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## *The Unholy Trinity*

### **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. Last week we were introduced to a very clear picture of Satan.
  - 1. In chapter 12 he is portrayed as a dragon.
  - 2. We saw how throughout the ages he is working behind the scenes and through nations and people to work his ill.
  - 3. We saw the intense hatred for Jesus Christ and his efforts to destroy Him since the Fall of mankind.
  - 4. We saw that he is the power behind world kingdoms.
  - 5. And we saw that he has no love for any person. He is truly the original murderer and he is no friend to humanity, though he will sell himself otherwise.
  
- B. At the end of the message I made a comment that I fear may have been lost in all of the information given.
  - 1. Basically said that though Satan is evil and powerful, he is also under the control of God. He is a junk yard dog, but he is also on a leash.
  - 2. We see the evil perpetuated by these kingdoms. We see that he is behind those who do such evil. And then we can wonder, where is God and how is it that this can occur? Is God really in control?
  - 3. Habakkuk is a good place to remind us that even in the midst of great evil, God is present and He is accomplishing His perfect purposes. (Explain the flow of the book)
  - 4. To make this even more explicit remember always Joseph.
    - a. Explain the story.

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- b. “And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 45:5-8)
- c. “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Genesis 50:20)
- 5. To the one who learns this and keeps it close to his heart there will be found much peace even as you weep in the midst of evil.
- 6. But I also had the community groups think through the subtle ways Satan is working behind the scenes in the various facets of our lives. (Give a few examples).
- C. Today we continue in this interlude where a lot of information is given to us through these visions of John.
  - 1. Read chapter 13.
  - 2. Having introduced Satan in chapter 12 now John brings to us two more beings that will be very prominent in the final days of the Great Tribulation.
  - 3. They are both described as being ‘beasts.’
    - a. The first comes up out of the sea.
    - b. The second comes up out of the earth.
  - 4. And together with Satan they form what is often called the unholy trinity.
  - 5. There is also a very close connection between this chapter and Daniel 7. Put a bookmark there to turn quickly.

## **II. The Unholy Trinity.**

- A. The first beast from the sea:
  - 1. This is a continuation of the vision regarding the dragon’s war against the offspring of the woman. Now with a different focus.

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2. Revealed after Satan is cast out of heaven. These two beasts act as the main instruments of his fury.
3. Again we will see heavy symbolism here.
4. The first comes out of the sea. Many opinions on what this means.
  - a. The ancients saw the sea as more powerful than the ground making this an image of one very powerful.
  - b. Some see it as the beast arises from the mass of humanity, which is likely. “Sea of humanity.”
  - c. However add to that that in 11:7 and 17:8 you have the beast arising out of the abyss.
    - (1) The abyss is where we saw demonic horde arise.
    - (2) It is where Satan will be bound for 1,000 years.
    - (3) So, with that in mind I think what you have with the Anti-Christ is a person or persons possessed by a powerful demon.
    - (4) (Suggest Lutzer’s book, *Hitler’s Cross* if time permits).
5. The identity—many views:
  - a. An inhuman entity, the incarnation of evil.
  - b. The Roman Empire. This one shows how throughout the years since Revelation was written people have used current events to explain this book.
  - c. A final view takes him as an actual person—the Anti-Christ.
    - (1) Parallels with 13:8 and 17:8.
    - (2) His “number” in vs 18 is that of a man.
    - (3) There are parallels with Jesus Christ:
      - (a) His death/resurrection of vs 3.
      - (b) Both wield swords.
      - (c) Both have followers with marks on their forehead.
      - (d) Both have worldwide authority vs 7.
6. Horns, heads and crowns.

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- a. 10 horns are ten kingdoms. Apparently there shall arise 10 key nations or powers over which he will rise to power.
  - b. The seven heads refer to seven world monarchies.
    - (1) 17:9-10 refers to them as well.
    - (2) I referenced these last week: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and this final one made up of 10 nations/empires. It flows out of the vision of Daniel.
    - (3) The beast only has one head at a time, each one rising to power, and then giving itself over to a new one.
      - (a) The symbolism is simply one kingdom morphing into another kingdom, and then into another one.
      - (b) It is a panoramic image where you are standing off looking at it as each head rises and falls.
      - (c) But the point of it all is that behind all of these kingdoms is Satan working in and through these people for his evil.
    - (4) This also shows why though the Anti-Christ at the end of time is a human, he would have been demonic as he worked his evil in and through these monarchies.
  - c. Crowns are probably refer to self-government of each of these nations. According to 17:13 they will eventually give up their self-governance to the Anti-Christ.
7. Note the similarities of Daniel 7:3-7 with vs 2.
- a. One other interesting note, they're given in reverse order in verse 2 from Daniel's vision.
    - (1) In Daniel it's lion, bear, leopard. Here it's leopard, bear, lion. And the reason is very simple, Daniel was going from Babylon to Medo-Persia to Greece.
    - (2) John in seeing the image Greece to Medo-Persia to Babylon.

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- (3) Why? Simply because they are view in order as John recites history looking backward at it from his viewpoint and how Daniel saw history looking forward.
8. More important to note is that his great power came from Satan.
- a. Here we see the rise of Satan and the Anti-Christ as objects of worldwide worship.
    - (1) A key part of this is the fatal wound that is healed (3).
    - (2) Here we are reminded of the desire of Satan that none worship the true God.
    - (3) Just like the false magicians of Pharaoh's court could replicate certain works of marvel so too does Satan here.
    - (4) But it is destined to fail for it flows from evil and rebellion and shall not stand in the day of judgment.
    - (5) But it is also serving to confirm the hearts of humanity. They look everywhere for a savior except to Jesus Christ alone. This will be to their shame.
  - b. There is a peace that comes simply due to the fact that no one could hope to wage war with him (4).
  - c. This is a great time of blasphemy, where the world shall utter "who is like the beast." When they should be saying "who is like the Lord."
    - (1) These words shall haunt them for all eternity.
    - (2) You can see the tension that is building here. For there are also those who are believers, who cannot and will not worship the Anti-Christ.
    - (3) Think of how believers will look to the rest of the world. It is obvious that they worship wrongly. And they are being killed. This is where 1 Corinthians 15:19 comes into play.
  - d. Vss 5-8 describe what he does.
    - (1) Given the power to speak great things and of blasphemies.
    - (2) He mocks God and His people.

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- (3) This is to turn all against them so as to kill them.
- (4) Notice vs 7, how it mirrors 5:9.
  - (a) Fits with Daniel 7:21-23—note the consolation in vs 22.
  - (b) In Revelation 13 we see great irony for though the saints are being killed they shall still reign on the earth.
- (5) He will be the object of worship by all who are not the elect.
  - (a) What is the reality in the secrets of each person's heart right now shall be seen in the open at that time.
  - (b) No more moralistic or atheistic pronouncements from humanity. The bible has long stated that apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ all are under the will, power and control of Satan.
- e. A final warning.
  - (1) Textual issue with vs 10. Compare NASB with ESV or NIV.
    - (a) There is are some important manuscripts that make the verb passive rather than active.
    - (b) I hold that NASB has it properly translated, mostly due to the majority of the texts have it rendered that way.
    - (c) If it is correct, then we are being warned against taking vengeance into our hands during this great tribulation.
    - (d) If NIV and ESV are correct, then it is saying that we are to submit to God's sovereign plan for our lives. If we are to die by the sword, we shall.
  - (2) Behind either way to render it is a much more important point to remember—we are called yet again to endure.

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- (a) The idea of Christians leading rebellion is foreign to the bible. We are not zealots leading the charge for Christendom.
  - (b) But we are also not to be faithless but faithful.
    - i) In the bible study for the new plant Matt Miller pointed out that suffering and persecution are the usual methods of God for producing holiness in His servants.
    - ii) This was in the context of learning about the goodness of God.
    - iii) When you really understand that God is good and does only good to His children then you can endure.
    - iv) When you doubt He is good then your faith shall tremble.
  - (3) Here John is telling us, “if you can hear and understand then take warning. Your life is not yours, it is in the hand of the living God. It is sufficient. It is good. So take heart and stand fast in your faith.”
- B. 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. The imagery is one of gentleness. But he is really a dragon. He comes clothed in humility and weakness but is really a man of destruction.
  - 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.

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- 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) To have them worship the Anti-Christ (12).
    - (2) To deceive the nations (14).
  - b. He encourages the people to make idols of the Anti-Christ and apparently can even cause those idols to speak! (15)
  - 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).
    - (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).



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- (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.
  - (e) They are the martyrs who will be the focus from this point on in Revelation.
- 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.

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- 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.
  - 3. It is all under Satan's power and it is always pulling at you in your jobs, your marriages and your children.
- E. 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.**

**And may the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.**

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## **Small Group Questions**

- **In passages such as this one it can be easy to begin to question God's goodness and His right to have His children go through some of what is described in this book.**
  - **As a group, go through the book of Job starting in Job 38-39. Read it out loud in sections. At the end of those two chapters discuss what stood out and what was the point.**
  - **Then read together Job 40:1-5. Take time looking at these verses, perhaps phrase by phrase. What is God's point or points? What is Job's response? What do you think of his statement? Finally, how does God respond to it?**
  - **Now read 40:6 - 41. Again discuss what stands out. Note how God uses the behemoth and Leviathan as points of questioning. They are great beasts that are of immense strength and a source of terror to mankind. Why use them and what is God saying by asking these questions?**

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- **Finally read 42:1-6. Again carefully go through this piece by piece. What is Job's response? How is it different from before. And what is God's response?**
- **Finally, pray for one another to have minds that are discerning of the wiles of Satan, hearts that are eager to turn away from evil, and a spirit of endurance in the midst of sorrow and affliction. Literally, really pray for each other.**