

Text: Rev. 20:1-3, 7-9

Title: "The end of the dragon" - Part One

Time: 10/21/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: The agnostic Carl Sagan wrote an essay about people who believe that invisible dragons are in people's garages. Let me read some of that as we begin this morning [<http://www.godlessgeeks.com/LINKS/Dragon.htm>; accessed 10/18/2018]:

"A fire-breathing dragon lives in my garage."

"Suppose . . . I seriously make such an assertion to you.

Surely, you'd want to check it out, see for yourself. There have been innumerable stories of dragons over the centuries, but no real evidence. What an opportunity!

"Show me," you say. I lead you to my garage. You look inside and see a ladder, empty paint cans, an old tricycle -- but no dragon.

"Where's the dragon?" you ask.

"Oh, she's right here," I reply, waving vaguely. "I neglected to mention that she's an invisible dragon."

"You propose spreading flour on the floor of the garage to capture the dragon's footprints.

"Good idea," I say, "but this dragon floats in the air."

"Then you'll use an infrared sensor to detect the invisible fire.

"Good idea, but the invisible fire is also heatless."

"You'll spray-paint the dragon and make her visible.

"Good idea, but she's an incorporeal dragon and the paint won't stick." And so on. I counter every physical test you propose with a special explanation of why it won't work.

"Now, what's the difference between an invisible, incorporeal, floating dragon who spits heatless fire and no dragon at all? If there's no way to disprove my contention, no con-

ceivable experiment that would count against it, what does it mean to say that my dragon exists? . . . What I'm asking you to do comes down to believing, in the absence of evidence, on my say-so. The only thing you've really learned from my insistence that there's a dragon in my garage is that something funny is going on inside my head. You'd wonder, if no physical tests apply, what convinced me."

As I read that essay, my hope is that you recognize some serious mistakes made by its author.

The first mistake is Sagan's failure to recognize that his belief that all reality is physical is an unproven religious article of faith, not a proven scientific conclusion. Science can tell us what physical reality is like, but it cannot tell us that all reality is physical reality. That ideology Sagan must assert by faith, and it is a belief that the Bible tells us is very wrong. Sagan's reason for the denial of an invisible dragon in the garage is really his reason for denying that the dragon of our passage, Satan, exists. His denial of the existence of the dragon is based on a lack of physical evidence, but the dragon Satan is spiritual or non-physical.

The second mistake is that Sagan fails to recognize who it is that has told us about the dragon. It is not you and I that are telling one another about the non-physical dragon, it is the Word of God that tells us of him. The apostle John is not an ignorant first-century dupe. He is an inspired author of inerrant and infallible Scripture. There may or may not be other evidences that prove the dragon's existence, but that question is irrelevant, because God's Word is the most trustworthy form of evidence. God is the most believable authority. If He were not that, He would not be God. It is for this reason that He tells us that without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6).

A final mistake is the fact that there has been plenty of physical evidence for the dragon in the creation of the world and in the preaching of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. Antony Flew changed his mind because of physical evidence in creation. God became a man, and we beheld His glory with our own eyes. He told us He is God, and He told us that the dragon is real. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

One of the major truths we learn from the Revelation the Apostle John received from the Lord on the Island of Patmos in A.D. 95 is that our non-physical enemy is very real indeed. This dragon prefers to remain deceptively hidden, and Sagan's essay was undoubtedly helpful to him in that regard, but God's Word shines the light of truth upon him, and he cannot hide from those who believe.

Our passage is Revelation's mention of the millennium, a thousand-year period in which Jesus Christ rules the world from Jerusalem on the throne of His father David. Yet its mention of this glorious period is in some way incidental. There are fuller treatments of the millennium elsewhere in Scripture, and we will look more carefully at this future period in the coming weeks, but the primary focus of the ten verses under our consideration this morning is the end of the dragon, and I want us to notice three things it says about his end: the dragon will be arrested and imprisoned, the dragon will be released, and the dragon will be cast into eternal torment. This morning we will only get to the first of these.

I. The dragon will be arrested and imprisoned (vv. 1-3).

Illustration: Frank Abagnale is today an agent that serves our country at the FBI. He is remembered in popular cul-

ture as one of America's greatest conmen. Devastated by his parents' divorce at the age of 15, Frank ran away from his New Rochelle home, added 10 years to his age, and began impersonating a Pan Am pilot who flew for free with other airlines all over the world. He figured out how to make Pan Am paychecks as part of the game, and so he became very rich. He would go on to impersonate a doctor at a hospital and an assistant attorney general before finally getting caught after swindling the banking system out of millions of dollars with falsified checks. They caught him in France, imprisoned him, brought him back to the US to stand trial, sentenced him to 12 years in prison, and then a few years later put him to work for the FBI, where he still serves our country today. One of the morals of Abagnale's story is that eventually a man like that is going to get caught.

Application: In our passage, the greatest conman of them all gets caught. A great angel with the key to the abyss and a great chain puts the dragon under arrest (KJV: "laid hold", v. 2) and imprisons him for 1000 years. This account of his arrest pauses a bit in verse 2 to remind us about the criminal career of this awful creature. Just like the four names of the coming Christ revealed to us His glory (19:11-16, "Faithful and True", "a name written" which only He knew, "The Word of God", and "King of kings and Lord of lords"), so also the four names of this enemy reveal to us his inglorious shame:

1. "dragon" - Like the label beast, which in prophecy in both Revelation and Daniel refers to heaven's view of the kingdom of antichrist, and then to both antichrist and the false prophet, the word dragon gives us heaven's view of the ugly character of this creature in terms of his political power. In chapter 9, the fifth trumpet sounds, and this dragon, the fallen star, is given the key to the abyss, and he releases scorpion-locust demons that torment earth-dwellers

during that judgment. The political kingdoms of this world are his domain. Remember Matthew 4 and the final temptation.

2. “the old serpent” – Our enemy is an ancient foe. He is the one who deceived our first mother and tempted our first father into the fall of man. Everything about our world that is evil can be traced to the influence of that sin, brought about with the work of that ancient serpent. His serpentine nature refers to the worldly wisdom of his mind. He is notoriously brilliant and effective.

3. “the devil” – We get our word diabolical from the Greek word translated devil. The idea behind the word is that of false accusation. A good English word, which we do not use much, is the word calumniate, which Miriam-Webster defines as “to utter maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about” and “to injure the reputation of by [these statements].” So this enemy is the devil because it is his goal to injure God’s reputation in the eyes of mankind by making men believe falsehoods about God. Remember the lie he told Eve? “For God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil.” He accused God of withholding godhood from them. We are under the influence of the devil to the degree we have a false notion of God.

Ill: Ligonier Ministries’ 2018 “The State of Theology” survey highlighted the effectiveness of the enemy at corrupting our view of who God is.

4. “Satan” – That word means adversary. He is the enemy that is bent especially on the destruction of Jesus Christ, His people (including Israel), their homes, and His churches.

And so the names of this enemy remind us that he is a powerful enemy. History has seen him wreck much havoc. But Christ is more powerful, and so this angel from heaven arrests the dragon and puts him in prison in the abyss for 1000 years. The key locks the door, and the opening is sealed.

Application2: Do you remember the day that Satan tried to do that to Jesus? (Matt. 27:62-66). That was the day that Satan tried to arrest Jesus, throw Him into Sheol or Hades, seal the stone on the tomb, and set a watch so that He could never come out again. And what happened? (Matt. 28:1-7). And the risen Christ has been on ascended on high ever since, fulfilling His promise, "I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

What does it mean to our lives that Jesus Christ is more powerful than our powerful enemy? It means that we do not have to be destroyed by that enemy. It means that our lives and our homes and our churches have armor by which we can do battle against his brilliant schemes and his fiery darts (Eph. 6:10-20). It means that the One who shall chain him always has him on a leash (Job 23:10). It means that although he prowls about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, we have every resource necessary to resist him steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9). It means that he cannot touch us unless we give place to the devil (Eph. 4:27).

Which leads to a very sobering question: why is he so effective in my life if my Christ is so much more powerful? Clearly, the problem is with me – the lust of our eyes, the lust of our flesh, and the pride of our life. The enemy uses these things to enchant us like he did Eve. He need not hunt us down. We walk willingly and knowingly into his traps.

The day is coming when he will no longer be allowed to do these things to people to people (v. 3).

Illustration: Sometimes at VBS we play a game in which a contestant is blindfolded, and he must reach a certain destination merely by listening to a teammate. Often, the opposing team will shout bogus directions to mislead.

Conclusion: Brother and Sister, the day we were saved was not just the day Jesus began shouting out the right direction for us. It was the day He removed our blindfold. We have spiritual eyes that can see how to walk in the light as He is in the light. We have ears to hear His truth, and we know His voice as sheep know their shepherd. We can see our enemy in plain sight in the pages of Holy Writ. 2 Cor. 2:11, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Has he gotten the advantage of us this morning?

We are citizens of that kingdom that shall someday see this enemy bound for 1000 years. That kingdom is not yet of this world, but it already exists. It is in heaven, and Satan was thrown out of there long ago. Because of this citizenship, the enemy cannot touch us, unless we invite him to. Think of the blessing that can come in the defeat of this enemy for our lives, our homes, and our churches. We have the power of Christ to not be deceived by him today.

II. The dragon will be released (vv. 7-9).

III. The dragon will be eternally tormented (v. 10).

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*