

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Unholy Trinity, Pt 2 **Revelation 13**

Keywords: Revelation, prophecy, End Times, Satan, Beast, AntiChrist, Unholy Trinity

PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: In this interlude John now shows us what is often called the unholy trinity. Satan brings to the forefront his two servants of evil. Known as the Antichrist and the beast, these two are key in bringing humanity into a state of active worship of Satan.

I. Introduction.

- A. We continue in the book of Revelation in the middle of a key interlude.
 - 1. Today we continue in this interlude where a lot of information is given to us through these visions of John.
 - 2. Read chapter 13:1-18.
 - 3. This is the final part of what is often called the “unholy trinity.”
- B. John introduced the first of this vile union in the person of Satan in chapter 12.
 - 1. Portrayed as a dragon.
 - 2. In the fullest description of who and what he is, we read in 12:9:
 - a. It reaches all the way back to Genesis 3 where sin, brokenness and futility entered into creation—through the ancient serpent.
 - b. He is the devil, the slanderer who accuses God’s people without end.
 - c. He is satan, the adversary who ever seeks to resist, thwart and fight.
 - d. He is the deceiver to the whole world; his lies are designed to encourage and cause people to not see that the only hope for them is Jesus Christ.
- C. The second person is portrayed as a beast arising from the sea in the first half of chapter 13.
 - 1. The Anti-Christ.

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

2. Here we see a person who is possessed by a powerful demon who arises out of the abyss and enters onto the world scene.
3. There are many parallels to the person of Jesus Christ which we saw last week.
4. He is the apex of the countless anti-christs that have come and gone throughout the centuries.
 - a. A unique term used by the Apostle John in his letters.
 - b. 1 John 2:18-22 defines for us the nature of these precursors.
 - (1) 1 John 4:3.
 - (2) 2 John 1:7
5. He is granted worldwide authority.
6. We learned that behind all the kingdoms of this world lie the evil of this being.
7. Behind and through all of this we saw that it all had to do with worship. Will you worship the true God or will you worship Satan?
 - a. Satan gave him his power (13:4).
 - b. The sheer power that was seen in the antichrist is such that the world worships him as well.
 - c. As all non-Christians finally come out of the proverbial closet and begin to worship him, he leads them in false worship, uttering blasphemies against God, His reputation and fame and His people (4-8).
 - d. Beloved, you must grasp this reality.
 - (1) 19 major religions in our time.
 - (2) 290 major subgroups and untold number of smaller ones.
 - (3) Each claiming truth and each with its own unique look.
 - (4) But strip them down to the basics and you have two. Those who love and follow and believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ and those who don't.
 - (5) And in the end all of these fractured, disparate groups will coalesce into one—the worship of this unholy trinity.

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (6) Fathers, can you not see this? Mothers, can you not use this to pray? Oh may you be men and women found faithful to instruct your children from the day they are born to the day they leave your household to look and trust in Jesus Christ alone.
- D. Before getting into the text a brief statement on interpreting it.
1. Antichrist is often highly symbolic to represent the whole or many.
 2. The same approach with the False Prophet.
 3. The opposite approach from my position, where the many are precursors to the one.
 4. Also it is worth noting how both interpretation takes the first person, Satan, to be literal and a single individual in chapter 12, in spite of the heavy symbolism there.
 5. Finally, in Revelation 19:20 we see God casting them into the lake of fire. This is not done to systems, it is done to people.
- E. Now we see this final person of this unholy trinity.

II. The Unholy Trinity.

- A. The second beast from the earth:
1. “And I saw. . .” marks a new scene for John to record.
 2. Coming up out of the earth is usually seen that he is less powerful as the Anti-Christ yet, at the same time, he is much like the Anti-Christ.
 3. Notice that he has these two little horns, bumps really, like a lamb.
 - a. The imagery is one of gentleness. One who is approachable and gentle and kind. One who looks out for you and has concern for you.
 - b. But he is really like a dragon (111b).
 - (1) Similar in concept to Matthew 7:15 where Jesus warns us about those who appear in sheep’s clothing but who are really wolves.
 - (2) We will see that the words he speaks is on behalf of Satan, who is the true dragon.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (3) You can see how this would work. The tribulation is upon the world and here comes a person with good, kind and soothing words.
 - (4) He comes clothed in humility and weakness but is really a man of destruction.
 - c. You will see it developed more in this chapter, but he is not coming in military might but in words of deception.
- 4. Identity:
 - a. Common for Protestants (especially in the 1500-1700's) to see him as papal Rome. The problem is that this beast is seen as an individual not an institution.
 - b. Preterists see him as the priests of the Caesar cult of the 1st century.
 - c. Other have argued that he is embodied as the false prophets Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:24.
 - (1) However the prophets there are in the plural.
 - (2) Though I think it is possible that there is a close connection between this person and the false prophets of Matthew 24. I see it in a similar way as the Anti-Christ. A man empowered and possessed by a powerful demon.
 - d. The most ancient view, including people such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus is that this person is the Anti-Christ's main assistant/right-hand man.
 - (1) This is the best view.
 - (2) We know him as the false prophet of 16:13 and elsewhere.
 - e. What you have here is the making of the unholy trinity.
- 5. He is the mouthpiece of the Anti-Christ.
 - a. Given great power—note the two purposes of this power.
 - (1) First, to have them worship the Anti-Christ (12).
 - (a) Note the verb “to make” here. It is not that he tries to make or hopes to make. He simply does it.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (b) For all the grand words uttered about free will and individual choice we hear and say, this is a passage that slams into our pride.
- (c) Again this is all about worship and the withholding of worship towards God.
- (d) See also 14:9-11; 16:1; 19:20.
- (e) It is worth noting in Revelation 13:13 how this worship is brought about:
 - i) “Great signs” and “makes.” These are not tricks but expressions of great power.
 - ii) Here we also see how he seeks to divert focus from God. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is often described as doing “great signs.”
 - iii) It also reminds me how fast we are to throw our admiration and trust in a man or woman who comes claiming to do great works of power in the name of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Second, to deceive the nations (14).
 - (a) The flip side of the coin. Those signs are used to deceive the nations.
 - (b) They obey by making an idol of him.
- b. He encourages the people to make idols of the Anti-Christ and apparently can even cause those idols to speak! (15)
 - (1) This is something that is quite unique.
 - (2) Thus says the LORD, "Do not learn the way of the nations, And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens Although the nations are terrified by them; For the customs of the peoples are delusion; Because it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and with gold; They fasten it with nails and with hammers So that it will not totter.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good.” There is none like Thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and great is Thy name in might.” (Jeremiah 10:2-6).

- (3) Notice he is given the power to do this. From whom? Likely it is Satan.
- c. It is with the idolatry that those who are believers are going to be singled out.
- (1) Similar to Daniel as well as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Daniel 3, remember who is behind Nebuchadnezzar).
 - (2) The nations will take the mark of the beast on their forehead or hand.
 - (a) This appears to be a literal mark.
 - (b) What it is is unknown, but it is a mark of loyalty. Perhaps a tattoo.
 - (c) It will be either a mark, or the actual name of the Anti-Christ (17).
 - (3) They will be killed and starved.
 - (a) Who are they? Two groups are likely in view.
 - (b) Those who are still alive who were Christians and those who had repented and trusted in Jesus Christ during this evil time.
 - (c) Also remember last week how Satan was seeking to destroy those of Israel who were believers. However God protected them by hiding them.
 - (d) So Satan turned his wrath against those who remained who were Jews. And I pointed out that could only be the 144,000.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (e) They are the martyrs who will be the focus from this point on in Revelation.
- (4) Application: if you think rejecting and standing against falsehood and idolatry is hard not, then what if we live in these times?
- 6. The mark of the beast.
 - a. A lot of talk on this and there is no clear answer.

So the calculation technique called gematria or something comparable must come into play. In ancient times, letters of the alphabet served as numbers. The first nine letters stood for the numbers one through nine, and the next nine for the numbers ten through ninety, and so on. In Greek, the current alphabet did not have enough letters, so certain obsolete letters and signs supplemented the system. Every name yielded a number, the deciphering of which proved to be a fascinating riddle.

Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 183.

- b. Here is what you need to understand. If this Anti-Christ was someone in the past then it doesn't matter, he has come and gone.
- c. If it is a person in the future as I believe, then it is also futile as even today we can use gematria to find many names it could be.
- d. This riddle is given not so that people at any given time can know the identity of the Anti-Christ but rather for those living in that final time.

III. Conclusion.

- A. The stage is set now for the rest of this book as God lays out what is to come.
- B. Students of history can testify to the fact that empire after empire has risen and gone down. Each a forerunner to what is to come.
- C. The curtain is pulled back for us to see the spiritual realm where Satan works his woe and seeks his power.
- D. This is why Paul tells us in Romans 12 that we must not allow ourselves to be conformed to this age.
 - 1. It is done by buying into its thinking and values.
 - 2. Then it is reflected in living out those values and thinking.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. It is all under Satan's power and it is always pulling at you in your jobs, your marriages and your children.
- E. For you who do not believe this, simply hear the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- F. We are again reminded that God calls His children to be found faithful and to hold fast what they believed from the beginning. May this be true of each of us.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Small Group Questions

- **CGL, make sure you take your group through the link I gave you in the group FB page. Discuss how they might be hindered in practicing this in their lives and family life. Discuss how the group might serve as a way to consistently encourage, pray and hold accountable each member.**
- **In thinking through the unholy trinity what are thoughts or consequences for each believer here and now? To facilitate this it is important to remember the core goals of what these three beings have and seek to implement.**