

WORSHIP SERVICE - 1.16.2022

COUNTERFEIT TRINITY - Part 1

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: Even as Satan and his allies make war on the saints, believers never have to fear because they belong to the Lamb and conquer through endurance and wisdom.

Revelation 13:1-10

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. 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?"

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. 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.

II. THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA

ITS DESCRIPTION AND IDENTITY

- The imagery comes straight out of Daniel's vision of the four great beasts that come up out of the sea.
- In Daniel 7, the first beast looked like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, the fourth beast was different from the others and it had ten horns.
- Those four beasts symbolized four great empires: Babylonians, Medes/Persians, Greek, and then Rome was the 4th terrifying beast. These empires all persecuted God's people.
- This beast is a composite of the four beasts described in Daniel 7.

- Seven and Ten, numbers of fullness and completeness and horns with diadems as symbolic of authority and rule shows that the scope of this beast is global. It encompasses the whole earth.
- The beast emerges from the sea which the OT depicts as the source of evil, chaos, unrest, and wickedness.
- This ally of the dragon, is not one specific entity, empire, government or state but it is any deified political and military state that demands allegiance from its people and persecutes the people of God.
- It is symbolic of wicked governments and regimes in this world that are enemies of Christ and demand the worship that is solely reserved for God.
- It is the spirit of the dragon corrupting the state and causing it to be hostile to Christian witness.
- For the 1st century Christians, the beast was Rome. The saints to which this letter of Revelation was written were being persecuted by officials of the imperial government.
- These Christians refused to bow the knee in worship to the emperor and it proved costly.
- Every generation of the church has seen the spirit of antichrist present in beastly governments.
- Wicked rulers will always be used by the dragon, through his agent the beast, to oppose God's people.
- The beast then is the dragon institutionalized in the idolatrous political, social, cultural, economic and religious systems by which Satan relentlessly attacks the Church.

ITS AUTHORITY

- V2b this beast derives its authority and power from the dragon.
- This beast is animated by the dragon.
- But not only that, this beast is the image bearer of the dragon himself. 12:3 a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.
- Every resource the beast needs to make war on the saints comes from the dragon.
- But as we have seen before, it is the sovereign Lord who has ultimate authority and the dragon and the beast are on a leash.
- V5 *"and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months."*
- V7 *"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..."*
- The beast, like the dragon, is constrained by God's providence.
- He is not God's equal rival—he fulfills the divine purposes of God.

ITS IMITATION

- V3 one of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed...
- This is one of the clearest indications that what we have in this beast is a counterfeit Messiah, a counterfeit expression of the Lamb.
- 5:6 John sees a *"Lamb standing as though it had been slain"*.
- The connection being made is unmistakable, Satan intends for this beast to function as a replacement of Jesus Christ.
- That is why this beast is referred to as the antichrist, though that title is never used in Revelation.
- Antichrist means that which stands against or in place of Christ.
- From the NT perspective, antichrist is not just a single person.
- John in his epistle refers to the antichrist as a spirit.
- **1 John 4:1-4** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that

confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 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.

- We think of the antichrist as a person because it is usually a person that stands at the head of a wicked and totalitarian government that is the enemy of God's people.
- But the beast is every wicked government that makes war on the people of God.
- There will be a final expression of the beast before the coming of the Lord, and there may be a figure at the head of that wicked empire, but that is not the primary concern of this passage.
- The beast, like the dragon, will endure for the totality of the church age, symbolic 42 months, also known as the tribulation, as a rival to the Lamb competing for the allegiance and worship of human beings.
- The dragon worked in the Roman Empire through its emperors, just as he works through world leaders and political entities today.

ITS WORSHIPPERS AND WAR ON THE SAINTS

- One of the most striking things we see is that the whole earth follows the beast.
- The Lord has his people who follow him, the beast has his people who follow him.
- There are only two types of worshippers, those who worship the sovereign God and those who indirectly worship the dragon by placing their allegiance on his agent, the beast.
- Anytime secular power is deified, any time someone's ultimate trust is placed on the state, when the government is expected to be like god, the dragon becomes the object of worship.
- In John's day, the emperor was worshiped as a god.
- V5 and they worshiped the beast saying, "*who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?*"
- The beast is worshiped for its apparent military invincibility. What other choice do people have but to worship the beast?

- V7 The beast makes war on the saints to conquer them.
- That conquering can come through economic pressure, societal marginalization, fines, and imprisonment, and can even result in martyrdom for some of the saints of God.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRIST-FOLLOWERS

- The Scripture tells us that it is God who ordains government.
- We are commanded in **Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
- It's important that we understand that God has largely ordained three spheres of authority in the world: the family, the Church, and government.
- They each have their place and God-ordained authority.
- To the government, God has granted the authority to bear the sword to punish evildoers.
- The government also is to promote the general welfare of its citizens to which citizens pay taxes.
- God calls these governmental agents and authorities ministers of God.
- We are to be subject to the government when it is operating in its God-ordained role.
- But when the government steps out of its place—that is when we are not bound to obey it.
- Specifically it is when our biblical responsibility to obey governmental authorities conflicts with our primary responsibility to obey God.

- Generally, because governments are ruled by sinful people, they will stray from their God-ordained boundaries and become oppressive.
 - How are we to respond—we are to submit and obey—until we are told to do something that directly contradicts God’s Word.
 - When we refuse to submit because we are being told to do something that violates our allegiance to our ultimate authority which is God, we will face the wrath of the beast.
 - The beast will make war against the saints and conquer them. The beast is powerful.
 - We must be ready for that. Suffering is part of the pathway to victory in the Christian life because we are emulating our Savior.
 - John quotes Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11 to remind the saints that if God has ordained persecution then it is inescapable. Some will be taken into captivity by the predestining purpose of God, some may be killed by the sword.
 - We have to keep in mind that God has ordained our every experience of persecution. We have seen that time and time again in Revelation.
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- v10b Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.
 - We conquer the beast by being conquered by the beast.
 - In every letter to the seven churches, Jesus concludes his letter with a benediction and promise, “*The one who conquers...*”
 - The way to conquer the beast is by holding fast, enduring under opposition, by keeping the faith in the face of persecution.
 - No experience of persecution can threaten our eternal reward.
 - Those who do not worship the beast are those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.
 - The roster of those who will conquer the beast by being conquered by the beast was put together before the world ever began.
 - No threats from the beast can threaten our eternal reward.
 - We don’t need to fear the beast because we belong to the Lamb, and despite any opposition you and I will face in this world, our eternal destiny was secured before anything existed that might undo it.