

Earth Dwellers are Deaf

Text: Revelation 13.8

Theme: We must continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to a world that is deaf to His voice.

Introduction – How’s your hearing?

- not your physical hearing—that varies for each one of us, I’m afraid
- some hear just fine; others of you need assistance; and even for some, that doesn’t help
- but how is your spiritual hearing?
- after last Lord’s Day’s message, are you tuning in your ears to hear & obey God’s Word?
- I pray that it is so, but today, we’re going to examine a closely related theme
- this harmonic chord, consisting of five dissonant notes clashes with what we saw last week
- this chord grates the nerves like fingers down an old blackboard
- and this is why we must continue to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ
- both to believers, for their encouragement and strength
- and to unbelievers, who seek to turn a deaf ear to the news of Jesus

Let’s first see the...

I. Earth Dwellers

- those on earth aligned with the Beast of Rev. 13
- called “those who dwell on earth”, technical term for unbelievers
- they hear & see only what comes from this world, not message from God & His Word
- because of this they will face judgment that engulfs entire world
- *“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.”*

(Revelation 3:10 ESV)

- believers, on other hand, will be preserved
- this doesn’t mean they will be absent; just means they won’t face this judgment
- those in Christ, during this time, will be spared God’s wrath, kept from it
- like Israel was spared the plagues upon Egypt, so to will believers during this time
- but “those who dwell on earth” have gone all in to evil & wickedness
- *“with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”*

(Revelation 17:2 ESV)

- sexual immorality in Revelation is one of main forms of idolatry worshipping god of choosing

1. True nature: Rev. 13.8

- *“and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”*

(Revelation 13:8 ESV)

- remember, this isn’t everyone alive on earth; just those who reject God & Christ, His Son
- it is clear, these “earth dwellers” worship the beast
- *“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. and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.”*

(Revelation 13:12, 14 ESV)

2. Deceived

- clear in Revelation 13.14, just read

- those who have ear to hear are told about these earth dwellers, these unbelievers
- most likely, vast majority of these just think living ordinary lives
- don't view themselves as evil, wicked even deceived
- but not aligned with Christ
- in John's day, would have been aligned with Rome & with Caesar, saying "Caesar is lord"
- when the beast presents itself to them in its hell-spawned glory, they follow readily

3. Opposition to the gospel

- earth dweller's ears are filled with the message of the beast, not of God
- therefore, they hate the gospel, they oppose it
- they rejoice over the martyrdom of the two prophets, in Rev. 11
- they also join with those who put believers to death, as we're told in Rev 6.10
- now, granted, not all unbelievers actually kill believers, but they support it
- as we learn in this book of prophecy, there is no neutral space
- you are either light or you are darkness, in truth or in error, from above or below
- this is why, all those who dwell on earth will face God's wrath and judgment

Now, let's look at that which influences all these earth dwellers.

II. The Beast

- first hear of this beast in 11.7
- *"And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,"*

(Revelation 11:7 ESV)

- this beast comes from the abyss, the bottomless pit
- from this, we know quite easily, it is connected directly to hell, death, and devil
- in that verse, we see this beast waging war on Christians & putting them to death

1. More detail, Revelation 13

- *"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 13:2 ESV)

- here we have a clear connection to Daniel 7 and beasts seen there
- Daniel saw four beasts coming up from the sea
- first was like a lion, second, like a bear; third, like a leopard; and fourth indescribable evil

2. From the sea; not good

- *"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea..."* (Revelation 13:1 ESV)
- in much of Scripture, OT & Revelation especially, sea represents chaos, evil
- so, when we see this beast rising up from the sea, we know what it brings
- because beasts of Daniel's vision combined in this horror, most likely Daniel's fourth beast
- one that Daniel couldn't even describe because so filled with wickedness against God's people

3. Is this beast Rome?

- it is possible, yes; but not limited to just Rome in time and history
- the empire put forth here is not humane
- it seeks to stand against human flourishing, success, and improvement
- instead, this beast is ravenous, ferocious; it kills, mauls, destroys
- as such, we know this beast is against Christ—indeed, a form of the antichrist
- it knows full well how to trample on human rights and dignity, seeking to strip it away

- indeed “...in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”
(Revelation 18:24 ESV)
 - Rome was anti-God and anti-human; so too will this beast be
4. Yet people stand in awe of this creature
- no matter the devastation of rights & liberties, earth dwellers bow to worship this beast
 - this has been the case ever since Rome: people given wholeheartedly to evil governments
 - *“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. 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.”*
(Revelation 13:2, 12 ESV)
- how can they do such a thing?
5. God-like in what it is and does
- *“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.”*
(Revelation 17:8 ESV)
 - this is what makes it so vile: it is a mockery of One, True God
 - it is powerful, promising to keep people, provide for everyone who bows the knee
 - *“And they 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?”*
(Revelation 13:4 ESV)
- those who dwell on earth put their trust in the government to save & deliver them
 - they worship it as the believers do God
 - we’ll learn far more about this creature

But now, let’s move onto...

III. The Second Beast

- this second beast of Rev 13 is like the sidekick to the first beast
 - *“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke 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 performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that 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 might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. 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 the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.”*
(Revelation 13:11–18 ESV)
- this beast is described as a false prophet having a religious & prophetic dimension
 - political power is intertwined with religious devotion to the beast thru this second beast
 - under the powerful influence of this being, no separation between church & state
 - state has become the church, a new religion
 - thus this beast parodies Christ, trying to look like a lamb
 - it has the power to deceive

- *“And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image.”*

(Revelation 19:20 ESV)

- all this underscores the importance for us who believe to hear & heed God’s Word
- do not be deceived by political tyranny, economic discrimination, religious persecution
- these are the marks of these two beasts

A third entity competes for the affections of God’s people, along with earth dwellers:

IV. Babylon the Harlot

- obviously, this title is symbolic; no one believes Babylon will be built again
- but does not the name bring back memories from our time in Daniel?
- she was the great enemy of God’s people then, and now
- *“And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”*

(Revelation 17:18 ESV)

- many believe this was Rome during John’s day, and I agree...to one extent
- there was a past tense to this great prostitute, but also a present & future sense as well
- she works hand-in-hand with the beast
- *“And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.”*

(Revelation 17:3 ESV)

- like Rome, the powerful influence and attraction of this city is strong
- she is rich, prosperous entrancing, exciting and beautiful
- are not many of the world’s great cities like this?
- they pulse with business and commerce, with entrepreneurs hawking their wares
- still this city, like the beast, is a mystery, but John is given to unveil this to us
- yes, great, attracting, alluring, but a wicked prostitute
- *“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.”*
“for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

(Revelation 17:4–5; 19:2 ESV)

- Babylon may look stunning and ravishing, but she is demonic & unclean
- *“And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.”*

(Revelation 18:2 ESV)

- she may have the best goods for sale from all corners of the earth
- she may have theaters and auditoriums, restaurants and stores aplenty
- but it has been gained unjustly, oppressively, enslaving people to get it, sell it and buy it
- *“cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.”*

(Revelation 18:13 ESV)

- Babylon is, in reality, a disgusting drunkard, imbibing the blood of the saints
- the true nature of this city is given to us so we might hear, heed and not be deceived
- all others who dwell on earth will be taken in, consume, worship and be consumed by her

Well, it’s no surprise that these mock representatives of the Trinity are driven by...

V. The Dragon

- if you've read Revelation, you might have picked up on something fascinating
- most common word for devil is—"dragon"
- thirteen times in Revelation; "Satan" only eight times; "devil" 5x; and serpent, 4x
- now, don't think fairytale dragon: breathing fire, robbing fortunes, kidnapping princesses
- biblical dragon has extraordinary power over human beings however
- John pulls back curtain on reality to show cosmic conflict, war against God's people
- Revelation 12–13 has dragon on center stage

1. Satan = adversary

- nowhere is this more evident than in Revelation 2 & 3
- he houses the synagogues of Satan in Smyrna & Philadelphia
- in Pergamum, Satan's has a throne, we're told; this is where Satan dwells!
- Jezebel, who is in Thyatira, influences with the deep things of Satan
- truly, he stands opposed to the saints of all ages
- he wishes to subvert our faith: either by persecution or deceptive compromise
- again this is why we must hear and heed God alone

2. Seven heads & ten horns = authority and strength

- we'll see this more when we arrive in Revelation 12
- but Satan, even though defeated by Christ's cross and empty tomb, is still horrifyingly strong
- he is like a roaring lion, after all, seeking whom he may devour
- and since he was cast out of heaven, Revelation 12.12 he seeks to destroy the church
- *"Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"*
- *"And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child."*

(Revelation 12:12–13 ESV)

- along with the two beasts, this unholy Trinity seeks to do us great woe
- on earth, Luther said, is not his equal; but there is a word... a Living Word, Jesus Christ

Conclusion – and in Christ lies our hope

- while life may seem rather ordinary in light of all these odd visions, it's not
- this cosmic conflict rages even now, this morning
- behind the evil of the two beasts, Babylon, and earth dwellers lie great dragon, Satan
- he tempted Eve & Adam, who both plunged us all into sin
- but God's promised Deliverer, Jesus Christ, His Only-Begotten Son has come
- He suffered, died, and rose again to defeat power of sin, power of death, power of devil
- those who will not heed this truth, those who dwell on earth, will perish eternally
- we must hear & take to heart the very Word of God
- our trust is to be in Christ, not in man his governments or politics
- there is no utopia promised here on earth
- so be alert to the totalitarian attempts of even our government
- turn your eyes from allure of Babylon's temptations of material blessings
- close your ears to false prophet's message via media of all sorts
- instead, patiently endure to the end, overcome, conquer
- and then you will know the greatest blessing of all