

REVELATION: HELP FOR LIVING, HOPE FOR LEAVING

Sermon no. 16

SEVEN KEY FIGURES OF THE TRIBULATION Part 2 (The Unholy Trinity)

Revelation 13

In Revelation 12, we saw a blatant imitation of God the Father – Satan, the dragon. In Revelation 13, we see the last two of seven main characters of the Tribulation. They complete the “trinity from hell”: the antichrist – imitating the Lord Jesus, and the false prophet who imitates the Holy Spirit.

It seems unbelievable that the world will be worshipping a man and the devil. But by nature, men have an undeniable religious impulse, and they also have an undeniable rebellion against God. What men want most is not the elimination of religion, but their own religion. They want the kingdom, but they don't want God in it. As we look at the two beasts, remember this – man and Satan at their worst only prove that the best thing in life or death is God:

1. THE BEAST FROM THE SEA: THE ANTICHRIST (Revelation 13:1-10)

a) His Appearance (Rev. 13:1-2)

- The Rider on the White Horse of Revelation 6 (The First Seal) now shows his true colors. It was never a political agenda but a spiritual one – to gain the worship of the world on behalf of Satan. This is a blatant imitation of Christ's First Coming, which aimed to bring worship towards God by redeeming men through Christ. In this case, the goal is to damn the world to hell through the Antichrist.

b) His Acclaim (Rev. 13:3-4)

- What is the danger of looking for signs and wonders? It's the danger of seduction by the spectacular, something more common than you realize. When you enter a church for any other reason than the Lord Jesus – the popularity of the church, the entertaining jokes of the preacher, the celebrities who go there, or the signs and wonders in that church – you've been seduced by the spectacular. And that is an insult to God. Let it be Christ, and only Christ.

c) His Activities (Rev. 13:5-10)

- There are times when evil will seem to triumph, but those who belong to God will live unashamed of God. Let your “patient endurance and faithfulness” be driven by your unwavering trust in the ultimate sovereignty of God over evil.

*Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone that's strong.
"Truth", forever on the scaffold, "Wrong", forever on the throne.
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above His own!*

James Russell Lowell

- God is a God of second chances. Those left behind by the Rapture are given a second chance in the Tribulation, but it will be a difficult choice. To be unashamed of Christ then will be synonymous with martyrdom. The best time for repentance and faith is always now.

2. THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH: THE FALSE PROPHET (Revelation 13:11-18)

a) His Description (Rev. 13:11-12)

- Unlike Antichrist, the false prophet will come not as a killing animal, but as one who appears gentle and deceptively attractive.

b) His Deceptions (Rev. 13:13-15)

- The false prophet will produce supernatural fire to convince men of his power, imitating the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-13). Also, through modern technology or demonic power, he gives the appearance of life to the idol of the Antichrist and makes it speak.
- His gentleness is a lie, since he is a mass murderer (v. 15), but some Gentile Christians and the believing remnant of the Jews will be spared to populate the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 12:14-17).

c) His Decree (Rev. 13:16-18)

- He forces everyone to receive a mark (imitating God in Rev. 7:3) without which you cannot buy or sell. To refuse the mark is equivalent to rebellion, which is treated with execution (v. 15). Rather than crack our heads trying to know the meaning of 666, it is better to know the Christ who secures you from ever needing it.
- The Great Tribulation is a time of slavery, blasphemy, apostasy, and gross satanic activity. Let us thank God that we have the blessed hope of the Rapture (Titus 2:13). But as we contemplate this, let us not forget our responsibility to be involved in the propagation of the Gospel, the only hope for the world.

Final Thoughts:

We need to read the Book of Revelation over and over again. It's not about deciphering 666. It's not to figure out who the Antichrist will be. This was written to give us hope and to bring us back constantly to the fact that life is short and we'll be in heaven soon.

The person who doesn't understand the Book of Revelation will go through life in his own personal tribulation. But the person who understands it will live in a state of anticipation and celebration. Every single one of us will go through this week either in tribulation or celebration. It becomes a celebration when you realize that "Christ in you is the hope of glory" (Romans 5:2; Colossians 1:27) and you make it the highest goal of your life "To Know Christ and Make Him Known."