

Antichrist: The Beast From The Sea

Revelation 13:1-10

Introduction: “Antichrist.” The word itself conjures up images of supreme evil, ultimate deception and eschatological holocaust. Called the “beast coming up out of the sea” in Revelation (13:1), its origin is the abyss or bottomless pit (11:7). It speaks of one who is coming at the end of history, though he has been preceded by many forerunners (1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7). It identifies one who will be given power, a throne and a great authority from Satan himself (13:2). He will be worshiped as a god and the whole world will “marvel as they follow” him (13:3). But, his reign of terror will not last. Actually it will be quite brief (13:5-7).

- It is interesting to notice that the word “antichrist” does not appear a single time in Revelation. In the apocalypse he is called “the beast.” Elsewhere in Scripture he is called:
 - 1) The little horn Daniel 7:8
 - 2) The prince (ruler) who is to come Daniel 9:27
 - 3) The lawless one (or man of sin) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8
 - 4) The antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7)
- The word “antichrist” (Gr. *antichristos*) means 1) one who is against Christ or 2) one who is in the place of Christ. Both are true. The beast is an anti-

messiah. He is in war against Christ even as he attempts to replace the true Christ.

- Now it is very important to understand that the concept or idea of Antichrist is multifaceted. It is used in at least 4 ways:
 - 1) A evil empire or political power (Rev. 13, 17)
 - 2) A past and present impersonal force, presence, or spirit (the evil spirit of this age; 1 John 4:3).
 - 3) Literal persons who are forerunners of the final Antichrist (1 John 2:18).
 - 4) The final and climatic embodiment of satanic power and opposition to God in a person (2 Thess. 2:3-8; Rev. 13:1-10)

There is a fluidity and even overlap, especially in Revelation 13:1-10, where the beast, the antichrist, at times seems to be both a political empire and at the same time a person. This is not all that unusual. When one thinks of evil Nazi Germany you think of Hitler. When you think of the founding of America you think of George Washington.

- Throughout history many candidates have been proffered as the coming Antichrist. Bernard McGinn in *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination With Evil* catalogues much of the history. He notes “the mythological background of the picture of two Beasts is apparently Jewish

speculation about Leviathan and Behemoth... (Isa. 27:1, and especially Job 40:15-41:26)” [p.54]. There are also Old Testament types in men like the Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus and the intertestamental Antiochus Epiphanes. (Kim Riddlebarger, *The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist*, 40). Then the parade begins. Notable suggestions include Nero, Domitian, Constantine, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Martin Luther, Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Gorbachev, Jimmy Carter, Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan, Anwar Sadat, Saddam Hussein, Barack Obama, Pat Robertson and numerous popes (McGinn, 260-61). In fact Luther, Calvin, Cotton Mather, John Knox, Cramner, John Wesley and Roger Williams all identified the Pope as the Antichrist.

- On November 1, 1999, *Newsweek* Magazine’s cover story was “Prophecy.” It reported that 40% of U. S. adults believe the world will end in a Battle of Armageddon between Jesus Christ and the Antichrist. It also reported that 19% of Americans believed the Antichrist was alive on the earth right now. Well one thing is certain. All those in the past who made a specific identification of the Antichrist have one inglorious thing in common: They were all wrong! Every one of them was wrong. That should at the very least give us pause in following in their footsteps.

- I believe Revelation 13 and the Bible’s teaching on the Antichrist is not intended to provoke our speculation as to who he is. Rather, I think God’s design to instruct us now and in every generation concerning what antichrists do and how they work as they are empowered and deployed by the dragon (13:2), Satan himself. The text seeks to enlighten us to the devices of the devil, the strategies of Satan.
- Chapter 13 is a part of a long parenthesis or interlude (10:1-14:20). Here we are introduced to two beasts. The antichrist or beast from the sea is the focus of 13:1-10. The false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10) or the beast from the earth is the focus of 13:11-18. Joined at the hips of the dragon, they constitute nothing less than a counterfeit trinity!

Satan counterfeits God the Father.

Antichrist counterfeits God the Son.

False prophet counterfeits God the Holy Spirit.

I. Satan Works through evil individuals and governments to advance his

kingdom 13:1-2

- Satan, the dragon of chapter 12, stands on the sand of the sea in 12:17. The sea was often associated with evil in the ancient world, “the reservoir of chaos” (Mounce, 244). In the apocalypse it may even “symbolize the Abyss, the source of demonic powers that are opposed to God...” (Johnson, EBC,

705). Others think it could represent also the nations of the world with all its ethnic, national, political and social chaos and wickedness (cf. 17:15; MacArthur, vol. 2, 41). From the sea John sees “a beast (Gr. *therion*) rising out with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.” The word “beast” appears 16 times in Chapter 13. Fifteen refer to the Antichrist, and one to the false prophet (13:11).

- This begins the biography of the Beast. Ten horns speaks of great power. Seven heads may draw from seven-headed monster mythology in ancient New Eastern text. It also speaks of great power, but also ferocity and intelligence. Ten diadems conveys great authority and political influence. However, there may be more though we must be very cautious at this point. Revelation 17:9-12 tells us the seven heads are both seven mountains or hills (the city of Rome) and also seven kings or kingdoms. The ten horns are a future political alliance in consort with the beast who will enjoy a very short reign. The same symbolism was applied to Satan in 12:3. On these heads are blasphemous names, mentioned four times in our text (vs. 1, 5, 6 [twice]). MacArthur well notes,

“In addition to his ten horns, the beast is described by John as having seven heads. As will be seen in Revelation 17..., those seven heads

represent seven successive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Antichrist's final world kingdom. The ten diadems (royal crowns) indicate the horns' regal authority and victorious power. John also noted that on the beast's heads were blasphemous names. Like many of the Roman emperors and other monarchs before them, these rulers will blasphemously arrogate divine names and titles to themselves that dishonor the true and living God. They will follow the pattern of their master, Antichrist, "who opposed and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess. 2:4). [vol. 2, 43].

- Verse two draws on the vision of Daniel 7:3-8 but in reverse order, perhaps because John is looking at it in the past. Here, three terrifying elements of three great empires of the ancient world are said to characterize the beast. The leopard represented the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. It speaks of the swiftness of its destructive power. The bear represented Medo-Persia, and symbolized its great strength and devouring power. The lion was Babylon. Majesty power, fierceness are the ideas here. This awesome political entity and person is empowered by the dragon, who will give to it and him three things: 1) his power, 2) his throne and 3) great authority. The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says, "The dragon works through this beast. This beast is simply Satan's agent. Satan claimed this power to Christ (Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:6) and Christ called Satan the prince of

this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). So the war is on (*Word Pictures in the N. T.*, Vol. VI, 398-99).

II. Satan desires to be worshiped and treated like God 13:3-4

- Satan is the great counterfeiter, the great imposter. He is a wanna be god who will never be God. Still, he delights in aping the one true triune God. In verse 3 we see him counterfeiting the resurrection of the Son. In verse 4 we see him counterfeiting the worship of God.
- Verse 3 tells us that one of the heads of the beast “seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed,” leading the whole world to be amazed and to follow the beast. Verse 14 adds that the beast “was wounded by the sword and yet lived.” The phrase “mortal wound” (*ESV*) or “fatal wound” (*HCSB*) is the same word in Greek translated “slain” in 5:6, 9. There it addresses the vicarious death of the Lamb. The word “lived” is “the very term used for Jesus’ resurrection in 2:8” (Osborne, 495). What we have here is nothing less than a counterfeit death and resurrection taking place at the end of the age. Some believe it is the resurrection of a political entity (The Roman Empire dead and revived), others of the personal Antichrist, and others a combination of both. I am sympathetic to this last view. Walvoord well notes, “The identification of a head with the government over which he has authority is not a strange situation. The person is often

the symbol of the government and what can be said of the government can be said of him” (p. 199). Interestingly, many believed in a *Nero redivivus* myth or idea, with Nero returning from the dead as Antichrist. In fact in Armenian “the word Nero became and remains the equivalent for the Antichrist” (Beasley-Murray, 211).

- Amazed at the apparent resurrection of the beast, the whole earth begins to follow him. “And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given great authority to the beast” (v. 2). And, in addition, they also worshiped the beast declaring, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” Wonder turns to worship. Divine worship is substituted by devil worship. Idolatry of the most terrible sort imaginable now blankets the earth. “Who is like the beast is” a parody of the acclamation of Yahweh (Exod. 8:10; 15:11; Ps. 71:19; 89:8; Isa. 44:7; 46:5; Mic. 7:18). “God alone is incomparable, and the beast once more is usurping what belongs only to God” (Osborne, 498). Swindoll is insightful as usual at this point, “How like Satan! The one who “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) will provide the world with a copycat “christ” to match all their man-centered ideals of personality, politics, and power. No wonder the whole world will be swept off its feet by this attractive, persuasive figure (13:3)! In fact, we are told the world will worship the dragon through their worship of the Beast. In this rabid fit of

hypernationalism that will make Hitler's Third Reich look like a high school sporting event, the world will cry out, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" (13:4)." (Swindoll, 181). Satan desires to be worshiped and treated like God. He always has. He always will.

III. Satan and his minions will be given great power but only for a short time **13:5-8**

- The beast's and his reign of terror will have definite and specific characteristics. These are carefully logged in verses 5-8. He is "given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words." Directly he is given this mouth by the dragon, but ultimately he is permitted to speak by God. He, like the devil, is God's beast and on God's leash. With this mouth he will utter haughty, boastful, proud words of arrogance. He will also speak "blasphemous words," a word appearing 3 times in verses 5-6. The objects of his slanders are noted in verse 6: it is God, his name, his dwelling (lit. "tabernacle") and his people ("those who dwell in heaven"). Mounce provides helpful commentary at this point: "The beast opens his mouth to blaspheme God. This activity of the Antichrist is clearly portrayed in 2 Thess. 2:4: "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God...proclaiming himself to be God." The blasphemy of Antiochus (Dan. 7:25; 11:36) and the use of divine titles by the Roman emperors would for John identify the Antichrist as the one in whom secular authority had

assumed the mantle of deity. The expression, “to open the mouth,” is frequently used at the beginning of a prolonged discourse (cf. Matt. 5:2; Acts 8:35) and suggests that the blasphemies of the beast against God were sustained.” (Mounce, 250).

- These blasphemies, these slanders, indeed will go on for a sustained period of time. John says it will be for 42 months or 3 ½ years (v. 5). But, not only will he speak against God and His people, he will act against God and His people. In a story all too familiar for those who know the history of the church, the beast will be “allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them.” He will persecute God’s people and many will perish as they take their faithful stand for the Lamb. Conquering the people of God will not satisfy the insatiable appetite of Satan and his Antichrist. Again, by divine permission, he will be given authority over the very people the Lamb came to redeem: “every tribe and people and language and nation” (v. 7). Indeed “all who dwell on earth will worship him” (v. 8). Unbelieving humanity on a world-wide scale will worship the beast as god. Mocking the authentic worship rightly given to the Son of Man in Daniel 7:14, the beast “imitates the glory, authority, and worship of which only Christ is worthy” (Osborne, 502). All of this and more will Satan, the beast and the earth-dwellers do. But, it will only be for a very short time.

- You know it is a truism: everybody worships somebody. Who do you worship? Here are two possibilities: Christ or Antichrist!

IV. Satan’s deceptive devises will not fool the followers of Jesus who will persevere even as they suffer **13:8-10**

- Verse 8 says “all who dwell on the earth will worship [the beast].” But, there is a 2nd group on this planet who are not “earth-dwellers” and devotees of the dragon and beast. They follow a different leader, march to the beat of a different drummer, pledge allegiance to a different master. And, unlike the earth-dwellers “whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (v. 8), theirs has. The book of life is the book containing the names of the redeemed, the saved (cf. Phil. 4:3), and those who follow the Lamb have their name in this book. We should note in this the security of our salvation. Our name was written in this book in eternity past. Further, this is a book that belongs to the Lamb who was slain (5:7, 9). I love what MacArthur says about this verse, “Seven times in the New Testament, believers are identified as those whose names are written in the book of life (cf. 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3). The book of life belonging to the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, is the registry in which God inscribed the names of those chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. (This phrase is used as a synonym for eternity past in 17:8; Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 2

Thess. 2:13; and 2 Tim. 1:9). Unlike unbelievers, the elect will not be deceived by Antichrist (Matt. 24:24), nor will they worship him (20:4). Antichrist will not be able to destroy believers' saving faith, for the Lord Jesus Christ promised, "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5; cf. 1 John 5:4). Believers have been in the keeping power of God since before creation, and they will be there after the destruction of this order and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth (21:1ff.)

Believers are doubly secure, because the book of life belongs to the Lamb who has been slain. Not only the decree of election, but also the atoning work of Christ seals the redemption of the elect forever." (vol. 2, 50).

- Verse 9 is a simple invitation to pay attention and be spiritually discerning. This is an invitation every generation needs to heed, but how much more as we edge toward the end of history. Verse ten is somewhat enigmatic to be sure. I believe it best to understand it as a proverb of destiny for those whose name is in the book of life. You can expect to be captured and imprisoned. You can expect to be slain as to your future destiny on this earth. However, endure (persevere) and remain faithful. David Platt puts it

well, “It is, and it will be, costly to follow Christ in this world, but don’t compromise! Even if it means you’re being slain, hold fast to your faith. Even if it means you lose your job and all your money, hold fast to your faith. Even if it means ridicule and oppression and isolation or imprisonment or death, follow the Lamb! And one day you will stand with him, you will sing with him, and you will be satisfied completely in him” (Sermon).

Conclusion

Satan’s Antichrist is coming. But, so is God’s Christ, the Lord Jesus. What will you do? Will you be pro-Christ or anti-christ? Will you worship God and the Lamb or will you worship the dragon and the beast? The choice is that clear. The choice is yours. Your eternal destiny hangs in the balance. Your eternal home is at stake. You must take a stand. You are taking a stand right now. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, “Anyone who is not with Me is against Me.” There is no neutral ground. You are either with Him or against Him. So, what will you do? John Piper is right, “The main point of the book of Revelation is that Christ wins in the end. And that to have your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, so that you don’t get any mark of belonging to any beastly power, is absolutely essential. Those who have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life are enabled not to give in to any beastly, antichrist power that comes along.

And that's the most important thing for us individually: that we love Christ so much that we defeat Satan by the word of our testimony and by the blood of the Lamb, and thus find ourselves on the right side of the Lamb when he comes when others are going to say, "O rocks, fall upon me!" because they can't bear to look upon the wrath that will stream forth from the face of the Lamb of God when he comes the second time." ("Is the United States Talked About In the Book of Revelation," 5-20-09).