before that wrath all classes of men flee to the caves and the

rocks of the mountains preferring death to a confrontation with it (chap. 6:15-17).

But for the redeemed there is a final reunion with the Lamb described in beautiful language: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night within his temple;
and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more,
neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water;
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”
(chap. 7:14-17).

In Revelation 19 the final union of God with His people is set forth as a great marriage supper. “The voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals” makes the announcement “the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready” (chap. 19:6ff.). And John is bidden to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (verse 9).

The Lamb Gives Victory

What enables God’s people to overcome and to be among those who are “called and chosen and faithful?” In this victory they owe everything to the Lamb. It is He who loves them and has freed them from their sins at the price of His blood (chap. 1:5). He has formed them into a holy nation, a new theocracy (chap. 1:6; 5:9, 10; cf. Ex. 19:5, 6). As Peter put it, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9).

They conquered the beast by virtue of the blood of the Lamb, that is, by virtue of Christ’s victory on the cross. To this must be added their own loyalty to the Lamb: they stand firm even in the face of death (Rev. 12:11). So when the Lamb conquers they conquer with Him.

Their names are in the Lamb’s book of life (chap. 13:8; 21:27).

The Sale

By MARYE TRIM

DAWN HURRIED from the fourth-grade room, out of the school grounds and down the street to her house as fast as she could go. She rushed to the kitchen to tell mother her news.

“Mother, we want to have a sale for Investment. Gloria, Michael, and I want to do it and—”

“Slow down,” said mother. “Stop for a breath.”

“They want me to be captain of the whole idea, and we’ve been talking about it at school every chance we have. Michael says if you will let me do it he is certain his mother will say Yes. And Gloria says the same. Oh, please, Mother!”

“I think it’s a very good idea,” said mother, “and I’ll help you all I can.”

“Oh goody!” Dawn beamed, kissing both cheeks. Then she went to get some note paper to write down ideas.

“I want to help too,” five-year-old Lynne told Dawn. “I want an Investment sale too.”

“Well—” Dawn’s brow puckered. “This is really for Gloria, Michael, and me, but—well, maybe you can do something.”

Ting-aling-aling. That was the telephone.

Mother answered. “Hello. . . . Yes, Dawn’s been telling me. . . . Yes, I think they could. . . . Factory grounds? good idea. . . .”

When she had hung up the telephone, mother said, “Michael’s mother called, says she will help you too. Suggests you have the sale on the Health Food factory grounds, near the office. Michael’s father said he could give you permission.”

Dawn clapped her hands. So did Lynne. “We are going to have a sale for Investment. Hurrah! Hurrah!”

During the following weeks Dawn and her friends talked, planned, and prepared for the sale. They decided to let Michael’s younger brother help and also the son of the factory manager, who wanted to be in the plan too, so that made six of them.

One morning, during the holidays, they set up their table and a large sign that Michael had printed. It said SALE, in big red letters at the top. Underneath, in black, it said savories, cakes, sweets, vegetables, magazines, et cetera.

“What does *et cetera* mean?” Lynne whispered to Dawn.

“That means the other things we have to sell—toys, and jam, and odds and ends.”

“Oh,” said Lynne, feeling wise. She decided to buy something that was listed and not just in the *et cetera* part. She bought three fat pieces of coconut ice.

Lots of people came to buy. Michael, Gloria, and Dawn did most of the serving. Lynne and the other young boys wrapped up the parcels or smiled at everyone who passed, so they would want to stop and buy from the Investment sale too.

Quickly everything sold. When Dawn and her friends added up the money they had more than twelve dollars for Investment.

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” they said again as they put away the sign for another time, and threw the cooky crumbs to the birds.

Only those whose names are inscribed there will enter the New Jerusalem. That all-important book, which designates who shall live and enter the city, is the sole property of the Lamb. While judgment is based upon what has been done as recorded in the books (chap. 20:12), it is "another book . . . the book of life" that determines whether or not a man will have immortal life. No authority beyond the Lamb can add or subtract a name from that register against His will. The Lamb is sovereign in His determination of human destiny.

The final anthem in which all creation joins is addressed "to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb" (chap. 5:13). The great multitude before the throne cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (chap. 7:10). But the Lamb is not merely *by* the throne, He *shares* the throne of God. This is most clearly expressed in the vision of the New Jerusalem. The throne in it is designated as "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (chap. 22:1, 3).

Whereas in chapter 7:15, the redeemed clothed in white garments are said to be "before the throne of God" and "the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd," in chapter 22 the river of the water of life flows "from the throne of God and of the Lamb," and it explicitly states of the city that "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Thus the authority of the Lamb is ultimate, for He shares the throne of God.

Finally, John sees a new heaven and a new earth. It will be a new world of peace and consolation, when "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (chap. 21:4). All is secure. Nothing unclean shall enter the city, and the leaves of the tree of life will bring healing to the nations (chap. 22:2).

That city "has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (chap. 21:23). "Its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (verse 22). □

Concluded next week

REFERENCES

- ¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 283.
- ² ———, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 280, 281.
- ³ ———, *The Great Controversy*, p. 520.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 438.
- ⁵ Greek manuscripts are divided between the singular and plural.
- ⁶ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 289.
- ⁷ ———, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 433.

I Visited Three All-Adventist Islands

By ROBERT H. PIERSON

DECEMBER 6, 1973, is a day I shall not soon forget. In company with D. S. Johnson and his wife, O. D. F. McCutcheon, R. E. Cobbin, and our pilot Ray Newman, I visited Mussau Island in the St. Matthias group.

On three islands in this area of the South Pacific all the inhabitants are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Tench, a tiny isolated green atoll that we flew over, has 60 people living on it; Emirau has approximately 800; and Mussau approximately 2,000.

When we touched down on the newly constructed coral airstrip on South Mussau Island, we were met by a large crowd of happy Christians and their leaders gathered to welcome us. Everything had been planned and organized with great care and foresight. Choirs were on hand to sing. The pastor, church elders, welfare leader, lay activities leaders, all were well marked with prominent bandoleers. Each had been assigned his specific place to stand. All moved with impressive precision, and it was a great welcome. The Mussau "King's Heralds" quartet was superb.

It is five miles across the sea to the main island where the headquarters for this area are situated. The journey was made in long dugout canoes with 20 oarsmen and women rowing and singing in precise rhythm. The honored visitors occupied two central canoes, well decorated with flags and streamers. Three escort canoes rowed on each side as guards of honor.

More than 2,000 smiling, waving Seventh-day Adventists were on the jetty or lined up along the road to the mission when we arrived. Here again we were welcomed with some of the most beautiful music this side of heaven. *These people can sing!* In fact, the Mussau Seventh-day Adventists always take the top honors in music festivals held in these islands. It is easy to understand how this would be, for during our visit we heard many choir and quartet numbers.

It was hard to believe that the grandparents of many of these happy, singing Adventist youth and oldsters were once heathen—almost given up as irredeemable by the government before the three angels' messages reached them. Today the men and women of Mussau and Emirau are some of the most progressive, effective missionaries we have in this area, and they leave their homes to preach and teach throughout these islands and highlands.

Despite a steady downpour of rain, another welcome program was awaiting us at the school. Here hundreds of young and old in choirs, charmed us with their singing. There were speeches and skits reminiscent of the days before the missionaries came. Even a miniature "ship" came "sailing" across the campus, with narration on a tape recorder, including all the background noises. Here we received beautiful, fragrant South Sea garlands and straw hats.

During the 24 hours spent on Mussau we heard choirs made up of members from the 12 churches on the islands. We visited personally with the people, shook many hundreds of hands, and each of us had opportunity to bring messages of encouragement and challenge.

You may wonder where people like this on an all-Adventist island would do any missionary work. I learned the answer from Brother Lundstrom, the district leader. He described the group of eight or ten missionaries who are sent—largely at their own expense—to the unentered areas of New Ireland Island several hours away by boat. Here they spend up to two months creating interests, visiting, preaching, and otherwise carrying on a missionary program.

In a shower of rain, that in no wise dampened any of our spirits, we left the main island of Mussau by the mission launch to return to the airstrip where our plane was waiting to fly us back to Rabaul on New Britain.

Mussau is not just a place—it is an experience! And it is an exhilarating experience too. In fact, in the language of the people, "Me pella pleeg too much!" No doubt there will be many more "Mussaus" before Jesus returns!

Robert H. Pierson is president of the General Conference.