

The End

The Bad Guys (Part One)

Introduction

With comic book heroes, there's a saying that a hero is only as good as the villains they face. While superheroes are popular, it is often their "rogues gallery", the villains that provide the challenge that make them interesting and compelling.

Throughout the Revelation, we are presented with "bad guys" that rise up to challenge the Christians of that time. From physical people, to ideologies, to seemingly mythical beasts, the bad guys are plentiful and occupy much of the central part of the Revelation. Today, we'll talk about the first few bad guys that appear throughout the letter. . .

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Bad Guy

False Teachings

Throughout the letters to the churches, John stresses the various false teachings that are ultimately causing people to be led astray. These teachings are ultimately rooted in the spiritual forces of evil (more on this below):

"Yet this you have: you hate the works of **the Nicolaitans**, which I also hate." (Revelation 2:6)

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of **those who say** that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." (Revelation 2:9; compare with 3:9)

"But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold **the teaching of Balaam**, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold **the teaching of the Nicolaitans**." (Revelation 2:14-15)

"But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who **calls herself a prophetess and is teaching** and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. . . But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this **teaching**, who have not learned what some call the **deep things of Satan**, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden." (Revelation 2:20-24)

"Remember, then, what you **received and heard**. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you." (Revelation 3:3)

The "devil" / "Satan"

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of **Satan**. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the **devil** is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:9-10)

"I know where you dwell, where **Satan's** throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where **Satan** dwells." (Revelation 2:13)

“But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of **Satan**, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.” (Revelation 2:24)

“Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.” (Revelation 3:9)

There is more to say about the devil/Satan, but we'll save that for a more specific chapter study below.

“Abaddon” / “Apollyon” (Revelation 9)

This “star fallen from heaven” (9:1) is given “the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit” (9:2) is listed by two names, one Hebrew (Abaddon) and one Greek (Apollyon) and is later called the “angel of the abyss” (9:11).

Abaddon – means destruction. This Hebrew word shows up five different times in the Old Testament (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11). Here are the references listed below:

“Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering.” (Job 26:2)

“Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’” (Job 28:22)

“for that [speaking of sexual immorality] would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon, and it would burn to the root all my increase.” (Job 31:12)

“Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?” (Psalm 88:11)

“Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!” (Proverbs 15:11)

Q: What do you notice about these OT references?

Apollyon – means destroyer

Q: Why give both Hebrew and Greek names here?

The language of “star fallen from heaven” is not unique to Revelation, nor is it unique to the Bible.

In many religious beliefs, the stars/planets were given names or said themselves to be ‘gods’ that watched over the earth.

Biblically speaking, there are a few references to stars as spiritual beings in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 17:3 forbids the worship of “other gods...or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven...”

Amos 5:26 refers to “Kiyyun your star-god”

2 Kings 17:16 talks about Israel worshipping “all the host of heaven and served Baal.” (Acts 7:43 seems to quote this)

Jeremiah 8:1-2 speaks of the “kings of Judah” as having “loved and served” and “sought and worshiped” “the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven”

Read Isaiah 14:11-16. Who are we talking about here? Babylon! (Isaiah 14:4)

There is also, what appears to be a reference to Satan being cast down in Ezekiel 28:12-19.

In the rest of Revelation we get references to fallen stars in Revelation 6:13; 8:10; 12:4

Taking these various references into consideration, it becomes clear that John is relaying a destructive force of nature, a being, that will pridefully bring destruction upon the earth.

“Devil” / “Dragon” / “Satan” / “Serpent” / “Accuser” / “Deceiver” (Revelation 12)

A number of terms are used here to discuss Satan. You’ll recognize some of the statements here from our previous section:

He is noted as sweeping down a third of the stars of heaven and casting them down to earth (12:4).

This dragon and his angels are engaged in heavenly warfare against Michael and his angels (12:7; see Daniel 10:13, 20-21).

The idea of being “thrown down” returns again here (12:9). NOTE: that is by “the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of Christ” (see Luke 10:18)

The terminology of “serpent” is one that takes us back to Genesis 3, in fact, John refers to him as “that ancient serpent” as well as “deceiver of the whole world”.

Aside from the obvious deception that takes place in Genesis 3, John likes to refer to Satan/the Devil as being deceitful (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8)

John also likes the phrase “from the beginning” in association with Satan (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8)

Summary

We’re only halfway through the list of “bad guys” in Revelation, and its clear to see that the church has and will face trials. The good news? We know who wins. Jesus is the victory over these forces, and we too are able to stand with Him as conquerors (see last class) if we stay true to Him and His testimony.