

AN UNHOLY TRINITY

Revelation 13:1-18

Dr. John Walvoord, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary wrote this about Revelation 13.

Chapter 13, taken as a whole, is one of the great prophetic chapters of Scripture and is the only passage which presents in any detail the two principal evil characters of the end of the age who form with Satan an unholy trinity. ... Dominated by Satan, he (Antichrist) is Satan's masterpiece and substitute for Christ, and is aided and supported by the second beast called the false prophet.¹

Revelation 12 revealed that midway through the Tribulation Satan will be cast to the earth. Knowing his time is short; Satan will work through the Antichrist and the False Prophet to receive the worship he craves. This is the theme of Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:1–2 (ESV)

¹ *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.* ² *And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.*

This beast that rises from the sea is the Antichrist. The meaning of the symbols used to describe the Antichrist have been explained in previous sermons available on both our church website and smartphone app.²

THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA – THE ANTICHRIST (13:1-10)

The second half of verse 2 explains how it is that the Antichrist will be able to accomplish things no other human being has ever been able to accomplish; namely, world domination. The Antichrist will accomplish world domination because he will be empowered by Satan.

Antichrist will be empowered by Satan (13:2b)

Revelation 13:2b (ESV)

And to it (the first beast) the dragon (Satan) gave his power and his throne and great authority.

Through the Antichrist, Satan will perpetrate a most incredible and effective deception; he will mimic the death and resurrection of Jesus through the Antichrist. As a result, many people the world over will be persuaded to worship the Antichrist.

The assassination and resurrection of Antichrist will cause many to worship him (13:3-4)

Revelation 13:3–4 (ESV)

³ *One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.* ⁴ *And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"*

As the counterfeit Christ, Antichrist will mimic the death and resurrection of the true Christ. The word *seemed* makes it sound like he doesn't actually die, but the same phrasing is used to describe Jesus, the Lamb in Revelation 5:6.

Revelation 5:6 (ESV)

⁶ *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...*

Clearly Jesus died and rose again. So I'm inclined to believe that the Antichrist actually dies and that he dies as a result of an assassination attempt. Verse 14 reveals that the Antichrist is killed by a weapon.

¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 210–211.

² Website: gccramona.com / Smartphone App: [gccramona](http://gccramona.com).

Revelation 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ *and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.*

This assassination attempt may very likely be related to Antichrist's campaign against the Ten Kings. If some or all of the Ten Kings are in on the assassination plot, imagine the affect of his resurrection upon them. They may very well conclude that since they can't kill him they better join him. Thus, as Revelation 17 reveals, the seven remaining kings give their authority to the Antichrist (17:13).

The end of verse four indicates that many the world over will reach the same conclusion about the Antichrist – he is unstoppable. As a result, many will worship not only the Antichrist but, recognizing the power behind the Antichrist, they will worship Satan as well.

Revelation 13:4 (ESV)

⁴ *And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"*

Antichrist's ultimate objective is to be worshipped by mankind. He will use his power to deify himself and to compel unsaved mankind to worship him.

Antichrist will use his power to deify himself as the sole object of man's worship (13:5-8)**Revelation 13:5-8 (ESV)**

⁵ *And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.*

Satan desperately wants to be worshipped as God (Isaiah 14:12-14). Just as God the Father is worshipped and glorified through the Son, so also, Satan will be worshipped through the Antichrist.

Verse five says that the Antichrist "was given a mouth" probably indicating that the Antichrist will be a powerful communicator. Almost all dictators have risen to power by controlling people with their words. Adolf Hitler mesmerized huge crowds with his speeches. Satan will make the Antichrist a great communicator. In his speeches the Antichrist will blaspheme God, His name, His tabernacle in heaven and the martyred saints in heaven.

As we have seen a number of times previously, Antichrist will be allowed to rule for 3 ½ years. His authority will extend over every tribe, people, language and nation. He will persecute the Jews, Messianic Jews and believers in Jesus Christ. And he will be worshiped by everyone around the world except those who are believers in Jesus.

This revelation of the Antichrist concludes on a sobering note. The point of verses 9-10 is to encourage believers living at this time during the Tribulation to prepare for persecution and to remain faithful to Jesus even unto death.

Revelation 13:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ *If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH – THE FALSE PROPHET (13:11-18)

Verses 11-18 reveal that the Antichrist has a very powerful partner who will promote the worship of Antichrist, making it the official religion of the world!

The False Prophet will perform miraculous signs to promote worship of the Antichrist (13:11-13)

Revelation 13:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ *Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.*
¹² *It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.* ¹³ *It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,*

In Revelation 16:13; 19:20; and 20:10, this second beast is called the *False Prophet*. The *False Prophet* completes the counterfeit trinity of Satan (mimicking God the Father), the Antichrist (mimicking God the Son) and the False Prophet (mimicking God the Spirit). One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and lead people to trust and worship Him (John 16:7–15). The “ministry” of the False Prophet will be to deceive the world and promote the worship of Antichrist.

According to verse 11, the False Prophet will be a smooth operator. He will appear to be as harmless and gentle as a lamb. He'll be a smooth talker, but his words will be full of lies and deceit just like the master deceiver, Satan.

Energized by Satan, the False Prophet, will perform miraculous signs. He will be able to call down fire from heaven to earth duplicating the sign performed by the Two Witnesses. Undoubtedly this will give him great credibility with the masses so much so that when he commands them to make an image of the Antichrist, they comply.

The False Prophet will cause an image of the Antichrist to be set up in the Tribulation Temple (13:14)

Revelation 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ *and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.*

This image of the Antichrist is elsewhere in Scripture called the *abomination that causes desolation*. That such an image would someday defile the Jewish Temple was revealed to the Old Testament prophet Daniel.

Daniel 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ *And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.*

The Tribulation begins with the signing of a seven year security treaty between the Antichrist and Israel. After 3 ½ years the Antichrist will violate the covenant. He will invade Israel. He will violate the Tribulation Temple and through the False Prophet his image will be set up in the Temple. The Antichrist will proclaim himself God.

When teaching on end times, Jesus warned the Jews living in Judea at that time to flee when they see the image set up in the temple. The worst Jewish holocaust of all time will be unleashed by the Antichrist during the second half of the Tribulation.

Matthew 24:15–16, 21–22 (ESV)

¹⁵ *“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),* ¹⁶ *then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

²¹ *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.* ²² *And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

The Apostle Paul also prophesied this event.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 (ESV)

¹ *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,* ² *not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.* ³ *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,*

the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

In the ultimate act of blasphemy, Antichrist will sit himself and his image in the temple of Yahweh, the one true God, and declare himself to be God.

This image will be no ordinary image; the image will “come to life” and enforce worship of the Antichrist.

The False Prophet will animate the image and enforce worship of the Antichrist (13:15-18)

Revelation 13:15–18 (ESV)

¹⁵ *And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.*

The False Prophet will “give breath to”, that is, bring to life the image of the Antichrist. He will enforce worship of the Antichrist by seeing to it that anyone who refuses to worship the image be killed. He will also enforce worship of the Antichrist through what has been called *the mark of the beast*. Those without the mark either on their right hand or forehead will be cutoff from the marketplace. If they survive, they will only do so by trading on the black market. It will be very tempting for believers to compromise, but Revelation 14:9-12 issues a very stern warning.

Revelation 14:9–12 (ESV)

⁹ *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”*

¹² *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*

There has been a lot of speculation about the number of 666 and to whom it refers. 7 is the number of perfection and in Scripture refers to God and His perfections. 6 is the number of man; one number short of perfection. Mostly likely the numerical value of Antichrist’s name as spelled in Hebrew or Greek will add up to 666. But there will be no need for speculation in that day – the name of the Antichrist will be well known throughout the world. The significance of 666 is to drive home the point that in spite of his claims to be God, the Antichrist is nothing more than a man.

In summary, Revelation 13 reveals that in the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, Satan will work through the Antichrist and the False Prophet to compel mankind to worship him.

REFLECTION

Jesus warned his Jewish countrymen about false prophets. In Matthew 7:15-23 He gave practical advise how to spot a false prophet.

Godly character is the chief mark of a true prophet, not charisma (Matt. 7:15-20)

Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV)

¹⁵ *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*

Obedience to God's will is the pursuit of a true prophet, not miraculous deeds (Matt. 7:21-23)**Matthew 7:21–23 (ESV)**

²¹ *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

In this day and age of so many religious teachers we need to be discerning. We need to continue growing in our knowledge and application of God's Word so that we can discern between those teaching God's truth and those twisting God's Word. The more deeply grounded in God's Word the less vulnerable we are to being deceived.