**THE UNHOLY TRINITY**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 13**

Since the beginning of time there has been some world power or world leader who has desired to rule the world. There were the Assyrians and Babylonians. Then along came Alexander the Great. He was followed by the Greek and Roman Empires. Later there were such notable figures as Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin. All of these men tried but failed to secure supreme control over the entire world. But there is going to come a time in the Tribulation when one man will arise and will gain control of the world. That man is the antichrist. *[point out that Satan always has his man ready]*

To control the entire world the antichrist will need a computer with an enormous database that is capable of processing information very fast; he will need reliable communications; he will need a common currency to control the world’s economy; and he will require one world religion, a state religion. Our world has been moving fast in these directions for some time. They make it conceivable that one person could rule the entire world.

So, who is the antichrist and what will he be like? John describes him this way in his epistles: “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour… Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” (1 Jn 2:18, 22) “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 Jn 4:3) “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (2 Jn 7)

Basically the antichrist is described as an individual that embraces anti-Christian attitudes, purposes and motives. The antichrist will oppose Jesus Christ and deny His deity. He will denounce Christianity. John refers to such an individual as “antichrist” because he opposes everything that Jesus stands for. Like Satan, he will be a great deceiver. He will make himself out to be something he is not in order to be embraced by the world. With that background let’s look at Chapter 13…

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.

The “beast coming up out of the sea” is the coming world ruler the antichrist. Because of the term “beast” the ESV repeatedly uses the pronoun “it” to describe the beast. But “it” is actually a “he,” a person. “The sea” referenced here is not literally a sea, but speaks of something else. Consider Revelation 17:15: “The waters that you saw… are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.” I believe that the sea here represents a mass of humanity. The antichrist arises from this mass of humanity, which means that he is human. But he is no ordinary human. As we will see he is controlled by Satan.

Notice his ten horns and seven heads. This is the same description given for the dragon, identified later as Satan, back in Revelation 12:3. So, you see, the antichrist bears a family resemblance to his father the devil. Satan is the great imitator and here we see an example of that. Jesus once said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Jesus was so much like His Father that when men saw Jesus, they saw God. In the same way the antichrist looks, acts and thinks just like Satan. HE is the spitting image of HIS father!

Horns symbolically represent earthly power. So, like Satan, the antichrist is quite powerful. We will go into more detail on this later in Ch 17 but for now what you need to understand is that the seven heads represent seven kings; five have fallen, one is, and the other has yet to come. The five kings who already fell are generally accepted to be the once-powerful ancient kingdoms of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Assyria and Greece. The one king that is speaks of the Roman Empire, which still existed when John penned Revelation. The king that is to come will be the antichrist. He is the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8 and 8:9 and the “man of lawlessness” of 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

The ten horns represent a ten-nation confederation that will be formed and controlled by the antichrist. This international confederacy will be united in one purpose, that is, to promote the agenda of the beast, the antichrist. Here we see the antichrist merge together his church and state. Modern day communism is very similar.

The end of verse 1 describes “blasphemous names on its heads.” The antichrist will act just like his predecessors. All of the leaders of those other six ancient kingdoms exalted themselves as God and encouraged their subjects to worship them. They all had huge egos. In the same vein, the antichrist will set up a form of worship that forces people to bow down before him as though he were a god. The powers he receives from Satan will make him appear God-like and he will deceive many people.

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 verse directly correlates to the dream that Daniel had in Daniel Chapter 7. In Daniel’s dream the leopard represents the swiftness of the Greek Empire, the bear represents the savagery of the Persian Empire, and the lion represents the supremacy of the Babylonian Empire. The rule of the antichrist will be like all these previous empires rolled into one. The antichrist will gain power quickly. He will be ruthless and will rule with the supreme authority given to him by Satan.

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.

There are two possible interpretations, both of which lead to the same result, which is, that the world follows blindly after the antichrist.

Interpretation 1: The antichrist is killed and then Satan miraculously restores him back to life. I personally discount this one because only God has the power to raise somebody from the dead. Satan can’t do that. With that said, it is possible that Satan, being a master of deception, could fake the antichrist’s death and his subsequent “resurrection.”

Interpretation 2: There will be the revival of one of the six ancient kingdoms though we do not know which one. Perhaps there will be the revival of the Roman Empire or of Alexander the Great or of King Nebuchadnezzar. We really do not know. I believe that this verse is describing the revival of an empire, similar to one of those just mentioned. This makes it possible for one man to control the entire world.

Bottom line – the whole world follows the antichrist!

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?"

We know from Rev 12:17 that the dragon is Satan. The beast, the antichrist, has been given the power of Satan. The people will be so enamored with the antichrist that they make him an object of worship.

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.

That last phrase, “those who dwell in heaven” I believe is a direct reference to the Lord’s church that was raptured at the beginning of Chapter 4 and is up in heaven with the Lord at this time (my personal view). During the Tribulation, the antichrist no doubt will use the media to rail against God and His saints and promote an anti-God agenda. During the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, the antichrist will have completely unrestrained power to say and do as he pleases.

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.

The antichrist will exert power over all of the nations of the earth. He will persecute the saints, those thousands who have been saved since the rapture of the church and are living on earth during the Tribulation. The vast majority of the world will follow the antichrist, will worship him and will reject Jesus Christ. Only those who have truly followed Christ (whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life) will not bow down to the antichrist. We will see a bit later that many of them will be killed for refusing to worship the beast’s image.

These verses make it clear that in the Tribulation one WILL take a stand – either for the antichrist or for Jesus. No fence straddling. Those who are saved, the saints of God, will be persecuted severely. They will suffer unspeakable brutality for their faith and for their loyalty to Christ. I urge you to hear the message of the Book of Revelation – NOW is the time to be saved. You may think that the Christian life is tough now. Well, it’s a cakewalk compared to what our brothers and sisters in Christ will go through during the Tribulation.

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.

John reminds his readers that there is coming a day when God squares all of His accounts. There is coming a day of reckoning when God will render to everyone what is rightfully due. Evildoers will be punished. God will punish those who persecute the saints. For the dear persecuted saints who are martyred for their faith during the Tribulation, they will receive their reward later in Revelation Chapter 15.

Death is not the end for His saints. God gives us the victory. An eternal reward, that is, to be forever in His glorious presence. Knowing all of this should be a source of great encouragement to the Tribulation saints.

Well, we know about the dragon, Satan. He is anti-God. He desires to be just like God, but there can only be one God. We just looked at the beast, the anti-Christ. Now we are introduced to the third member of the “Unholy Trinity.” He is the second beast, or the unholy spirit.

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

The third member of the unholy trinity is referred to in this verse simply as “another beast.” I believe that this is the same person later in Ch 16 called the “false prophet.” Notice the description of this second beast: He is “like a lamb,” but that is merely a deception. He speaks as a dragon, or Satan. He is passive, kind and docile, congenial and draws people to himself. However, when he speaks, he has the words of death.

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.

This second beast, this false prophet points everybody to the antichrist and extols his virtues. Once again, we see Satan the imitator at work. The false prophet (this other beast) points everyone to the antichrist the same way the Holy Spirit points everyone to Jesus.

13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,

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.

The false prophet has strange powers, yet another example of how the devil counterfeits the method of God. Don’t be drawn to signs and wonders. The devil can perform signs and wonders. Jesus Himself warned us, “If anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:23-24)

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.

Some translations render this verse this way: “He had power to give life unto the image of the beast.” The correct word here is not translated “life” but as the ESV translates it, “breath.” The false prophet will cause the image of the beast to appear to come to life. It will appear life-like, but it is only a deception. It will not really be alive. Satan does not have the power to give life. The image of the beast will look like it has the spirit of life but do not be fooled. It only has the spirit of death.

What happens next reminds me of Daniel 3, the story of fiery furnace. Again, the devil is a nothing but a copycat. Remember the story? King Nebuchadnezzar erected an image and forced everyone to bow down to it. Those who did not bow would be cast into the fiery furnace. Three faithful worshippers of Yahweh refused to worship the image and were bound and thrown into the flames. In that story the three faithful followers were supernaturally spared. Well, here in the Tribulation a similar scenario takes place. Those who refuse to worship the image of the beast are killed. There is no indication that God spares any of them. They stand for their faith and they die for their faith.

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.

You’ve been waiting to hear about the mark of the beast. Well, here it is. Those who are loyal to the antichrist receive what is referred to simply as “the mark.” This mark is designed to mock the seal that God placed on His followers in Revelation 7. What the mark is for sure we can only conjecture. All we know is that it somehow comprises the numbers 666. In Bible numerology “six” is the number of man, one short of the perfect number seven.

Perhaps the mark of the beast is an invisible mark that can be scanned and seen only with an infrared beam. Or maybe this mark is some kind of a chip implant. Or it could be something else entirely. Whatever the case, in order to buy or sell anything, one must have this mark on them. It will be a requirement for one to have this mark if they are to provide food for their family. All who do not have the mark of the beast, including those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and do not express their allegiance to the antichrist, will be left to die. Not exactly a compassionate government!

Now, you need to understand something. There is coming a day when everybody in the world will bow their knee, but it WON’T be to the antichrist. Praise God there will be thousands loyal to Jesus Christ who will refuse to give in to evil pressure. The antichrist will NOT be able to force everyone to worship him even if though he threatens their lives. The Bible says that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2:10-11)

You can bow the knee to Jesus Christ voluntarily today with no threat of impending doom, just a simple invitation. To refuse to bow to Jesus Christ is to bow to the antichrist. If you don’t stand on Jesus’ side, then you are on Satan’s side. There is NO middle ground. You are either for Christ or you are anti-Christ.

Central message I take away from Chapter 13 and the entire book of Revelation is BE SAVED TODAY - Don’t wait.