

*Allegiance to God! (Slide 1)*  
*Divided Loyalty?*

The last few lessons we have been looking at the incredible events just before and immediately after our Lord Jesus' death.

I am convinced that though these events had enormous significance to the Jews, they have equal significance to us and the world today.

(Slide 2) Complete and utter *Darkness* beginning at the 6th hour was unusual as far as the time of day it occurred and its intensity.

I am convinced that the *darkness* represented God's disdain for the people who were responsible for His Son's death and acted as a warning that this terrible sin could not be hidden and that it would certainly be eternally dealt with if those responsible did not repent. Many did!

(Slide 3) The *rocks split open* representing God's grief and power. These rocks were not pebbles but were likely large rocks. No ordinary event. It was an incredible sign of the power from God's reaction to His Son's death. For the Christian, the *split rocks* represent a *cleft* in the rock for protection.

(Slide 4) *Rock of Ages.....Cleft for Me.....Let me hide myself in thee.*

The *earth shook*, indicating God's distressed reaction to this terrible event He witnessed from Heaven. His power, majestic and impending judgment to come was felt by all the witnesses and serves as a reminder that God is in control.

(Slide 5) *The Veil of the Temple was Torn from Top to Bottom.* Again an incredible event based on its size and what it represented to the truly religious few as well as the Priestly order garnered from the Old Law.

For the jews, the *Torn Veil* represented the end of the Old Covenant and immediately ushered in the New Covenant established by the Blood of Christ, the only Begotten of God.

*Hebrews 6:17-19 (Slide 6)*

*<sup>17</sup> So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible (Slide 7) for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain*

God watches from Heaven as His plan of Salvation, planned before the world began, comes to completion.

Blood had been shed and given for the remission of sin once and for all. Jesus became the one and only *High Priest*.

*The way, the truth and the life.*

However, many wish to hold on to the Old and yet serve God just like they have always done! *Much like a Christian trying to hold on to the desires of the flesh yet trying to be justified, spiritually.*

They believed they could observe the old with its traditions and sacrifices. In essence a divided loyalty!

Their action and reaction should serve as a warning to us this day. We are either for or against. There is no inbetween!

*Matthew 12:30 (Slide 8)*

*Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*

To me, this verse eliminates the possibility of having divided loyalty. It is impossible to have both. So it's an either or!

*God will not accept the lukewarm Christian!*

With these thoughts in mind, I want to spend a couple lessons dealing with *Allegiance!* Taking perhaps a different approach.

*Have you ever heard of this word?*

*Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia (Slide 9)*

*This word is 3 letters greater in size than our entire alphabet.*

*It is an actual phobia-The fear of the number 666. The mark of the beast.*

You are probably asking what this has to do with *Allegiance?* I hope I can explain.

(Slide 10) The number 666 has conjured up an almost superstitious notion, even today among Christian, much like the number thirteen for some.

80 to 90 percent of buildings with 13 or more stories have a physical thirteenth floor but label it in a way to exclude the number 13.

Many people have an aversion to odd numbers such that they would rather have an even number as their final outcome. Almost rounding up. If there is a number 13 seat on a passenger jet no one would want to sit there.

*All of this is based on feelings associated with that number which is generally something bad is going to happen.*

(Slide 11) *Like when a black cat crosses your path. That type of thinking is devoid of sobriety.*

If we will only view most of *Revelation* from the perspective of symbolism, that is, written in symbolic language, we will be more inclined to come to an understanding of what is meant and relieve any fears we may have.

If not, we can be carried away by superstition or even by misunderstanding.

*1 Peter 5:8a* (Slide 12)

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Symbolic language isn't something we are unfamiliar with or something we can't understand. In fact, we use symbolic language in our everyday lives simply through association of what we observe in character.

Some examples are the wonderful creatures God has filled the earth.

(Slide 13) When we think of a *lion* we readily have many adjectives that come to mind to describe the character of that magnificent animal.

I really enjoy watching many of the posts of African safaris.

When I see those larger than life *Kitty Cats* I think of the ultimate in an apex predator. Power, fierceness, hunter, predator, majestic, fear and awe. No wonder the lion is called the *King of the Jungle*.....

(Slide 14) It's interesting though that there are other creatures that are equally feared by people. One is the *Honey Badger*. Known to be fierce, aggressive and unafraid of even larger animals.

(Slide 15) *Elephants* to me describe a gentle giant, feeling, caring, massive, magnificence.....again powerful.....

(Slide 16) What comes to mind when you see an *Eagle*.....

(Slide 17) When I see my *dog* I think of companionship, fierce loyalty, protection.....

Anyone of these animals could be used symbolically to describe someone we know.

*Peter, as we just read moments ago, used symbolic language to describe Satan. Going about like a roaring lion!*

*We read where Samson was surprised by a lion because it was stalking him. In Peter's writing we understand that we should hear him coming if we live sobermindedly.*

Bear in mind that this *Revelation* given to *John* was addressed to the *7 churches of Asia*. They were of all people familiar with this type of *symbolic* writing which was apocalyptic in nature.

*Apocalyptic: written to reveal truth in Religion and create soberness in following the will of God.*

In addition, the *Revelation* wasn't written to cause fear but was written to create sobriety and consciousness towards one's allegiance to God.

It's important to note that one cannot determine what the *Revelation* means from a literal lens. Rather, we must interpret the symbolism and determine the reality.

Last week we studied the *torn veil* and understood from this literal supernatural occurrence, that is, something tangible seen by witnesses with their own eyes, that it also has symbolic meaning.

The *Old* way of worship was immediately done away with and the *New* way was ushered in instantaneously through the death of Jesus. The *Old Covenant* was no longer binding but was replaced with *New Covenant* through the blood of Christ.

What I believe is important is for us to put ourselves in the shoes of those people who were there and had their entire religious world turned upside down. It created a divided loyalty,

What we see is a people who would not accept the *New Covenant* for a variety of reasons just like the reluctance of people today to accept the true *Gospel* for a variety of reasons.

*Thoughts such as these enter the mind:*

*This is the way we have always done things. I grew up this way. We have to be careful that we don't become so lethargic that we shut off our desire for learning.*

*These are my people who are my religious leaders. I trust them. They have always made me feel justified.*

*People who we are so close to; family, friends, or others who we wouldn't want to hurt have become in reality an obstacle.*

*Even if the old way is wrong they would sacrifice truth to keep their conscience clear with someone dear rather than follow truth.*

*John 12:42-43-Even the rulers knew the truth but kept silent so as not to lose standing and the praise of men which they loved more than truth.*

*Of course holding onto the Old was encouraged by religious factions who could not let go of the Law of Moses. Acts 15*

Jesus said because of Him there would be division:

*Luke 12:52-53 (Slide 18)*

<sup>52</sup> "For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> They will be divided, father against son and son against (Slide 19) father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

*The Bible isn't written to create a divided loyalty, rather for unity!*

We get confused when we read *Revelation* and we apply everything literally. *John's* writing of *Revelation* had meaning to those people at the time because they were likely familiar with the *Prophecy of Daniel 7*.

John writes in *Chapter 13* and in much of the *Revelation* with the same symbolic language. Those he is writing to are familiar with the *Hebrew* text of *Daniel 7*.

In *Daniel 7*, the description of the *four beasts* were to be interpreted symbolically as representative of what is real.

*The comparative analysis of symbolic language of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13:*

*Daniel 7 (Slide 20)*

*Lion with Eagles wings (Babylonian Empire)*

*Bear that devours Much Flesh (Medo-Persian Empire)*

*Leopard with Four Heads (Greek Empire)*

*Terrifying Beast with Iron Teeth and Ten Horns (Roman Empire)*

*Terrifying Symbolism translated to Reality.*

*Revelation 13:1-2 (Slide 21)*

*<sup>1</sup> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; (Slide 22) its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon (Satan) gave his power and his throne and great authority.*

If we were in the audience to hear or to read this scripture our minds should automatically go back to *Daniel 7* and we would clearly understand that we are once again reading *symbolic language* representing collectively the composite image of all evil empires before and after.

And of course, we couldn't help but to see the *Roman Empire*. The Empire they were dealing with and were the most familiar with.

Looking and dissecting the behavior of kingdoms, empires and now nations as one whose leaders have become so powerful and having desire to exalt that kingdom into some type of self described deity is what *John* is writing about.

So why is *John* writing symbolically about the Empire's past and present to Christ's church throughout Asia? Why is he basically saying you've seen this before? Why is he writing concerning the *Roman Empire*?

*John* is given the *Revelation* of Chapter 13 because some in the church are trying to divide their loyalty. Some have exalted the *Roman Empire* on an equal pedestal as God's Kingdom.

They believe that Rome is good. Rome has brought peace and prosperity. Yet, in *Daniel* and in *John's symbolic language* it is revealed that Rome isn't good. Rome is the beast so terrifyingly described.

*I am personally so afraid that in our modern sophistication and disingenuous interpretation of events and false promises that our own nation may become equally terrifying beasts.*

*1 Peter 5:8-9* (Slide 23)

*<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith*

*And to it (Rome) the dragon (Satan) gave his power and his throne and great authority.*

*Brethren be careful, be alert, be soberminded-be patriotic, yes and honor a nation built on God's authority that is; if it walks in His statutes.*

*John* states be careful where you apply your allegiance, your loyalty. Don't give it to *Rome* because its authority comes from the *dragon*!

God first, Country second and remember,

*Philippians 3:17-21 (Slide 24)*

*<sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

*Keep your eye on the prize! That Veil was Torn for a Reason!*

All the events that occurred prior to and after Jesus' death on the cross have significance to Christians today. In particular, the tombs that opened after the death of Jesus have a clear and important relationship to our *Allegiance to God* as we will see in coming lessons.

*Invitation*

*If you are outside of Christ, still alienated from Him because of sin, we implore you today to have your sins washed away in baptism.*

*If you are in Christ, but need prayer for any reason, let your wish be known.*

*Please let us know how we may serve you.....*

**Reading**

**Matthew 12:30-37**

***<sup>30</sup> Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. <sup>31</sup> Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven***

**people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.**

**<sup>33</sup> "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. <sup>36</sup> I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."**

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