

THE BEAST ... And the Unholy Trinity

By

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The weight of evil which lies so heavy upon our world today is not by accident. The increasing lawlessness, opposition to God, suppression of truth and the general frustration and confusion have a common source.

Jesus recognized Satan as His chief adversary. Paul wrote that our fight is not against flesh and blood, but “against the spiritual host of wickedness in heavenly places.” In the 5 books written by the apostle John he makes clear that the source of opposition to God is Satan. In Revelation 20 we are told that in the last days there is to be a great upsurge of satanic power in an attempt to destroy the purpose of God. The key to understanding present world conflict and chaos is in the fact that behind the variety of evil symptoms lies the chief engineer, Satan. His technique and plan is most clearly pointed out in the 13th chapter of Revelation, which begins with John’s vision of a “beast coming up out of the sea.”

The whole scheme is plainly seen if we recognize that Satan seeks to destroy God’s purpose by deceiving men into following a counterfeit. Men naturally desire the security, the promises and the general design of God’s purpose. The simplest and most successful way to capture men’s allegiance is to counterfeit the program of God and thus draw men away from the truth by offering them a substitute. The 13th Chapter of Revelation is simply an outline of the counterfeit offered by Satan.

However, before one can detect a counterfeit, he has to know something of the genuine article. First we must know God’s purpose, then we can see how Satan is counterfeiting it. The purpose of God as set forth in the Bible is to have man in His image in a perfect creation. Man has been warned that if he should rebel against God, the result would be death, the very reversal of his creation, with man returning to the dust from whence he was created (Genesis 2:17, 3:19). In the Day of Judgment this death becomes final and eternal, unless man has been redeemed by Christ. All those who reject this redemption will perish in a flame of fire along with the destruction of the earth (2 Peter 3:7). The redemption is accomplished by the death of Jesus, Who took man’s guilt and died in man’s place on Calvary, thus freeing man from execution at judgment. The resurrection of Jesus is our assurance that since we are made free from sin by Christ’s sacrifice, we may rise from the dead as He did, to live as deathless and immortal creatures in a new creation, which God will prepare. All those thus subjecting themselves to God through Christ, will make up the Kingdom of God, over which God will reign forever.

The purpose of Satan is simple. He attempts to destroy this Divine plan by causing man to rebel, and thus lose his right to life. The means of bringing about this rebellion is by

counterfeiting the Kingdom of God, as Satan knows that man cannot be a loyal subject of two kingdoms.

Now let us analyze Revelation 13 and see how the counterfeiting is done.

1. The beast arising out of the sea of the human race, with ten horns and seven heads (verse 1) indicates a person with world-wide power, and that this power is to be complete. This, of course, is the counterfeit of the power of Christ to rule over His Kingdom which will finally inhabit the new earth.

2. “The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority” (Verse 2). Immediately this reminds us of the fact that God has given Christ all power and authority in His kingdom. The “dragon” refers to Satan (Rev. 12:9) and the beast is a false Messiah. So the false Messiah gets his power from Satan, just as the true Messiah gets His power from God.

3. “And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death stroke was healed” (Verse 3). This suggests the fact that Christ was smitten with the death stroke, was buried, and came forth from the dead to live again.

4. “And the whole earth wondered after the beast . . . and they worshipped the dragon because he gave his authority unto the beast” (Verse 3-4). In the Christian system, we worship the Father because He has given all authority to the Son.

5. “And they worshipped the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?” In other words the beast appears invincible and all-powerful. In the Kingdom of God, Jesus is the total authority, and in the new creation all will be totally subject to Him.

You will note that the beast, or false Messiah, is not merely obeyed, but actually worshipped; that is, men voluntarily and willingly do his bidding. Even his blasphemies against the true God and war against the saints (Verses 6-7), are whole-heartedly endorsed by “all that dwell on the earth,” except, of course, the true Christians. Can we not already see the emergence of this attitude of hostility to the truth of God as men conform to the “policies” of this world’s rulers?

6. In verse 11 appears the second beast, who is elsewhere spoken of as the false prophet. “And he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight” (Verses 11-12). This second beast, or false prophet, is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. He bears the same relation to the dragon and the first beast that the Holy Spirit does to God and to Christ. Jesus Himself said that the Holy Spirit would not speak from himself, but would take of Christ and declare it unto us, and also that the Spirit would glorify Christ (John 16:13-14). So the false prophet, the second beast, speaks “as a dragon” (the voice of Satan) and exercises the authority of the first beast (the false Messiah).

7. “And he makes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast” (Verse 12). The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to magnify Christ and to cause men to turn to Him. The purpose of the false prophet is to cause people to religiously accept, honor and obey the will of the beast that has world-wide power. (Note: One may see in this a religious system that advocates support of certain political powers.)

8. “And he doeth great signs...” (Verse 13). We are reminded of the signs and miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit to impress men with the Gospel of God. Satan hasn’t missed a bet in counterfeiting Christianity.

9. “... saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast...” (Verses 14-15). Remember that it is God’s purpose to have man in HIS OWN IMAGE, and this image is begun when the Holy Spirit begins to transform a man into a new creature after the likeness of Christ. So the unholy imitation of the Holy Spirit, the false prophet, seeks to make men in the image of the false Messiah, under the direction of Satan. Is there any wonder that modern religions are generating violence and lawlessness?

10. “And it was given unto him to... cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Verse 15). Again, this is a counterfeiting and copying of the warning God gave, that all who should reject Him would be put to death in judgment.

11. “And he causes all ... that there should be given them a mark...” (Verse 16). This is an imitation of the fact that every true Christian is “sealed with the Holy Spirit” until the day of Christ’s coming. Satan seals and marks his worshippers too,

12. “And that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark...” (Verse 17). There is to be no social security for anyone except those who are fully committed to the beast. So it is with the Kingdom of God; God promises His provision, now and in eternity, only to those who are fully surrendered and committed to Him.

13. “He that has understanding let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man...” (Verse 18). The “number of a man” reminds us of the fact that Jesus was one with the human race, that he partook of flesh and blood, was tempted like other men and was “numbered with transgressors” in His death in order to redeem men. As Jesus was the perfect man, the beast sets himself up as the ideal man. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 he is described as the “man of sin.” Obviously he has a ready-made following!

14. What we see here is a counterfeit of the whole Godhead, an unholy trinity, with the dragon, the beast and the false prophet imitating the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Note: Revelation 16:13 shows the unity of the three in trying to overthrow God.)

These comparisons show that Satan is presenting to the world something that is designed to resemble the Kingdom of God, but which is intended to draw men away from God. It is as described by Paul, in speaking of the “last days,” when men shall hold “a form of godliness, having denied the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). One need only to look

around to see that this scripture is fulfilled in our day when prosperous churches overflow on Sunday morning and the devil prospers all week; when “religion” has the greatest following ever; but the power of God grows less evident daily.

What is happening in our world is not a mere failure of men to come to agreement. The radical changes in church and governments are not natural changes wrought by the drift of time. The pressure of social, political, racial and economic strife are not unrelated. Widespread murder and war cannot be attributed to environment and social progress. If we are to take seriously what Jesus said about Satan, and what the Bible says about his schemes, we must also recognize that the world’s problems are a part of his diabolical plan to overthrow the purpose of God and set up a substitute kingdom which rules God out.

Jesus said to the Jews who sought to destroy Him, “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own; for he is a liar, and the father thereof” (John 8:44). The battle between Jesus and the children of the devil has never ceased. Today the battleground is centered right in the church - the church which exhibits a form of godliness, but denies the power of Gospel truth.

There is one way to understand many controversial issues of the day, and perhaps it is the only way. That is to see what part they play in this all out war between the truth of God and His eternal Kingdom, and the counterfeit, false system, which rapidly is being built by Satan.

Paul writes that the coming of this lawless one, “is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:8-10). Satan deceives. The result of this deception is to “perish.” The only protection is the love of the truth. “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

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