

THE SATANIC TRINITY

Robert was a bully. I don't know what motivated him, but I learned he was no one to "mess with." For one thing, he was the biggest kid in class – 6 foot, 6 inches in first grade! Or at least he seemed that big to me. For another thing, he demanded instant compliance.

Our first conflict came when I brought my musical spoons to school for "Show 'n Tell." At recess, Robert asked me if he could borrow them. I didn't trust him, so I told him, "No." "Maybe you didn't hear me," he repeated, drawing himself up to full height, "I want to borrow your musical spoons!" But I wasn't about to let him intimidate me, so I said "No" again. That was my first mistake. My second mistake was failing to keep a lookout on the way home. He ambushed me and let me have it for not sharing with him earlier in the day.

When I finally arrived home, I was crying. My mother wanted to know why. "Robert beat me up on the way home!" "Well, why didn't you hit him back?" she asked. "I did," I said. "I kept hitting him with my lunchbox, but he wouldn't let go of me!"

Bullies. Most of us have had to face them – at school, at work, in our neighborhoods. In fact, spiritually speaking, there is one bully whose blows no one ever avoids. What bully is that? The one from which every bully takes his cue—Lucifer the devil. Hebrews 2:15 says that before we fled to Jesus, we were "held in slavery" by him all our lives through "fear of death." Furthermore, even now that we're safe in Jesus, he still tries to intimidate us. For this reason, Paul encouraged Timothy, the timid shepherd of Ephesus, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Sadly, most of humanity does not share our victory. On the contrary, this study reveals that the situation will only grow worse with time. For it introduces us to two human rulers whom the devil will raise up to bully the whole world into submission to his will. These two characters give us our first glimpse at what many call the satanic trinity. In our last study, we met the counterfeit father who originates all the evil in the world. Revelation 12:9 labels him "that serpent of old, called the Devil or Satan, who deceives the whole world." Jesus added in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

His greatest lie is that like God the Father, he can grant us God's powers. Isaiah 14:13-14 records the boast that led to the loss of his home in heaven, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Silly cherub! A creature cannot be equal to his Creator. But the devil continues to live in denial and lies to us by trying to copy God's glory. His lie to Eve was, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it (the forbidden fruit) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:4-5 ESV) Now, in his greatest feat of deceit, he raises up two partners to counterfeit God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, making a satanic trinity

BEAST #1 - THE ANTICHRIST

The first character John introduces is the Antichrist, whom we met in chapter 6. There he was pictured as a king and savior making a covenant with Israel and appearing to solve the world's problems. But here, at the midpoint of the Tribulation, the man of peace becomes a "beast." Dr. Jekyll turns into Mr. Hyde. That's God's opinion of him. John says he is like a leopard with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. This reminds us of Daniel chapter 7's description of the rulers of ancient Greece, Persia, and Babylon. The winged leopard was Alexander the Great who conquered swiftly and without mercy; the bear pictured Cyrus the Great whose power was absolute and widespread; while the lion was Nebuchadnezzar whose glory puffed him up and caused him to blaspheme the God of heaven.

The point is the coming world dictator will incorporate the worst traits of all three. He will be merciless in his quest for power, iron-fisted in his control of his subjects, and blasphemous in his attitude toward God and His people. This becomes even more obvious as we read four additional facts about him—

1. HIS ORIGIN

Verse 1 says of him, "And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea." The first thing to notice about the Antichrist is his origin – he comes "out of the sea." The definite article "the" points to a specific sea with which John and his readers were familiar. What sea is it? The Great Sea or Mediterranean Sea from which all the ancient empires arose. What does this indicate about Antichrist? Like the ancient dictators, he will be a Gentile king who will rule over the same general vicinity as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Alexander the Great. Daniel the prophet is even more helpful. In Daniel 9:26-27, he predicts that he will be a Roman prince from a revived form of the Roman Empire that will reemerge in the final days.

The second thing John mentions is his spiritual origin. The NASB gives the literal translation of verse 1: "And he (that is, the dragon from chapter 12) stood on the sand of the seashore." Enraged at the Woman Israel, the Dragon who was cast out of heaven now stands at the edge of the Holy Land, surveying the world scene and out of hatred for God, comes up with a final solution for destroying His chosen people. His solution is Antichrist. In a final effort to exterminate the Jews, Satan "gives his power and his throne and his great authority (verse 2b)" to the Beast, making Antichrist the most powerful and evil dictator of all time – the literal son of hell – Satan manifest in human flesh.

The closeness of Satan and the Beast is also seen in verse 1. He has "ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns." This is virtually identical to the description of Satan in our last study. To what do horns, heads, and crowns refer? Revelation 17 says the heads are "seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come." This refers to the six world empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) that have preceded his and over whose territory the Beast will rule. As for the ten horns and ten crowns, these refer to the ten weaker kings and kingdoms with whom Antichrist will share power during the first half of the Tribulation. Before taking over as world ruler, he will head a United States of Europe – whose beginnings we may see in the European Union. But once he's indwelt by Satan, the Beast will no longer be content sharing power. In his final grab for power, he will "bump off" the other ten rulers and crown himself "king of the world."

2. HIS WORSHIP

Even more frightening than his origin is his thirst for worship. Verse 8 adds, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to

the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” All former allegiances will become null and void – including those people share with their family members and long-time friends. No one will know who they can trust, for now all will be given to the Beast. What will motivate the world to worship him? Two factors:

First, his power. Verse 4 explains, “Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against the beast?’” Mankind has always worshiped success – the business genius of Bill Gates, the athletic prowess of Tom Brady, the celebrity of Oprah Winfrey, and the charisma of today's TV preachers. So, when Antichrist appears sporting all the power of hell, people will be impressed. They will be so hungry for the prosperity and security he offers that they won't even ask where it comes from. Consider this excerpt from a speech by a well-known politician. It won the hearts of his countrymen.

The streets of our country are in turmoil; the universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting; Communists seek to destroy our country, and the Republic is in danger – danger from within and without. We need law and order! Without law and order, our nation cannot survive.

Who said it? Adolf Hitler in a 1932 speech to the German people. And the Germans welcomed them as the words of a savior. Germany was in financial trouble. Inflation was so high many were starving. Crime was rampant with Communists stirring up riots in the streets and chaos on the campuses. The nation was on the verge of collapse. But in the midst of the chaos rang a voice of authority. With impassioned fury, Hitler proclaimed the glory of Germany, promising the people they would again rule the world, and the Germans swallowed it “hook, line, and sinker.” Even Christians climbed on board the band wagon. It's said that as many as 80 percent of German evangelicals voted for Hitler. Why? Because of what he promised – power and prosperity. Here was the man who would meet their domestic needs and give them victory over their enemies. Unfortunately, as Hegel the German philosopher warned, the only thing history teaches us is that man learns nothing from history. For when Antichrist rises to power, the world will suspect nothing. They will be so impressed with his power they will simply fall at his feet in worship.

Second, they will worship him because of his resurrection. Verse 3 says the Beast will receive a “fatal” head wound that will be healed. What does this mean? Some argue that the head refers to the revived Roman empire which will be reestablished in the last days. While it's true that the heads of Revelation 17 refer to empires, including a revived Roman empire; they also refer to the kings of those kingdoms. For that reason, I prefer a literal interpretation. I believe at the midpoint of the Tribulation, Antichrist will receive a head wound and appear to die. But then “with all the power and false signs and deceitful wonders” of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9), he will try to counterfeit the resurrection of Christ, claiming that he, not Jesus, is the savior of the world.

There are four reasons I believe this is true. First, his wound is emphasized three times in this passage, indicating that it's something literal, not figurative. Second, verse 14 says it's a wound caused “by a sword,” something that would be difficult to apply to an empire. Third, it's been Satan's ambition from the beginning to counterfeit the works of Christ, robbing Him of His glory. Only a real resurrection could accomplish this purpose. Finally, the reaction of the world suggests a literal resurrection. “The whole world was amazed and followed after the Beast!” I doubt that would happen at the revival of Rome as a power. But the resurrection of a charismatic world ruler? Imagine the amazement if President John F. Kennedy had suddenly sat up in his coffin that dismal morning in November 1963!

Someone may say, "Is it possible for Satan to raise the dead?" Not by his own power. But 2 Thessalonians 2:11 says God will allow Satan to perform unusual miracles in that day, so that those who reject Christ will believe a lie. In this case, the resurrection of Antichrist will be so convincing that the world at large will no longer have the power to distinguish God from Satan. They will be so deceived that they not only will worship the Beast, they will also worship the Dragon who gives him his power. (verse 4)

3. HIS WORDS

One of the typical ways man shows his contempt for God is by taking His name in vain. In his book, Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis says this is proof of God's existence – that deep down in his heart man knows who controls all things, so that when things go wrong, whose name does he curse? The name of God and Christ. But John says this contempt will reach a new height during Antichrist's reign. Verse 5 says, "The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies...to blaspheme God, and to slander His name." Of course, this is happening even now. No longer can we watch an hour of television without hearing the name of God blasphemed. Nor are Christians innocent of these habits. How common it is to hear believers exclaiming, "Oh, Lord!" or "My God!" not only as declarations of praise to God, but as empty expressions of anger or surprise.

One example took place years when I was our church's Christian Education director. Having studied the Third Commandment, we assigned the children to listen for examples in the week ahead when they heard the Lord's name taken in vain. They didn't have to wait long. 10 minutes later, one of our college students came to share with our Children's Church how he came to believe in Christ. Stumbling at one point, he became embarrassed and exclaimed, "Oh, my God!" Suddenly the whole group of children gasped in unison. They had just found their first example. So, watch out! As 1 John 2:18 reminds us, Antichrist is coming, but his spirit is already at work in the world, trying to get us, like Peter, to curse the very Lord who bought us.

4. HIS WAR

Verse 6 says he will blaspheme God's "dwelling place and those who live in heaven." That sounds strange until you remember that's the place from which Satan was just cast out. He was at the Judgment Seat of Christ accusing us of sin, hoping to rob us of our eternal rewards. But then Michael the archangel steps in and casts him to the earth, so that all he has power left to do is curse those who prevailed over him in heaven.

On earth, it's a different story. Verse 7 says, "He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them." What does this refer to? The mass executions of the Tribulation. Revelation 20 says that those who refuse to worship the Beast will be beheaded for their faith. But his victory will be short-lived. Verse 5 says his power will last only "forty-two months." Then those who have been beheaded for their faith will be resurrected and the Beast will be cast alive into the fire that burns forever and ever.

Finally, before moving on to the second beast, I want to end with John's warning in verses 9 and 10. He adds, "If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and faith of the saints." John is emphasizing that the judgments he has just described are not merely for the Beast and his followers, but for anyone in any age who hardens his heart against God's truth and gives himself to the spirit of Antichrist. Why is it called "the perseverance and faith of the saints?"

Because one of the strongest incentives for doing right is the reminder of sin's outcome and the relief of knowing we've been forgiven. Remember that the next time Satan knocks at your door. Remember where you'd be headed and what you'd be facing if not for the grace of Jesus Christ.

(Our next lesson will finish this study of the satanic trinity with a focus on the False Prophet. At that time I will also make available the audio version of this message. Thanks for reading and studying with me.)

Shortly after deciding to follow Christ, I began to share my faith with my co-workers. One of them, named Larry, seemed to take an interest in what I had to say. In fact, he invited to play golf with him and eat dinner with his family that coming Saturday. I accepted and had a good time until the meal ended.

That is when I heard a knock on the door and found two missionaries from his church asking to share their faith with me. It was based on what they called the Book of Mormon. I felt it was kind of them to take an interest in me, but as they shared what they believed, I found my warm feelings dissipate and the hair begin to stand up on the back of my neck. I found it hard to go, but I knew I had to get out of there, for this was a different Jesus than the one taught in the Bible.

Did you know that there are many different spirits in the world? Spirits of false teaching. Spirits of fear. Ever walk down a dark street at night and feel a scary, evil presence? Spirits of rage. Spirits of lust. Spirits of blasphemy. The Bible says there are also many false teachers empowered by these spirits. To spot them, you need look no farther than the New Age Movement. So, John writes, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." (1 John 4:1-3) Aren't you glad, in this world of confusing spirits and competing voices, that we who love Christ have been given the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us?

In our last lesson, we began to study what Bible teachers call the satanic trinity by examining the Antichrist in Revelation 13. In this lesson, John introduces us to the third member of the satanic trinity – the False Prophet who is, in a sense a second Antichrist. That's why John calls him another beast (verse 11). The word means "another of the same kind," indicating that his purpose and character will be identical to that of the first beast. He will possess the charismatic personality and oratorical skills of the Antichrist and will demonstrate the same unswerving devotion to his father the devil. Let's notice four facts about him:

BEAST #2: THE FALSE PROPHET

1. HIS ORIGIN

Unlike the first beast, who comes "out of the sea." John says this second beast will come "out of the earth." What is significant about that? The significance is tied to the meaning of the word "earth." The word should be translated "Land," referring to the Promised Land, the Holy Land, the Land of Israel. This is what would have immediately come to the minds of John's readers. This also gives us a clue the nationality of the False Prophet. He will be a Jew. Dr. Stanley Ellisen, one of my professors

at Western Seminary, explains it like this in his book, [The Biography of a Great Planet](#). The false prophet will be an “apostate Jew who (like Judas Iscariot) sells his soul to the devil as the henchman of Antichrist.”

Furthermore, John says he will have “two horns like a lamb,” but will “speak as a dragon.” Horns represent power – not political power in this case, since his horns have not been crowned like those of the first beast – but religious and spiritual power. That’s why Revelation 19:20 calls him “the false prophet.” He looks like a lamb, counterfeiting the miracles of Jesus, God’s Lamb, who was empowered by the Holy Spirit, but inwardly he will be a wolf and a devil.

Even now we see the groundwork for this person being laid. Groups like the World Council of Churches are hard at work trying to unite all religions into one. My uncle was one of the nicest, most religious you could have met. Religiously, he was a minister in the United Methodist Church. Theologically, he knew the Biblical terminology. But as chief staff officer for the United Methodist Church’s ecumenical movement, he unwittingly acted as a false prophet and helped to pave the way for Antichrist. For in traveling the world and working to unite all religions into one, something had to be left out, and what they chose to leave out was the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ who said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6)

So, let no one deceive you. There are only two religious options in life. You can either follow the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior or you can reject Him and join forces with the spirit of Antichrist. There is no middle ground.

2. HIS MISSION

Verse 12 says he will possess the same of power as the first beast, but instead of using it to glorify himself, he will use it to make “the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast whose fatal wound had been healed.” Sound familiar? It should, for this is Lucifer’s effort to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said He would not draw attention to Himself, but would glorify Christ and convict the world of their need for a Savior. Likewise, to establish a trinity of evil, Satan will raise up a False Prophet whose sole ambition will be to make the world worship the devil and his son (Antichrist).

3. HIS POWER

How will he succeed in deceiving a whole world of sinners? By using the supernatural powers that are given to him. Verse 13 explains, “He performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth.”

The moment people see his amazing tricks, they will assume, “This man must be from God! After all, God is the One who does miracles! That’s true if they are in keeping with His Word and His will. But the question people will fail to ask is, doesn’t Satan do miracles too? The answer is he can and will, if he can use them to keep people from following Jesus. Remember the magicians of Egypt who copied the miracles of Moses? 2 Corinthians 11 adds that Satan is able to “transform himself into an angel of light” to deceive us.

So, be careful! Just because something is supernatural, doesn't mean it is from God. In our area, there is an attractive spiritual teacher named J. Z. Knight, who claims to be the channel through whom Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old spirit speaks. Convinced this is a voice from God, her followers pay as much as \$240,000 a month for her books, seminars, and audio tapes. But is this a spirit from God? The Bible gives us two ways to test her. First, we are to test her teaching. Do you believe that Jesus is the only Christ come in the flesh? (See 1 John 4:3) Ramtha's answer is no, we all have the Christ spirit within us. That is to say, Jesus is not unique. The second test is character. If she is from God, she should be a model of Christ-like behavior. But is she? No, she and her husband created a great scandal by going through a notorious court battle over assets. Money is very important to her. Both are reminders that just because someone has a charismatic personality and claims to be from God, doesn't make it so. Like the False Prophet to come, they could be energized the spirit of Antichrist, not to the Spirit of God.

But the False Prophet's most impressive miracle will be the "abomination of desolation" spoken of in Matthew 24:15. What will this abominable miracle be?

Dr. Warren Wiersbe explains: "It is the image of the 'beast,' set up in the temple of Jerusalem. An idol is bad enough; but setting it up in the Temple is the height of all blasphemy. Since Satan could not command worship in heaven, he will go to the next best place—the Jewish Temple in the holy city."

Why will this be so impressive to unbelievers? Because the image he sets up will appear to come to life. I don't know how, but verse 15 says the False Prophet "will have power to give breath to the image of the beast," so that it "even speaks." Remember that was the sign that man had become a living soul. God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) You may wonder, "Does Satan have power to give life?" No, Satan has no power except what God permits him. But apparently at this point in the Tribulation, man's rebellion has become so intense that, as in Pharaoh's case, God gives Lucifer the power to fully harden the hearts of unbelievers by performing miracles of unprecedented proportions.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 explains, "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

4. HIS DEMANDS

Unlike the Holy Spirit, the False Prophet will not be a gentleman. The Holy Spirit gently woos man's heart into loving and following Jesus. But not the False Prophet. He will trample on man's free will and employ two methods to coerce his worship. First, verse 15 says he will give power to the beast's image to kill those who refuse to worship it. Second, he will employ strict economic measures denying the right to buy or sell to everyone but the followers of the beast. How will he maintain such tight control? The explanation is found in verse 16, "He also forced everyone, small and great, rich or poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666."

Again, we see the stage being set for the fulfillment of this prophecy. No longer is cash the primary medium of exchange. Now the trend is debit cards. Nor is it any longer possible to do business

without a Social Security number. I remember when our daughters were born, we were forced to obtain Social Security numbers for them. Otherwise, they could not be counted as our dependents. In the marketplace, the scanner and universal product code are now the means of identification. In fact, it's interesting to note that the first, middle, and last numbers of the bar code are 6-6-6. Should that cause us to panic and refuse to cooperate with government? No. The fact is, Satan has always been the god of this world and is now working overtime to prepare the way for his detestable duo. But their coming is yet future. As we've learned in our earlier studies, they won't appear until the church is taken out of the world and removed to heaven.

Someone may ask, "What's the significance of the number 666?" That's a question Christians have been asking for centuries. Recognizing that letters often stood for numbers in ancient times, Bible students have come up with all sorts of intricate formulas for calculating "the number of his name." At one time, it was Richard Nixon. Then it was George Bush. Next was Barack Obama. Now it's Donald Trump. The problem is if you work at it hard enough, you can get almost any name to fit. Six is the number of man in the Bible, for that's the day on which he was created – one number short of perfection, for seven is the number of God. Hence, 666 symbolizes man to the third power, a fitting symbol for the satanic trinity. For what will they use their powers do? To trick man into believing the serpent's very first lie: "You will be like God." (Genesis 3:5)

A COUNTERFEIT CHRIST

He was a charismatic personality. Ordained as a minister by the Disciples of Christ in 1964, he immediately began to exhibit an intense concern for people in need. He began a health clinic for the poor, offered counseling services for ex-prisoners and juvenile delinquents, job training, rest homes for the elderly, offered college scholarships to the underprivileged, and fed over 1,000 people a day. His efforts won the support of politicians and celebrities alike.

Then in 1973 things began to turn the corner. The pastor began to find fault with the government and organized religion. He also began to sow doubt in the Bible's authority and reliability as well as the correctness of historic Christian beliefs. In their place, he inserted himself as the supreme authority.

Jean Mills remembers, "He took the Bible, threw it on the floor and shouted at God, 'If there is a God in heaven, strike me dead...' In 1973, he came out and said he wanted to be called 'Father,' and he wanted us to pray to him. He wanted us to carry around his picture in our wallets...Up to that time, we loved him. We followed him because he was a neat guy...our buddy. We would sit in his house and..joke with him. But in 1973 he turned into 'Father' and you couldn't confront him anymore."

Who was this bully and counterfeit Christ? Jim Jones, the man who led 800 adults and children to their deaths in the jungles of Guyana. How did he deceive them? At first, he appeared to be a loving savior, offering help and hope to all who came to him. But as time passed, his true colors were seen. His interest was not in helping people; what he desired was worship. He wanted to take the place of God Himself! And through fear, punishment, poverty, and isolation, that's what he extracted from his followers, the end of which was death.

The same thing will be true when Satan takes possession of Antichrist – only then it will involve worldwide death. The man of peace will become the beast, and the second beast or False Prophet, will force the world to worship him.

Aren't you thankful that you don't have to be here for that day of judgment? You can escape the spirit of Antichrist right now by taking Jesus as your Savior!

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