



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

SESSION 10. CURSED TRINITY (REVELATION 13)

I. Accounting for Evil.

A. Examples of evil.

1. *People of the Lie*, by Scott Peck.
2. The Holocaust.
3. The Rwandan genocide (*Hotel Rwanda*).
4. Miss Harvest Queen and Miss Homecoming (*Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*. Cornelius Plantinga. pp. 157f.).
5. But most importantly, look no further than **my own heart**.

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil **continually**.*
(Gen. 6:5).

B. But such evil needs an explanation.

We believe that man is made in the image of a good God. So where does such evil come from? What is its origin? The Scripture simply says: *Now **the serpent** was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made* (Gen. 3:1). Tonight our Scripture (Rev. 13) will introduce us to a much fuller description of the way this “ancient serpent” (Rev. 12:9) will ultimately present himself to the world in the hope that he can finally succeed in his rebellion against the Lamb.

C. Masquerade.

Satan can do nothing original. Evil is always a **parasite** on the good. For evil to succeed, it must appear as something “good” (Matt. 7:15; II Cor. 11:13–15). This means that Satan is always trying to imitate God. To do its worst, evil must look its best. Vice must masquerade as virtue. Nowhere is this more diabolically true than in Satan’s attempt to duplicate the Holy Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are twisted so that in Satan’s scheme they become **Satan, Anti-Christ** and **False Prophet**.

II. Cursed Trinity.

A. The Dragon. In the previous session we met this evil creature (Rev. 12).

1. His qualities and appearance.
 - a. He is enormous and red, having 7 heads and 10 horns, and a huge, destructive tail (vv. 3–4).
 - b. He is furious because he lost his rebellion in heaven and has been kicked out (vv. 7–9). He knows his time is short (vv. 12,17). Like a spoiled child that cannot get his way, he is having a **temper tantrum**.



- c. He has one overwhelming goal: kill the baby boy (Jesus) born by the woman. When he fails, he **makes war** on the woman and on the rest of her offspring (the church) (vv. 3–6, 13–17).
2. His names and descriptive titles:
 - a. The **ancient serpent** (v. 9).
 - b. The devil (*diabolos* means “to accuse”, “to slander”) (v. 9,12).
 - c. **Satan** (adversary) (v. 9).
 - d. The **deceiver** of the whole world (v. 9).
The accuser of our brothers (v. 10).
 3. Before Adam and Eve were created, this dragon had led the failed rebellion in heaven (vv. 7–9,12). Expelled from God’s dwelling, Satan (the devil) has now come to earth to seek revenge. This is the ultimate **source of evil**. But notice:
 - a. He is not another “God”. This is not **dualism** in the Bible such as one finds in Zoroastrianism and other ancient religions.
 - b. And yet his evil presence is somehow **permitted** by God and his influence allowed to infiltrate the earth.
 - c. He is a **big loser**. In the past and especially in the future, the dragon is marked as a defeated foe. No one should ever be in doubt as to his ultimate end.
- B. The Beast out of the sea (Revelation 13:1–10).
1. To understand this passage one must first study Daniel 7 (Appendix A).
 2. What the beast out of the sea is like:
 - a. 10 horns and 10 diadems (v. 1).
 - b. 7 heads with blasphemous names written on them (v. 1).
 - c. He is like a leopard (v. 2).
 - d. He has feet like a bear (v. 2).
 - e. He has a mouth like a lion (v. 2). He will be a great orator.
 - f. The Dragon (Satan) gave this beast his power, his throne and his authority (v. 2). When this beast comes he will create a **one world government**. “In Big Government we trust” will be the motto.
 - g. He is haughty and utters blasphemies against God and his temple (v. 5–6).
 - h. He rules over the entire world for **42 months** (1260 days, 3½ years) (vv. 5, 7–8).
 - i. The only ones on earth who did not worship the beast were those whose names were written in the book of life of the lamb (v. 8). He made war on these saints and **conquered** them (v. 7).
 3. The most notable feature of this beast: one of its 7 heads had a **mortal wound** but it was miraculously healed. This caused the whole world to marvel and worship the beast as well as the dragon (vv. 3–4).

4. Therefore: listen up (v. 9)! Things are going to get **much worse** (v. 10). For the saints, this is a call for **endurance** and for faith (v. 11).
5. This beast is the same figure spoken of elsewhere in Scripture as the **Anti-Christ**. Evil became flesh and lived among us. He will be a sort of **incarnation** of Satan (the dragon). He will be worshipped by the whole world.
 - *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.(I John 2:18, 22).*
 - *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, 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.... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.(II Thess. 2:3-4, 7-10).*

C. The Beast out of the earth (Revelation 13:11-18).

1. What the beast out of the earth is like:
 - a. It has two horns like a **lamb** (v. 11).
 - b. It speaks like a dragon (v. 11).
 - c. It has all the authority of the first beast (v. 12).
 - d. It makes the inhabitants of the earth **worship** the first beast “whose moral wound was healed” (Antichrist) (v. 12).
 - e. It performs **signs and wonders** (fire from heaven, etc.) and thus “deceives those who dwell on earth” (vv. 13-14).
 - f. It makes an image of the first beast (Antichrist) and then breathes life into the image so that it speaks. Those who will not worship the image of the first beast must be slain (vv. 14-15). With this beast the union of **church and state** is total. The state is deified and religion become politics.
 - g. It causes everyone to be marked on the right hand and forehead with “the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.” This mark is necessary for all **economic purchases**. (vv. 16-17).
 - h. Pay attention and calculate the number of the beast: “it is the number of a man, and his number is **666**.” (v. 18). (See Appendix B).
 - i. As the beast out of the sea (Antichrist) exerted his power through politics and **intimidation**, this beast exerts his power through **deception** and false religion.

2. With the beast out of the earth we see the completion of the cursed trinity.
 - The dragon of chapter 12 is Satan, the devil.
 - The beast out of the sea (13:1–10) is Antichrist.
 - The beast out of the earth (13:11–18) is the **False Prophet**.

3. Notice the satanic attempts to counterfeit the Holy Trinity:
 - Antichrist has a pseudo **resurrection** (13:3,12,14).
 - The False Prophet does signs and wonders (13:13–15).
 - The False Prophet is **lamb-like** (13:11).
 - Both Satan (dragon) and Antichrist (the first beast) are worshipped (13:4,8,12–15).
 - Antichrist does his work during 3½ years, approximately the same amount of time that Jesus did his ministry (13:5).
 - The False Prophet **exalts** Antichrist and causes people to worship him similar to the way the Holy Spirit exalts Jesus (13:12). He is a sort of Minister of Propaganda for the beast.
 - Just as the saints were **sealed** by a mark on their foreheads (7:3–4; 14:1; 22:4), so the False Prophet marks all those who belong to Satan with a mark (666) on their foreheads or their right hands (13:16–18).

III. What lessons can we learn?

- A. Be **balanced**. Satan and his minions are real and powerful. But they are a defeated foe. Therefore, we must alert and vigilant yet not overly concerned nor anxious.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors.... (C. S. Lewis. Screwtape Letters, p. 3).

- B. Don't be **fooled**. Satan, Antichrist and False Prophet are imposters, pretenders, and counterfeits. They can only try to imitate what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. More importantly, they are already defeated foes and they know it. They may look threatening but don't be fooled. Satan is a big loser! "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). These beasts are ridiculous imposters! It would be comical were it not so serious.

- C. Be **steadfast** and persevere (v. 10). Pastor John is not writing to give a philosophical explanation of the origin of evil. He is writing to the members of the churches to call them to patient endurance in spite of the tribulation and suffering they are experiencing.

- D. Be **prepared** for battle. When we know our enemy's strategy then we can be victorious in our combat against him. His tactics are primarily **intimidation** and **deception**. The beast from the sea would frighten us into disobedience; the beast from the earth would deceive us into illusions and false beliefs. But such tactics simply cannot work against those who know he is only bluffing. Yes, the beast may gain a type of "victory" over the saints (v. 7) but this is only temporary.

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
 Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:
 For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;*

*His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever. (Martin Luther).*

TABLE TALK

1. What theological truth have you learned in this lesson?
2. What practical truth have you learned? How will your daily walk be different because of what we have discussed here?
3. What has been your attitude to Satan in the past? Has this lesson changed the way you think about him and his work in the world?
4. Pastor John repeatedly calls the members of the body of Christ to be “overcomers.” And yet, it is clear he expects some of them to be killed and “conquered” (13:7). How can both of these realities be true?

APPENDIX A

Daniel 7

Daniel 7 is indispensable background material for understanding Revelation 13. In his vision, Daniel saw four beasts coming out of the sea: the first was like a lion, the second was like a bear, the third was like a leopard, but the fourth beast was different (v. 7,23,24) from the other three. It had 10 horns. Then a little horn grew that replaced three of the horns. These four beasts represent four kings and their empires. The fourth king will be different as will his kingdom (vv. 23–24). It will devour the whole earth and this king will speak blasphemies against God and make war on the saints and prevail over them (vv. 21, 25). But as horrific as this evil will be in the earth, suddenly the Ancient of Days will appear and take his seat on his throne and this fourth beast will be killed (vv. 9–12,22). Then the Son of Man will return in glory and establish his kingdom (vv. 13–14). The beast's kingdom will then be given to the saints (vv. 26–27). John has apparently blended the characteristics of the four beasts in Daniel 7 into one composite monstrous creature in Revelation 13. John wants us to understand that the beast from the sea (Antichrist) (13:1–10) is none other than the “little horn” of the fourth beast in Daniel's vision. He will rule over a global kingdom that will be in some sense “different” from all the kingdoms of the earth that preceded it.

APPENDIX B

#666

The number 666 has caused voluminous and passionate discussion for 20 centuries! How is this number to be understood? To what or to whom does it refer? In both Hebrew and Greek, the letters of the alphabet can also be used as numbers so that each letter has a numerical value. This means that names can be turned into a number. Many attempts have been made to determine which names in history can be translated into the number 666. With a little ingenuity, this can conceivably be done with Caesar, Nero, Caligula, Mohammed, Martin Luther, Cromwell, Napoleon, Hitler, etc. The possibilities are endless. It is interesting to note that 777 can be considered a perfect number. The name Jesus in Greek is the number 888, one step above perfection. And the number 666 thus represents someone who is a triple loser, a trinity of imperfection.