

Week of January 13-19

DRESS REHEARSAL

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 13

If you have ever been part of a theater production, whether in school or through the community, you know all the hard work that goes into making it a successful endeavor. One of the last steps before a production goes public is the dress rehearsal, an opportunity to perform the play in costume and get all the bugs worked out, so to speak.

In today's chapter reading, John writes about a company that will be producing a performance in the last days of human history but who was conducting a dress rehearsal in his day and age. Actually, the company putting on the production has been scheduling dress rehearsals for millennia trying out different actors for the lead role. The first actor to audition was a pharaoh in Egypt who persecuted God's people mercilessly (Exodus 1-11). When he passed away, the production company sought out another qualified actor. They found their man when they discovered Haman, the Amalekite (Esther 3-9). He played his role to the fullest and almost succeeded in wiping out the saints but failed in the end at the dress rehearsal and was let go. Next up was Antiochus Epiphanes (Daniel 8-9). He was brutal in the role and many saints died during the dress rehearsal. He became the standard that all future actors followed for the part, including the Roman emperor, Domitian, who demanded to be called lord and god and required people to worship him. Others have followed in recent days: Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong just to name a few. The company, though, is still looking for just the right person for the lead role. Eventually, they'll find their man, an actor who will surpass all who have come before him. No longer will auditions be necessary. Neither will any more dress rehearsals. The production will be ready to play to a packed house. The main character will make war against the saints and conquer them (Revelation 13:7). The crowds will love the performance and applaud the actor's exploits (Rev 13:1-3, 8) as well as the producer that put on the show (Rev 13:1-4). Public relations will make use of slick advertising (Rev 13:13-15) and will make sure the production is seen by all. They will market it worldwide (Rev 13:11-12, 16-17). There will be some critics who will patiently and persistently refuse to succumb to the media hype (Rev 13:9) but they will be few and far between. Their refusal to applaud the show will be dealt with accordingly (Rev 13:9,15,17).

Eventually, though, the show will be cancelled when the owner of the theater returns to town. He will no longer allow the star of the show, his public relations director or the producer to put on any more shows in his theater. In fact, the owner has plans to burn the theater down and rebuild a brand new complex. Architectural plans have already been drawn up (Revelation 21:9-25) and it looks like this new facility will be out of this world when it's built!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Look up the verses above to see what has played so far in the world's theater. Then, pray for God's strength to warn others about the upcoming deadly attraction and invite them to view the production starring Jesus instead.

Take-a-way: *When the final production starring the beast goes public, head for the exits (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).*