

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

Revelation 13:11-18

I. Introduction

1. Many of you are familiar with the three “I’s” of Scripture. It is inspired, inerrant, and infallible, with...
 - A. Inspired meaning that while man may have penned the words as human agent of the Lord, they did so under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit;
 - B. While written in their own voice and from their own experience, inerrant means the human authors relayed exactly what God desired them to communicate; and
 - C. Infallible meaning God’s word is without error.

All three of these are generally accepted as Christian orthodoxy by much, if not most, of what I will refer to as the authentic church.

Along with stating these, it is right for us to bring a presumption of allowing God’s word to speak for itself. That means we check our bias and pre-determinations at the door as we seek to understand what the authors intended rather than importing our thoughts and beliefs as to what they say and mean.

2. There is a fourth consideration of God’s word that is the least accepted, at least practically.
 - A. It is a consideration that is under the spotlight in our passage today.
 - B. It is a consideration that is under the spotlight in our lives today.*
 - C. It is a consideration that more than any others speaks to and of our heart.
 - D. It is a consideration that speaks of the battle unfolding here in the second half of the tribulation period.*
 - E. It is the consideration of authority.

3. Just who has authority in our lives? The Bible states quite clearly that ALL authority is God's. Satan and his two sidekicks, the Antichrist (or beast from the sea) and the Prophet (or beast from the earth) want and war for the authority. Mankind's hearts also chaff against any authority not our own. Even Christians will try to use an authority sharing relationship with the Lord whereby they keep all they can and just let the Lord deal with the inconsequential or impossible. Yet, when forced to choose sides between God and Satan, too many will choose Satan.

So...what say you? Who carries the final authority in your life on all things?

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II. Revelation 13:11-12: The Second Beast's Arrival

1. Here we have the arrival of the final person of the evil trinity. His purpose and power come from the dragon or Satan. What the two horns, like a lamb, speak of is contested, but it certainly does make us think of the Jesus as He is the Lamb of God. So, as with the unholy trinity being a deceptive counterfeit, this leader is another counterfeit representing gentle and kind religious leadership visibly while his words revealed the reality of his evil character birthed in Satan. This would be in keeping with him being the Prophet pointing the world to worship the Antichrist.
2. A reasonable speculation of many is the Prophet will be the head of the apostate church during the first half of the tribulation. In such case, it seems reasonable the Prophet would have either been (a) closely aligned with the Antichrist during the first half of the tribulation or (b) had somehow survived and realigned himself with the Antichrist after the apostate church's destruction (an event many point to as being reflected in Revelation 17:16) following the Antichrist rises to power.

Finally, it also seems reasonable to presume that the Prophet, both as the head of the apostate church and given his part in persecuting the Jews, is not likely a Jew.

III. Revelation 13:13-14: The Power to Persuade

1. 2 Thessalonians 2, please turn there with me, speaks of the time we are reading about here in Revelation. In v4, the Antichrist has revealed himself as “God” in the abomination of desolation. Then picking up in v9, we read:

The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive {the love of the truth}, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God **will send them strong delusion**, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. - 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12

2. So, just as was prophesied, we see the Prophet using great wonders and signs to persuade mankind the Antichrist is worthy of their worship. The description of the miracles he will do is convincing, so convincing that many will follow his lead. Yet, there are some who will not be fooled by his evil. Who and what lessons can we learn from this?
3. Beyond the 144,000 witnesses, there are those that will not be fooled by the seemingly miraculous. These “unfoolables” will question any and all performing with such obvious power. They will accomplish this by:
 - A. taking every thought, word, and action captive to the word of God. This is because in that day just as with today...any miracles of God will point exclusively to Christ, including His character and purposes; with an emphasis on the Good News or His incarnation, atonement, and teachings;
 - B. Do the doers of the signs and wonders leverage their miracle for personal gain or to get you to do/support something unbiblical?; and

- C. Do the signs and wonders guilt or otherwise bring the focus on the exchange of money or other things of value?

IV. **Revelation 13:15-18: Worship the Beast or Else**

1. Knowing the end is catapulting closer, Satan uses the Prophet to deliver a 1-2 punch.
 - A. First, the statue of the beast is miraculously brought alive or so it seems, for only God can actually give life. *This act brought them yet more credibility and they leveraged their increasing power toward demanding the death of any that would not worship the Antichrist or his image.*
 - B. Second, in certainly one of the most often referenced prophecy's in all of Scripture, the Prophet will introduce and enforce the placing of "the mark of the beast" on the right hand or forehead of every person. *The mark will be necessary to receive the goods and services necessary for life.* Further, this mark will represent ownership. *Any not having this mark would not only be out of luck in getting products and services, but would be marked for death.*
 - i. This mark is yet another counterfeit of the living God, who we learn from **Ephesians 1:13-14** and numerous other passages, places His seal of the Holy Spirit on His children.
2. In Revelation 13:18, we have a highly contested Scripture with many varied interpretations of just what the beast's name may be.
 - A. On one hand many have favored using a conversion of letters to numbers (i.e., Roman numerals) adding up to 666 as representing a library full of possible beast names. *Of course this is further confused with some of the manuscripts having the number 616 instead.* Some of these folks then take the Greek form of a Latin name as translated from Hebrew as a possibility.

B. A second common approach is viewing the number 666 as symbolic in representing 1 less than the number of perfection or the number for man who persistently falls short of perfection.

In the end, we don't know and I pray none of us will be here in the flesh to find out!

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V. Closing:

1. This chapter is full of prophetic imagery and action. **Much of which has engendered great disagreement.** What is clear is that Satan and his two appointed leaders will rule over earth during the period – **again suggesting the two leaders are Gentiles from a revived Roman empire.** It is also clear that deception will remain the same hallmark of Satan in that day as it is today.
2. Further, we see that mankind is unable to solve its problems and will, as a group, fall in lockstep with the Prophet and the Antichrist in following Satan and warring against God. **This both points to man's unrighteousness AND, at the same time, our desperate need for Christ.**

Revelation 13:1-10

Discussion Prompts

Don't be shy or embarrassed, this is a safe place to talk, learn, and grow. All of us should walk with an attitude of grace and Godly love in encouraging one another to contribute to our shared growth in the Lord.

For more discussion questions helping your faith to grow, please download the sermon documents typically posted the day after each sermon on the watch tab of our App or website.

1. How can we communicate with (a) people considering Christ and (b) believers withhold some authority that giving God full authority in our lives is in their best interest?
2. What can we learn from the “unfoolables” in Revelation 13 about discernment and resisting deception in today's world?
3. As a group, make a list of the top 10 deceptions Satan is using today. Then discuss how a believer can be more discerning and what they can do about each one.

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

I. Introduction:

- Inspired, Inerrant, Infallible....AND _____.

II. Revelation 13:11-12: The Second Beast's Arrival

- Consider things we know and things we suspect about this beast.

Additional Scripture References: Re 17:16

III. Revelation 13:13-14: The Power to Persuade

- Who are the “unfoolables”?
- List the things they and we can do to not be fooled by the enemy.

Additional Scripture References: 2 Th 2:9-12

IV. Revelation 13:15-18: Worship the Beast or Else

- Hard decisions...get the mark or die, worship the beast or have your spouse/kids die.
- In a sense, it's the same decision we face every day, just with different forms and intensity of pressure.

Additional Scripture References: Eph 1:13-14

V. Closing

5-Day Devotional Revelation 13:11-18 The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

Day 1: Understanding Authority

Reading: Rev 13:11-18

Devotional: In Revelation 13, we are presented with a scenario where the Antichrist and the Prophet seek to claim authority that rightfully belongs to God alone. This passage prompts us to examine the authority in our own lives.

Who truly governs your decisions, beliefs, and actions? Consider reflecting on the areas where you struggle to surrender to God's authority. Pray for the humility to recognize God's ultimate rule over your life, and seek His guidance in areas where you may still resist His authority.

Day 2: Counterfeit vs. Genuine

Reading: John 10:10-15

Devotional: Just as the Prophet masquerades as a gentle leader, we often encounter counterfeits in life that seek to divert us from the genuine love and leadership of Christ. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, contrasts against false leaders by His willingness to lay down His life for the sheep.

Reflect on the influences in your life—are they leading you toward the fullness of life Jesus promises or away from it? Commit to discerning and following Christ's voice above all others, inviting His protection and guidance daily.

Day 3: The Power of Persuasion

Reading: 2 Thes 2:9-12

Devotional: The Antichrist uses signs and wonders to deceive those who refuse to love the truth. In our daily lives, we are bombarded with persuasive arguments and displays of power that challenge our faith. How do you guard your heart against deception? Anchor yourself in God's Word and His truths. Cultivate a deep love for truth by regularly immersing yourself in Scripture, and develop a spiritual radar that quickly identifies what aligns with God's character and His eternal purposes.

Day 4: Enduring Hope in Crisis**Reading: Rom 8:35-39**

Devotional: The threats posed by the Antichrist remind us of the inevitability of spiritual warfare, yet Romans 8 assures us of inseparable love and victory through Christ. When faced with intimidation or fear, remember that nothing can separate you from the love of God.

Take comfort in the promise that God's love and presence are constant, even amid trials. Meditate on the steadfast hope and security found in Christ, and consider how you can embody this hope to those facing struggles around you.

Day 5: Sealed with the Spirit**Reading: Eph 1:13-14**

Devotional: While the world may seek physical marks of allegiance to earthly powers, Ephesians emphasizes that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit—a mark of belonging to God. This spiritual seal is a guarantee of our inheritance and identity in Christ.

Reflect on the significance of being marked by God's Spirit. How does this assurance influence your daily walk and decisions? Celebrate your identity as a child of God, and live in a way that boldly reflects His ownership and grace in your life.

Small Group Guide

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first; you may stay with one or more of those:

1. All authority is ultimately God's, yet mankind often struggles with acknowledging this, sometimes yielding authority to Satan instead.
2. Comprised of Satan, the Antichrist, and the Prophet, this counterfeit entity aims to deceive and wield control over humanity.
3. The Prophet, through wonders and signs, leads many astray—highlighting the importance of discerning truth through Scripture.
4. The Mark of the Beast symbolizes allegiance to the Antichrist and Satan, contrasting with God's seal on believers.
5. Remaining grounded in God's Word is essential to discern and resist deception.

Discussion Questions: Start with any questions prompted by the Holy Spirit. Then consider the following:

1. Authority Check: What does it mean that "all authority is God's," and how is this demonstrated in our daily lives? How can we avoid attempting to share authority with God in our decisions?
2. Identifying Counterfeit: In what ways do you see counterfeits of Christian leadership or teachings in today's world? How can we discern and guard against them?
3. Heart of Persuasion: What are some subtle ways you see society encouraging worship of things other than God? How do these parallels connect to the descriptions of the Prophet's actions?
4. Faith and Courage: The sermon mentions those who will not be fooled by the signs and wonders. What practices can help you develop a similar unflinching faith and courage?

5. End Times Relevance: How should our understanding of the prophetic messages and the end times impact our lives and relationships today?
6. The Number 666: How do you interpret the significance of the number 666 as mentioned in the sermon? How does this influence your perspective on scriptural prophecy?
7. Community Support: How can the small group and broader church community support each other in preparing for spiritual battles and remaining accountable?

Practical Applications: Query the group for personal applications first; then explore one or more of the following:

1. Daily Devotions: Commit to daily reading and meditating on Scripture, using it as a lens to understand world events and societal trends.
2. Accountability Partner: Pair with someone in the group for regular check-ins to encourage each other in your faith journeys and spiritual discernment.
3. Service Projects: Engage in acts of service that align with Christ's teachings, demonstrating the character of Jesus rather than seeking personal gain.
4. Prayer Focus: Pray for discernment, strength, and courage to identify and resist deception, and for the perseverance of those who remain faithful to God's Word.
5. Invite Conversation: Open dialogues with others outside the group about their views on authority, faith, and biblical truth, fostering an environment for spiritual discussion and growth.

Closing Prayer: Close the session by praying for each other, asking God to help the group walk in faith and under His authority.

Discussion Questions

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

1. In what ways do humans often challenge or reject the concept of divine authority in favor of personal autonomy, and how does this affect spiritual growth?
2. How do the ideas of inspired, inerrant, and infallible scripture influence your understanding and interpretation of biblical texts?
3. What are some practical steps we can take to prevent our biases from influencing our understanding of scripture?
4. What is the significance of the 'unholy trinity,' and how does the concept of counterfeiting divine leadership speak to the risks of deception in spiritual matters?
5. How might the role of the Prophet during the tribulation reflect broader themes of religious manipulation and false prophecy?
6. How does the idea of the 'mark of the beast' challenge our understanding of identity, ownership, and allegiance in a spiritual context?
7. What are the similarities and differences between the prophetic imagery of Revelation and today's societal challenges regarding spiritual authority?
8. How do concepts of power and authority in Revelation contrast with Jesus's teachings on leadership and servitude?
9. In considering the pervasive nature of deception mentioned in this chapter, how can believers ensure that their focus remains on Christ and not on manifestations of falsehood?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

1. The Role of Authority

In the sermon, the question of who holds the ultimate authority in our lives is posed. How does our understanding of authority affect our daily decisions and interactions with others? Who do you think should have the most authority in our lives, and why?

2. Recognizing the Counterfeit

The sermon discusses the concept of deceptive counterfeits, like the unholy trinity mirroring the genuine divine trinity. How can we discern what is genuine from what is counterfeit in our everyday lives, whether in relationships, media, or beliefs?

3. Miracles and Motives

The Prophet in the sermon uses signs and wonders to deceive people. How can we tell if actions and miracles we witness or hear about today are rooted in true goodness or in deception? What criteria can we use to evaluate the motivations behind them?

4. Facing Deception Together

The sermon suggests that deception is a hallmark of Satan now and in the future. What are some ways our family can protect and support each other from deception, especially when we face difficult decisions or receive conflicting information?

5. Understanding Prophetic Imagery

The sermon contains complex prophetic imagery about end times. How do you feel about such prophecies, and how do they influence your faith or perspective on the future? How can we engage with these topics as a family to strengthen our understanding and trust in God?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Listening to Good Leaders**: Encourage children to think about who they listen to and how they can tell if someone is a good leader, like a teacher or parent, who cares about them.

Discussion Question: Can you think of a time when you listened and learned something important from a leader in your life? How did you feel about it?

2. **Recognizing Good Choices**: Help children understand the importance of making choices that are honest and kind, even if they see someone else making different choices.

Discussion Question: What are some good choices you can make this week that show kindness to others?

3. **Understanding the Truth**: Simplify the concept of truth by focusing on always telling the truth themselves and understanding that God wants them to be honest.

Discussion Question: Why is it important to tell the truth, even if it seems like a small thing?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Evaluating Influences**: Discuss with children how to determine whether someone's influence is positive or negative, especially peers in school or activities.

Discussion Question: How do you decide if someone is being a good influence in your life? What are some signs that you should be careful?

2. **Making Smart Choices**: Encourage them to think critically about choices, especially when under pressure, by weighing consequences and aligning them with the values they've learned.

Discussion Question: Can you share a time when you had to make a difficult choice? What helped you decide what to do?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Evaluating Content Critically:** Encourage teens to critically evaluate the content they consume, whether in social media, films, or friends' advice, and to seek out truth.

Discussion Question: When you see something online that doesn't seem right, what steps do you take to verify if it's true?

2. **Navigating Peer Pressure:** Talk about strategies for resisting peer pressure and staying true to their beliefs, even if it means standing out or being different.

Discussion Question: What are some techniques you use to handle peer pressure? How can you support friends who also want to make good choices?

3. **Choosing Influences Wisely:** Discuss the importance of choosing friends and influencers who reflect positive values and support their growth.

Discussion Question: How can you determine which influencers or role models are worth following, and what values should they have to be a positive influence in your life?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for GenZ

Revelation 13:11-18

The Unholy Trinity – Part 2

1. Discernment in Digital Spaces

Bible Reference: 1 John 4:1 - "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Application: In digital spaces, not every opinion or post reflects truth. Practice discernment by critically evaluating online content. Ask yourself if it aligns with biblical teachings and whether the source has integrity.

Scenario: While scrolling through social media, you encounter differing opinions on important issues. Use biblical principles to assess the credibility of each post and share your thoughts in a way that reflects God's truth.

2. Resisting Peer Pressure in Group Settings

Bible Reference: Romans 12:2 - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Application: Resist the urge to conform to group norms that conflict with your values. Instead, allow your faith to shape your actions and decisions.

Scenario: Your friends suggest an activity that goes against your values. Use your inner conviction shaped by God's word to explain your stance and propose an alternative activity that aligns with your faith.

3. Building Christ-Centered Relationships

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 15:33 - "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"

Application: Choose friends who reinforce your faith and challenge you to grow spiritually. Maintain relationships that encourage mutual respect and understanding based on biblical love and principles.

Scenario: As you build friendships or relationships, evaluate if they uplift you toward Christ or pull you away. If needed, have open discussions about the kind of influence you wish to have in each other's lives.

4. Upholding Integrity

Bible Reference: Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Application: Let integrity guide your interactions with others, from the content you create or share online to the comments you make when you are with your friends. Ensure your actions honor God.

Scenario: Before saying something or posting online, consider if your words honor God. Choose to conduct yourself in a way that honors God and brings light to others.

These application points aim to help Gen Z navigate their daily environments while faithfully following Jesus' teachings with Biblical integrity and living out the gospel.