

Politics & Religion

Revelation 13

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Two weeks ago we preached on the Ancient Serpent, the Dragon. At the end of chapter 12 the Dragon is frustrated with his inability to get to the woman and her offspring, the Church.

Revelation 12:17: And he stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads.

And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed the beast with wonder. Men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months; it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

In chapter 17 an angel shows up and tells John, "The waters you saw are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." He also tells John that the ten horns are ten kings that have not yet received royal power. The seven heads are seven mountains or seven hills upon which the Whore of Babylon sits. You'll remember that Rome is the "city on seven hills."

The angel also tells John the seven heads are seven kings. Five of these kings have already fallen, one is, and one is yet to come. That means the Beast is alive and kicking at the time of The Revelation.

The angel also reveals that the Beast that was and is not is actually an eighth head, yet the whole Beast was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit. It seems that this Beast just won't die and stay dead. It can't be killed by normal means.

At the time of The Revelation the emperor Nero, who was the fifth emperor of Rome, had recently died through a self-inflicted head wound. The myth that circulated in the Empire was that he would be back.

Whatever the case, when Nero did die in 68 A.D., there was mass confusion, civil unrest, and three suitors for the throne. It appeared that the Empire was doomed . . . until it almost miraculously revived in 69 A.D. through Emperor Vespasian. And the peoples of the world were in awe at its resilience. In wonder they would say, "Who can fight against it?"

People argue about the exact identity of the heads and the horns. But it's obvious, if you study Scripture, that the Beast *at least* refers to Babylon, Persia, and Greece . . . the lion, the bear, and the leopard . . . who rise out of the sea in Daniel 7. There is also a fourth beast in Daniel 7 that has ten horns, and it appears to be Rome.

At the end of the chapter these four beasts are defeated by one like the "Son of Man" coming on the clouds, the "Ancient of Days." Yet the saints will suffer for "time, times, and half a time"—forty-two months. The four beasts also take the form of a large statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. Babylon is the head, and it seems that Persia is the chest, Greece is the loins, and Rome is the legs and ten toes.

In the dream an incredible thing happens: A rock "not hewn with human hands" crashes into the toes of the statue! The statue crumbles, and the rock grows and grows into a great mountain until it fills the entire world! It's an *eternal kingdom*.

We know who that rock is — the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus.

It would then seem that the Beast is at least the energy or spirit behind governments that war upon the people of God and exalt themselves above God and His Christ in blasphemy. They were governments like Babylon and Medo-Persia and Greece, in the past persecuting Israel; and at the time of The Revelation, Rome persecuting the Church. And at the time of The Revelation there were ten kings and a head still to come.

Behind them all is the seven-headed Dragon.

In the words of Paul, "We battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

In the words of John,
"We battle against the beast from the sea."

In 1950 the great Dutch theologian Hendrik Berkhof wrote a seminal book entitled Christ and the Powers. In it he argued that Paul saw the principalities and powers as "structures of earthly, human existence," "social facts," "ideologies," and "nations." These principalities and powers were created *by* God, but like humanity, they had fallen.

What was designed to be good became corrupt or inhabited by evil, so Paul writes that "governing authorities are instituted by God to bear the sword for the public good" (Romans 13). However, it's clear that they are fallen . . . and may be inhabited with evil.

Whatever you think about all of that, it's clear that evil is organized. It works through governments and institutions and peoples, what John calls "the world," as opposed to "the earth," which swallows the lies of the Dragon.

I John 5:19: “We are of God, but the whole world is in the power of the evil one.” The *whole world*. Yet Revelation 1:5 says, “Jesus is the ruler of the kings on earth.”

Everything the Beast does is allowed or granted to him. The Beast is allowed to blaspheme the name of God and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven, that is, *us*—the Church.

Rome was the Beast that blasphemed those seven churches in Asia Minor. And Rome was the Beast that crucified Jesus. A Roman soldier thrust a spear in His side, and the *whole world* was amazed at the power of Rome. *I’ve* been amazed at the power of Rome! Haven’t you looked back in history and thought, “How on earth did they rule such a vast empire?” The Beast . . . the Dragon, according to John.

Now Babylon,
 Medo-Persia,
 Greece,
 Rome . . . these empires are long gone.

So where’s the seven-headed Beast *today*? — Because we still battle against the world rulers of this present darkness.

John wrote, “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.” Well, where *is* he now?

I just read an amazing little book entitled Marx and Satan in which Richard Wurmbrand makes some fascinating connections between Satanism and people like Joseph Stalin, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx. Historians will argue about Marx’s involvement with Satanism, but it’s hard to argue with the hundreds of millions of dead bodies strewn across the twentieth century.

Communism’s greatest fury *is* against the Church. It’s pretty clear Marx was *not* an atheist. He was a God-hater.

And Hitler was a God-hater, a mass murderer of the Jews, and a violent persecutor of the Church—the Israel of God. It’s well known that Hitler was very involved in the occult . . . the worship of Odin, the Thule society, Satanic rituals . . .

In 1973 historian Trevor Ravenscroft wrote a book entitled The Spear of Destiny. The spear is supposedly the lance which the Roman soldier stuck in Christ’s side as He hung dead on the cross. There are all sorts of legends surrounding this spear, involving rulers like Alaric (who sacked Rome), Charlemagne, and Napoleon. The legend was that whoever possessed the spear would be able to conquer the world.

On March 14, 1938, Hitler annexed Austria and obtained all the relics in the Hoffburg Museum. He ordered that the spear be brought to Germany. In 1944 he placed it in an underground vault. On April 30, 1945, at 2:10 p.m. American forces took possession of that vault and the spear. Eighty minutes later Hitler killed himself in a bunker in Berlin. (Suicide like Nero.)

Hitler spoke of the day he first saw the spear in a museum in Austria:

I stood there quietly gazing upon it for several minutes quite oblivious to the scene around me. It seemed to carry some hidden inner meaning which evaded me, a meaning which I felt I inwardly knew yet could not bring to consciousness...I felt as though I myself had held it before in some earlier century of history. That I myself had once claimed it as my talisman of power and held the destiny of the world in my hands...

That's a freaky, weird story. But maybe Hitler *was* like a horn on that horrific Beast. Historians will argue about Hitler's involvement with Satanism, but it's hard to argue with six million systematically mutilated and tortured corpses!

Nazism is mostly dead. And Communism is greatly weakened. But the Dragon and the Beast are still working. Where? — Some may say the radical homosexual agenda in Washington. And it makes you pause to think that something like at least 30 million babies (that's what we call them if we *want* them; "fetuses" if we *don't* want them) have been murdered or aborted in our nation since Roe vs. Wade. But maybe that's too subtle . . .

In Indonesia, as we speak, Islamic Fundamentalists are waging a "jihad"—slaughter—holy war—against Christians on the islands of Sulawesi and Maluku. I read in the paper this morning about the Christians in Afghanistan who are facing execution. In Sudan Arabs are crucifying Christian fathers and raping and force circumcising Christian mothers, taking their children and selling them into slavery. Thousands upon thousands . . . and it's barely even reported in the western press.

What are we going to do about it?

This past week a friend came into my office and wanted to talk to me about Sudan, just to make sure I knew about some of the things going on there. Then we asked the question, "What can we do about it?"

We talked about pressure on the government. That would be good, because the U.S. military could utterly obliterate Sudan. But we don't. (Maybe there is not enough oil there, like in Kuwait and Iraq.)

We talked about the confusing politics and the role of government and carrying the sword. We wondered, "How can *we* conquer? What can *we* do?" And I thought of an answer . . . I think it's the right answer . . . but I was afraid to say it.

How *do* we conquer the Beast?

Revelation 13:7: *[The beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.*

If any one has an ear, let him hear: If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

“If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes.” That’s destiny, and it’s Jeremiah 15:2. “If anyone slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.” That’s Jesus in Matthew 26:52 when He said to Peter on the night He was taken off to be crucified, “Put away your sword. For he who lives by the sword will die by the sword.”

Then there’s a call for “endurance and faith.” It’s like a warning: “Beware of what this Beast can do to you.” “Beware when fighting the dragon lest you become the dragon,” writes Nietzsche, of all people.

Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

This second Beast comes from the earth or land, a word that is often used to refer to Israel. In Genesis 1:1 God forms the land from the chaotic sea. You see, the Dragon is emulating the One on the throne. The first Beast fakes death and resurrection; the Dragon and the two Beasts are like a mock Trinity. “Antichrist” doesn’t simply mean “opposite Christ” but “imitation Christ”— “mock Christ.”

Now this land Beast looks like a sacrificial lamb. But it talks like a Dragon.

It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

(We don’t know if “amazing signs” is trickery or demonic powers.)

Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six.

A “human number” would imply that the other numbers in Revelation are not merely human . . . like 42 and 7 and 3 1/2. But *this* number we are invited to calculate. It was common in that day to do this. There’s a wall in Pompeii where you can see graffiti on the wall: “I love her whose number is 545.”

In that day every letter in the alphabet was assigned a numeric value and then added together to get the number of the name. “666” is the number, but some ancient manuscripts record “616.” Emperor Nero’s name is spelled two ways. In Hebrew one way adds up to 666; the other way adds up to 616.

Emperor Nero took Christians and rolled them in pitch, tied them to poles, and set them on fire as human torches in the coliseum at night so he could drink and watch as other Christians, sown in animal skins, were torn apart by wild dogs.

After Nero killed himself with a fatal wound to the head, the Empire revived, and Domitian continued the persecutions, but only worse. Persecutions were inflicted on those who wouldn’t bow down in worship before statues or images of Caesar.

The Jews were officially exempt (they were an official religion), but they would often betray Christians and hand them over to the Roman Concilia, who enforced the cult of the Emperor. It was especially strong in Asia Minor. Those who wouldn’t worship the Emperor were often excluded from buying and selling, and they often faced death.

However, their names were written in a book, and they were sealed and marked by God for resurrection, just as the others who bowed down were marked with the Beast for destruction.

Now, if you are one of those who likes the Hollywood version of the story, and you’re worried about my interpretation, let me say, I don’t know the future. So I don’t *know* what will happen in the future. Prophecies can have many fulfillments. So if one day someone comes up to you and asks, “Hey, dude, can I tattoo the number 666 on your hand or forehead?” . . . *walk away*. Just say *no!*

I really hope it’s that obvious. But I’m afraid the Dragon is probably more subtle than that. I believe the first Beast is evil politics throughout history, and the second Beast is evil religion. Don’t compromise; don’t receive their mark. The 666 really is a human number. It is *six*, the number of fallen, incomplete humanity, three times over.

So how do we know this Beast? — It’s marked with fallen humanity. It looks like religion, it looks like a lamb . . . but listen very closely. All the talk is psychology, sociology, and business. It’s all human striving and power and pride, and that’s blasphemy and evil.

Human politics and human religion together are *lethal*.

In Germany they worshiped Hitler. And Communism is more than politics; it’s a religion. Did you know that historically one of the most viable candidates for Beast and Antichrist has been the visible Church and the Pope?

In the Middle Ages the Pope was politics and religion, and all his talk was power. He was seated in Rome on the Seven Hills, and many were entirely immoral and corrupt. They enforced religion with power. In the Inquisition thousands were systematically tortured and burned at the

stake. They ordered the crusades against the Muslims . . . Islam in Palestine . . . even Sudan. “Beware when fighting the dragon lest you become the dragon.”

Well, what *about* Islam? How *do* we conquer?

In verse 7 the Beast is allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them. It reminds me of something John recorded, that our Lord Jesus, absolutely drenched in blood and crowned with thorns, stood before the Roman governor Pilate. He said, “You would have no power over me unless it had been granted you from above.” He had already said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight.”

This so unnerved Pilate that he sought to release Jesus. He said to the mob, “Behold, your king.”

And the chief priests who presided
Over the sacrificial lambs each day in the temple,
The chief priests of the land of Israel,
The chief priests who had so ardently fought
Against the Roman Beast,
Cried out before the mob,
“We have no king but Caesar!”

Caesar — The Beast.

“Beware when fighting the dragon lest you become the dragon.”

And so it was that the religious leaders of Israel delivered Jesus to the Roman Beast, just as the synagogues in Asia delivered Christians to the Roman Concilia. Satan, who had so earnestly desired this, delighted as the Beast strung Christ up on that cross, and it was a Roman soldier who thrust a spear in His side.

Next verse: *Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Jesus conquered by being conquered;
He conquered with sacrificial love.
We conquer with “the blood of the lamb
And the word of our testimony,
Loving not our lives even unto death.”

So my friend and I sat together there in my office for a while. Having just read Revelation 13 and wondering what we can do about Sudan and how we can conquer, I finally said something like this:

Well, I guess maybe we could pray that God (and it would need to be *God* calling people to this) would raise up 2,000 or 3,000 white, upper middle class, American folks who would leave here and go to Sudan . . . sneak across the border . . . that is, leave Laodicea and just go *sit* with their brothers and sisters in Smyrna . . . leave America and just go *sit* with their brothers and sisters in

Sudan. And if the Arabs came down on them in a fury and crucified 2,000 or 3,000 white, upper middle class Americans in the desert, things would *change!* I imagine heads would roll at the UN.

The U.S. military would be put on “Red Alert.” I bet the slave trade would stop.

But far, far more powerful than that, the gospel would be proclaimed. And Satanic lies placed in the hearts of Muslims dating back to the crusades when the Church became the Beast . . . those lies might be *broken*. The rider on the white horse would ride out, and we would conquer not just governments but human hearts.

Well, that’s just a crazy thought . . . But that *is* how our Lord “disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Christ.”

I’ve come to believe that John 12:31 is the key to understanding The Revelation: “*Now* is the judgment of this world, *now* shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I when I am lifted up from the land will draw all men to myself,” and He spoke of His crucifixion.

The word “draw” is probably best translated “romance.” “I will *romance* all men to myself.” You romance a lover because that’s the only way you can get their heart to surrender in freedom, the freedom of love.

There is no greater power.

The Beast and the Dragon thought they held Christ to that cross with the power of iron nails, but they did not! Iron nails, Beast, and Dragon were only the means purposed before the foundation of the world. Nails, Beast, and Dragon *cannot* pin the Son of God to wood. They are not *powerful* enough. Only His own relentless love could ever do a thing like that.

Believe me, one day very soon, when this world of illusions and lies is finally burned away, we will see beyond a shadow of a doubt that nothing is more real or powerful than love.

“For God *is* love,” said John.

Even now every time you pick up a cross in love, the enemy is exposed and his lies are disarmed. Human striving, the quest for power, the survival of the fittest, the race struggle of Nazism, the class struggle of Communism, and the self-righteous legalism of Islam is exposed as *not* the deepest truth. It’s *not* all that is. It infuriates the Dragon, and it overcomes the world. It’s the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And there’s so much more to preach . . . but I want to leave you with a few simple things and this practical point: We conquer not with power of human politics and religion, we conquer with the power of God’s romance — the cross, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

So beware, my religious friends, when fighting the Dragon, lest you become the Dragon. Instead of marching against the radical homosexual agenda in Washington, we support HIV CareLink

and Mike Tucker in our church. We love homo-sexuals with AIDS, and if in the process we contract the disease and die, we conquer.

I definitely vote against abortion, for government is charged with protecting innocent lives. Government *can* protect biology, but it can never conquer a heart. So vote. But I hope we really get behind crisis pregnancy centers, hold babies in our arms, and minister the gospel of love to mothers who have been through the tragedy of abortion.

I'm not saying politics and organized religion have no *place*, I'm just saying they have no *power* . . . no *real power* . . . no power to conquer the world.

But on Hitler's birthday, when Rachel Scott was shot in the head by Eric Harris, the Beast conquered Rachel, but Rachel Scott conquered the world.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer returned to Germany to die with his brothers there, conquered by the Beast Bonhoeffer conquered the world.

Remember the report I read you last spring from Maluku, Indonesia? As Christians were being killed there folks kept seeing a rider on a white horse. We wonder what he's doing. He's conquering the world!

Sudan, Indonesia, Columbine — conquered by the Beast, they conquer the world. Kiss the hands of an AIDS patient in the name of Jesus, hold an unwanted baby in the name of Jesus, mow your grumpy neighbor's lawn in sacrificial love in the name of Jesus, and you conquer the world. "This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5:3).

And get this: It was precisely when the Dragon inspired the Beast from the land and the Beast from the sea, when the high priest in the land delivered Jesus to the Roman governor from over the sea, precisely when God allowed the two Beasts to conquer Christ by nailing Him to the cross (and Christ humbled Himself even unto death) . . . it was precisely then that our Lord conquered the world.

And it was also then that a Roman soldier stood in front of the cross and looked at the "glory of God shining in the face of Christ." I would like to think that *he* was the one holding that spear of destiny and that he was the *first* to say, "Surely this was the Son of God."

At that moment that incredible rock "not hewn with hands" *crashed* into the Roman Empire, and it began to fall! And the kingdoms of this world began to crumble. And that rock in Nebuchadnezzar's dream began to grow into a great mountain. It's growing still, right here and right now. It is an *eternal kingdom*, and it cannot be stopped!

It is tragic that Hitler did not know it *was* a spear of destiny. But all destiny is God's destiny. "And this was the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ and through him to reconcile all things to himself."

So we conquer by *being* conquered with and in love. And holding the lance, that Roman soldier was conquered by Jesus as Jesus conquered the world. Jesus gives the world to us (and that soldier) brand new.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Joseph Tson was a pastor in Communist Romania. They brought him in to the Secret Police and told him to stop preaching or they would kill him. He said, "If you kill me my sermons will be all over the country, and they know who I am."

Then he looked the Secret Police captain in the eye and said, "You know, sir, your supreme weapon is killing; *my* supreme weapon is dying." And they didn't know what to do with him, so they let him go! He was free, not only politically, but free in every possible way.

So, in the name of Jesus, children of God, *be free*. For He has overcome the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading

In the first year of Belshaz'zar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. . . ."

-Daniel 7:1-10

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

-Revelation 13:1-2

I stood there quietly gazing upon it for several minutes quite oblivious to the scene around me. It seemed to carry some hidden inner meaning which evaded me, a meaning which I felt I inwardly knew yet could not bring to consciousness...I felt as though I myself had held it before in some earlier century of history. That I myself had once claimed it as my talisman of power and held the destiny of the world in my hands..."

-Adolph Hitler, supposedly standing before the
"spear of destiny," a lance said to have pierced Christ's side

The hellish vapors rise and fill the brain,
Till I go mad and my heart is utterly changed.
See this sword?
The prince of darkness
Sold it to me.
For me he beats the time and gives the signs.
Ever more boldly I play the dance of death.

-Karl Marx, Spielmann (The Player) as quoted in
Marx and Satan by Richard Wurmbrand

By the cross . . . Christ abolished the slavery which, as a result of sin, lay over our existence as a menace and an accusation. On the cross He "disarmed" the Powers, "made a public example of them and thereby triumphed over them." . . . He made a public example of them. It is precisely in the crucifixion that the true nature of the Powers has come to light. Previously they were accepted as the most basic and ultimate realities, as the gods of the world. Never had it been perceived, nor could it have been perceived, that this belief was founded on deception. . . . The Pharisees, personifying piety, crucified Him in the name of piety. Pilate, representing Roman justice and law, shows what these are worth when called upon to do justice to the Truth Himself. Obviously, "none of the rulers of this age," who let themselves be worshipped as divinities, understood God's wisdom, "for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Now they are unmasked as false gods by their encounter with Very God; they are made a public spectacle. Thus Christ has "triumphed over them." The unmasking is actually already their defeat.

-Hendrik Berkhof

Beware when fighting the dragon lest you become the dragon.

-Friedrich Nietzsche

His objective is to persuade people not to believe in him or, failing that, to focus attention on his agenda, diverting our attention from God's agenda and his more important objectives. Worst of all, Satan prefers us to marry God's agenda with his tactics. It is Satan's ultimate victory. . . . Two decades after conservative Christians charged into the political arena, bringing new voters and millions of dollars with them in hopes of transforming the culture through political power, it must now be acknowledged that we have failed. . . . The aphrodisiac of political power descended on Lynchburg, Virginia, with the impact of an asteroid. Politics was a better means to noble ends than the hard and often invisible efforts mandated by Scripture. Who wanted to ride into the capital on the back of an ass when one could go first class in a private jet and be picked up and driven around in a chauffeured limousine?

-Cal Thomas, Blinded by Night

But as long as this world lasts and Christ's Church is in it, it is to be a militant Church. Although it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, woe to the Christian Church when it is triumphant in this world, for then it is not the Church that has triumphed but the world. . . . Did he not come into the world in order to suffer; is not *that* what he called being triumphant?

-Soren Kierkegaard

Collaboration with power, whether Communist or not, is always ruinous for the church. If the church exists, if it is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it must always stand erect as a counter-power to political power.

-Jacques Ellul

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. . . ."

-Matthew 26:52

As historian Garry Wills says, the first nation to separate Christianity from government produced perhaps the most religious nation on earth.

-Philip Yancey

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

-John 12:32

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness--his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth--that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him shall be broken." And again another scripture says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced."

-John 19:32-37

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadadrim'mon in the plain of Megid'do. The land shall mourn, each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shim'e-ites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves. On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. . . ."

-Zechariah 12:10-13:1

And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

-Mark 15:39