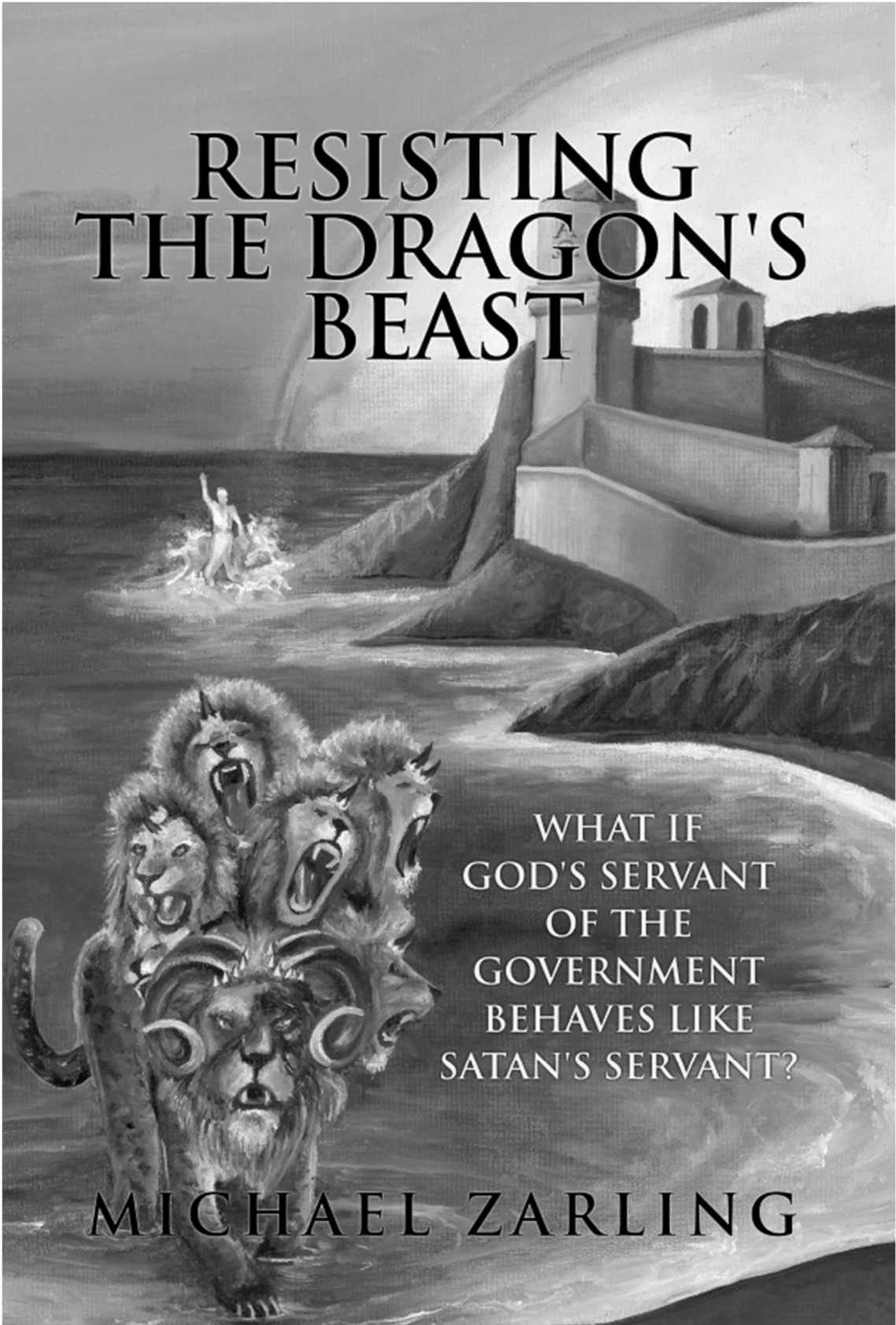


A black and white illustration of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a lion with large, curved horns stands in the water, surrounded by several other lion heads with open mouths as if roaring. In the middle ground, a person is seen running through the water towards the left. In the background, a large, walled building with a bell tower sits on a rocky cliff overlooking the sea under a cloudy sky.

RESISTING THE DRAGON'S BEAST

WHAT IF
GOD'S SERVANT
OF THE
GOVERNMENT
BEHAVES LIKE
SATAN'S SERVANT?

MICHAEL ZARLING

Resisting the Dragon's Beast: Study Guide

Introduction

1. Discuss: Is your church and church body united in scriptural doctrines?
2. Discuss: Was your church and church body united in its response to Covid, the experts' advice, and government restrictions?
3. What can your church and church body do to be better prepared for the next time something like this happens?

This book is designed to start the discussion. ... So let's start discussing!

Chapter 1

1. Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-3:7. What are scriptural examples of submission?
2. What does “submit” not mean?
3. What then does “submit” mean?
4. We often focus a lot of attention on those who are called to submit. But what does Scripture also have to say about those in positions of authority?
5. Perhaps you, too, heard well-intentioned Christians say, “Romans 13. Submit.” Then consider the debate ended. Why is a deeper examination and regular application of Romans 13 always beneficial?
6. Who are the governing authorities in our American system of government?
7. Give examples in our unique form of American government when various authorities must submit to other government authorities.
8. Discuss: Based on our nation’s founding documents, the citizens are the authorities and those in the government are the “ministers” or “servants” (Romans 13:6)? Why is this so important?
9. Discuss: Resisting governing authorities and their laws by citizens can be disruptive. But the first amendments to the U.S. Constitution legally protect the U.S. citizens’ rights to resist and possibly be disruptive.
10. What are the five freedoms protected in the First Amendment?
11. What do the words “lawful civil ordinances” in Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession on Civil Affairs imply?
12. What does God’s 4th commandment say to citizens? What does God’s 4th commandment say to authorities?
13. Discuss: Is Jim right or wrong in defying lockdowns for his gym?
14. Why is it always important and beneficial to discuss the application of the wonderful nuances of God’s will in a fallen world that hates God’s will?
15. What instructions do we often give to children, wives, or employees when they are being abused? But what instructions do we often receive when a government is being abusive?
16. Why is it unhealthy and not beneficial to give authority figures (besides God) unquestioning, absolute obedience?
17. Discuss: Has there been a confusion of equating the keeping of civil laws and a government’s will with keeping God’s moral laws and his divine will?
18. What does it mean to give Caesar what belongs to Caesar? What does it mean to not give to Caesar what does not belong to Caesar?

19. Does Romans 13 teach Christians to engage in government, society, and culture or to disengage from God's earthly kingdom? What does engagement or disengagement look like?
20. Why is it beneficial both to the government and its citizens to be able to question, debate, and even resist?
21. Read Daniel 7. What comfort do you receive from Daniel's vision?
22. What are the four elements that help Christian citizens carry out a clear confession in our American system of governance?
23. What is the danger of mixing God's two kingdoms – spiritual and earthly?
24. What is the danger of separating the two kingdoms as if we Christian citizens feel they are only living in one kingdom at a time?
25. Discuss: When churches allowed the government to restrict their worship – attendance, singing, communion, etc., were they allowing the left-hand kingdom to dictate what would happen in the right-hand kingdom?
26. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Why is it important to join with St. Paul in praying for our government authorities?
27. How is it beneficial for Christian citizens to submit to governing authorities because they are God's servant for our good?
28. How is it beneficial first for governing authorities to submit themselves to God's will so they behave as God's servant?

Chapter 2

1. Read Revelation 12. Describe how Jesus in his Revelation to St. John describes Satan and how he spends his time between Christ's ascension and his glorious return.
2. Read Revelation 13. Who are the two allies of the dragon?
3. Why is it important to know that Scripture not only pictures the government as God's servant in Romans 13 but also as Satan's servant in Revelation 13?
4. Read Psalm 2:2. What is the one thing that the rulers of the earth agree upon?
5. What does it mean that God used the evil of the kings to carry out his divine will, but he did not direct the kings to do this evil?
6. When do authorities and citizens act as God's servant?
7. When do authorities and citizens act as Satan's servant?
8. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. We are called by God to stand up to the bully of the devil and his beastly gang. What are the weapons God gives us for this spiritual warfare?
9. Our Christian values are constantly under attack. Why is it important to understand that these values are moral, then cultural, and finally political?
10. What will happen if Christians do not step up and step into the culture to share the good news of the true God?
11. Why do people worship the beast out of the sea?
12. How does the beast out of the earth make sure people worship its ally of the beast out of the sea?
13. What happens when Christian citizens lay down their weapons and refuse to fight in this war by submitting to the devil's servant?
14. What keeps us from bowing down to the beast?
15. Why is it important to know that governing authorities can switch sides to serve as God's servant at times and serve as Satan's servant at other times? How does this impact your life as a Christian citizen?

Chapter 3

1. Why had Martin Luther argued against active resistance to the Imperial government in the 1520s?
2. What had happened by 1530 to change the minds of Luther and other Lutheran theologians?
3. What were the two questions that were being asked of Lutheran lawyers and theologians at Torgau?
4. What did the Lutheran lawyers learn about resistance to the emperor based on Imperial law?
5. What did the Lutheran theologians learn about resistance to the emperor based on Scripture?
6. Explain interposition.
7. What does the second paragraph of the U.S. Constitution have to say about resistance?
8. What did Luther say to those who were equating resistance with rebellion?
9. Explain: Luther even argues that there are times when God strictly forbids Christian compliance of a command of the emperor.
10. Christians are called to desire to live in peace. But what happens when governing authorities will not allow us to live in peace?
11. What does it mean that “the nations who act as God’s servants are often his unwilling servants”?
12. Read Psalm 148. What are we praying for in this psalm?
13. What assurance from Scripture do we have when we are opposed and terrorized by kings and rulers?

Chapter 4

1. Describe the circumstances that led up to the writing of the Magdeburg Confession.
2. Why was the Magdeburg Confession not adopted as a church-wide confession like the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord?
3. What is the meaning behind each of the three Bible verses chosen for the Introduction to the Magdeburg Confession?
4. How were the authors of the Magdeburg Confession figuring out the balance between Romans 13 and Revelation 13?
5. Apply the Magdeburg pastors' statement to our current culture: "Divine laws necessarily trump human ones."
6. Do you agree or disagree with the Magdeburg pastors when they assert of Emperor Charles: "In this way now, you, Charles Caesar, are exceeding the limits of your dominion and you are extending it into the dominion of Christ"?
7. Why were Luther and the Magdeburg pastors always slow and careful with a call to resistance?
8. What are the three arguments for resistance laid out in the Magdeburg Confession?
9. What are the four levels of injustice presented in the Magdeburg Confession? Give at least one current example for each level of injustice.
10. When do governing authorities become the Beerwolf?
11. What can we learn from the Magdeburg Confession?
12. What was the result of Magdeburg resisting the emperor?

Chapter 5

1. What is resistance?
2. Why is this such an important statement to remember: “You have to oppose the beast ... while not becoming the beast yourself”?
3. Discuss as many of the biblical examples of resistance as you have time for. What did you learn from them?
4. How are rebellion and resistance different?
5. Discuss the examples of secular resistance. What did you learn from each?
 - Ghandhi and the Salt Act
 - Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Act
 - The Rosenstrasse protest
 - The WELS and the Bennett Law
6. Did it surprise you to learn that in America, resistance is not only accepted, but also encouraged? Does this change your viewpoint on resistance?
7. What does Knox mean when he writes about resistance: “To resist tyranny is not to resist God, nor yet his ordinance”?
8. What was one of your favorite acts of resistance and why?
9. Why is it important to understand that part of our vocation as Christian citizens is to hold governing authorities accountable in the same way we hold parents, pastors, and companies accountable?
10. What happens when Christians do not support the confession of word with a confession in deed in their vocation as citizens?
11. How can resistance be an application of the explanation to the 8th commandment?
12. Discuss Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s statement: “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”
13. How can resistance be an application of the 7th, 9th, and 10th commandments?
14. Agree or disagree and explain why: Churches that succumb to tyranny won’t die with a bang. They’ll atrophy with a whimper.
15. What are ways that American citizens already legally resist their governing authorities?
16. How might we contribute to the problems of government overreach because we don’t know civics, the laws, and the Constitution as we should?

17. How might we dissuade public and theological debate because we often offer and apply a simplistic and cursory understanding of Romans 13?
18. Why can't we wait for unbelievers to stand up to the government? If unbelievers won't stand up to the beast out of the sea, who is left to do so?
19. Share biblical examples where God's people were obligated to comply with evil.
20. What does Luther mean when he writes: "Pastors should serve as the club that lays next to the dog"?
21. Take the time to deeply discuss pastors speaking about and to governing authorities.
22. Why should we give our Christian brothers and sisters the benefit of the doubt over governing authorities?
23. How can resistance be a curb to the sinful nature of governing authorities?
24. How might resistance be wrong if it is done for our own self-interest? How might resistance be correct if it is done for the interest of our family, community, morals, and the Christian faith?
25. Why does the practice of resistance deserve our time, discussion, prayer, and application of Scripture?
26. Is resistance futile?

Chapter 6

1. Satan has been hurled down to the earth and he is in a furious rage against God and God's people. Take a few moments to name some of the ways you see Satan and his demonic forces attacking Christians and Christian beliefs today.
2. How have we Christians been doing in fighting a defensive war against Satan's forces?
3. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. We are called to go on the offensive with the weapons of the Lord. What does going on the offensive in the public square of our culture look like?
4. How can we as the Church of God reclaim "political" issues as cultural, moral, and theological issues so we can apply God's Word to these issues?
5. Read Psalm 140. Why is this a difficult prayer for 21st century Christians to pray? Why is this prayer a necessary prayer for 21st century Christians to pray?
6. Read Luke 12:51-53. Jesus says he will bring division to households. How do you witness this division in our culture and even experience this division within your own home?
7. How do we make ourselves and our church ready for this spiritual war – not a coming war ... but a war we are already in?
8. Agree or disagree: Christians are willing to fulfill their confirmation vows of suffering all – even death – rather than fall away from their Christian faith.
9. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Is St. Paul crazy when he writes these words? If Paul isn't crazy, then how is it possible to delight in our hardships, persecutions, and suffering?
10. God's weapons of Word and Sacraments appear lowly and weak. Share stories of the power of God's Word and Sacraments reclaiming souls away from Satan and into God's holy family of baptized and redeemed saints.

Chapter 7

1. How have you witnessed the Christian Church become infected by Christian quietism?
2. What happens in the culture when Christians remain quiet?
3. Have you heard your pastor or church speak recently about cultural issues? If not, why not? If so, why?
4. Why is “holding the line” in the culture war never going to be an offensive strategy?
5. Read Hebrews 13:33-38. Why does confessing Christ always require courage in every age?
6. What makes God’s Word so offensive in our culture?
7. God’s Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles were aggressive with the gospel. Are there times when Christians and pastors are uncomfortable because other Christians and pastors are aggressive with the gospel? If so, why do you think that is?
8. Have we as churches been tempted to exchange praising Christ for the praise of the public? If so, how?
9. Read 2 Timothy 1:7-8. What encouragement do you receive from St. Paul’s words to Pastor Timothy?
10. What are some ways the culture might change as we Christians preach Christ into the culture?
11. List specific ways you are going to put Solomon’s wise words into action: “Speak up for those who cannot speak. Speak for the rights of all those who are defenseless” (Proverbs 31:8)?

Chapter 8

1. What happens when we stop using our gift of reason?
2. How did your church, school, community, and family deal with Covid? Did they discuss everything to come to a consensus conclusion using common sense? If not, why not? If yes, why so?
3. What are some of the negative unintended consequences of governmental and experts' responses to Covid?
4. What would have been a better common-sense approach to mitigating Covid?
5. What is the purpose of the conscience?
6. In the words of Dr. Luther, why is it neither safe nor right to make someone go against their Christian conscience? What does Paul say about this in 1 Corinthians 8:12?
7. Did you find there was a lot of judging of others' motives and actions during Covid? What do Jesus words in Matthew 7:1-5 and St. Paul's words in Romans 14:10 teach us about passing judgment on others?
8. Why can we never demand how others should love us?
9. How might St. Paul's words about Judaizers in Galatians 3:1-6 be applicable to those who made unjust demands on others for Covid mitigation?
10. What is the difference between love and obedience?
11. Was it wrong for churches to dispense or even enforce medical advice on wearing a mask, getting the Covid shot, separating by 6 feet, etc.? If yes, then why did churches do it? If no, why was it not wrong?
12. Agree or disagree and discuss: It is not the church's responsibility to enforce the government's mandates.
13. Have you witnessed representatives of the government remove authority and responsibility away from parents? If so, how?
14. If you have time prior to the study of this chapter, please read Luther's treatise "*How Should A Christian Act During a Deadly Epidemic?*"
15. What does Luther have to say to those who might stay or flee during a pandemic?
16. What does it mean for us as pastors and people to let the physicians do their work on the body and we focus instead on doing the work of the Great Physician?

Chapter 9

1. When is fear good and healthy? When is fear bad and unhealthy?
2. Why do we have an unhealthy fear?
3. When we are afraid of going it alone, of what does Scripture remind us about our God?
4. How might fear have induced Christians into doing un-Christian things within their churches during Covid?
5. When is it wrong and fearful to test God?
6. When is it righteous and faithful to test God?
7. Faith is the difference between the two kinds of testing mentioned in Matthew 4:7 and Malachi 3:10. What is faith according to Hebrews 11:1?
8. How is fear the enemy of faith?
9. Agree or disagree and discuss: We are being fed a diet of fear and anxiety by the dragon of Satan so his beast of the persecuting government can provide us safety and security.
10. Discuss: Relying on the government to provide safety and security can lead to worshipping the beast out of the sea (Revelation 13:12).
11. Over six dozen times God's people hear in Scripture, "Do not be afraid." Why do you think God has to remind his people of this admonition so often?
12. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Why do we never need to worry, and therefore never need to be afraid?
13. What lesson do you learn from John Chrysostom?
14. The red dragon and his two beasts are terrifying creatures. Who could blame us if we become afraid, renounce our faith, shirk our responsibilities, and take the easy way out? Why would he blame us?
15. What lesson do you learn from St. Cyprian?
16. How does the fact that God will not let you die one moment sooner than he has planned help you overcome your fear of death and the illnesses, viruses, and accidents that lead to death?
17. Why is the annual trip to the tomb with the women every Easter so important for us as Christians?
18. Why do we not need to fear the rider on the pale horse of death (Revelation 6:2; 1 Corinthians 15:26)?

Chapter 10

1. Discuss: Until 2020, would any of us have believed that freedom loving people would so willingly have given up their freedoms?
2. Why is it important to remember that God's servant of the government is to serve as protector of its citizens – not their custodian?
3. What did you learn from the C.S. Lewis quote: "Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive"?
4. Discuss: Should Christians willingly hand over their freedoms or zealously guard those freedoms?
5. Discuss: Is it wrong for the government to take what belongs to God – its citizens' freedoms and rights?
6. What do God's 7th, 9th, and 10th commandments have to say when a government attempts to limit or renounced its citizens' freedoms?
7. How does the beast out of the sea use fear to turn people away from the security of God?
8. How have you noticed the American populace rely more and more on the government over the generations? What does this overreliance on the government naturally do with our reliance upon God?
9. What does it mean that in America we are a nation of people ruled by "the consent of the governed"?
10. Read Numbers 11:4-6; 14:2-4. Why is freedom so hard?
11. What lessons do you learn from the Freedom Convoy?
12. Should the government serve as the arbiter of truth? Why or why not?
13. Pastors and prophets called out their government leaders in Scripture. So did pastors throughout history. Discuss: Could – or should – pastors today join the chorus in calling out their government leaders?
14. Why were the first two amendments to the U.S. Constitution written?
15. Is it sinful to practice civil disobedience when America's highest laws promote civil disobedience?
16. How can we make our government authorities stronger and healthier by resisting their poor, wrong, or harmful policies?
17. Have you witnessed people confuse civic righteousness with true righteousness? Why is that confusion dangerous?

18. Read Mark 12:28-34. What is the greatest commandment? Have you witnessed people confusing submission to governing authorities as the greatest commandment? Why is this confusion so dangerous?
19. Give examples of issues that are not right but are declared legal. Give examples of issues that are right but are declared illegal. How might resistance be able to fix these issues?
20. What are we announcing by resisting immorality and immoral laws, mandates, and governing authorities?

Chapter 11

1. What is the difference between an immoral culture and an amoral culture? What are we presently living in?
2. How can persecution be beneficial for God's Church?
3. What has happened to Christian congregations by allowing governing authorities to close churches by deeming them as "non-essential" during Covid?
4. Discuss: Have Christians become so soft and lazy that we'll succumb to the dragon and its beasts even before they go through the effort of persecuting us?
5. Read Matthew 10:16-22. What does it mean that Jesus sends us out as sheep among wolves?
6. Read Matthew 10:16. What does it mean when Jesus tells us to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves?
7. Read Matthew 16:24, 25. What does it mean when Jesus instructs us to take up our cross and follow him?
8. What might Christians lose today as we stand up for Christ and his gospel?
9. What is the worst that can be done to us when we are persecuted?
10. What does it mean to be "devil-proof"? How can you become that way?
11. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18. What do we find when we weigh our earthly troubles against our heavenly glories?
12. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 7. How might others see us enduring persecution – like the Thessalonians – and become encouraged and emboldened?
13. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10. What two things will happen on the Lord's Judgment Day? Why is this important for us to remember as we experience persecution at the hands of the red dragon and by its two beasts?
14. Read 2 Timothy 4:2-4. How does St. Paul encourage Timothy – and us – to respond to persecution?
15. We are often tempted to remain safe. Why is it important to remember that Christianity by its essence is unsafe?
16. For what are we praying in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer?
17. In the face of such opposition and persecution, how is it encouraging to know that Jesus remains the King of Glory and the Lord of Armies?
18. Should it be scary that Christians are living in enemy territory? Why or why not?

19. Read Matthew 16:18. What does it mean when Jesus promises that the gates of Hades will not overcome his Church?
20. Are you and your church on the offensive or defensive against the red dragon and his two beasts?

Conclusion

Discuss: What did you learn from reading “Resisting the Dragon’s Beast”?