

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #30 — A Continuation of Lesson #29

2/21/2007

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath

Chapter Thirteen — Part Three

The Anti-Christ

Revelation 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

This verse, along with verses 14 and 15, is one of the most controversial verses in this passage and widely divergent views of interpretation can be found regarding these three verses.

The first view is held by those who see Anti-Christ as a political system and generally interpret **“one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed”** to be referring to the reviving of the Roman Empire which was represented by the fourth beast in Daniel's vision. Though this view has been held by a number of Bible scholars, it cannot be applicable for the Roman Empire never died; it just fell apart and will be reconstituted at some point and that may even be taking place before our very eyes.

A variation of this view is that the ruler of the revived Roman Empire suffers a fatal injury, dies, and is resurrected by the **False Prophet**, the second **“beast”** in this chapter (13:15). This view must be rejected because it is contrary to Scriptural teaching. **Neither Satan nor his representatives have the power to give life to anything or raise the dead. Only God can do that. God's Word tells us:**

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”

(John 5:21,25,28,29).

A second view, somewhat related to the above position, is that the ruler of the revived Roman Empire suffers a wound that would normally be fatal, but is seemingly miraculously healed by the **False Prophet**, thus stimulating adoration and worship on the part of all unbelievers. This view should also be rejected because it is not supported by the text.

SATAN, THE MASTER OF DECEIT AND ILLUSION

A third view, which has more Scriptural support and with which I agree, is that what we are reading is the presentation of a powerful illusion produced by Satan and his two representatives, the two beasts of Chapter thirteen. There are three reasons that provide support for this view.

First, Satan's nature is to deceive and to lie. In John eight Jesus was speaking to the religious leaders of His day and said,

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (8:44).

Since a lie is one form of deceit, Jesus was saying two things concerning this matter of deceit: 1. Lies and deceit always originate with Satan; 2. They are expressions of his nature because there is no truth in him.

From Genesis three, when Satan deceived Eve (Gen. 3:1-5), all through the Bible, even to the last chapters of Revelation, when God cast Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10), Satan is known as a deceiver. Numerous times, the Scriptures describe Satan and his followers as using deceit. Sometimes synonyms such as **“craft, guile, trickery and fraud”** are used with all of them meaning basically the same thing, i.e., an action or statement is made to influence others by presenting something that is contrary to the truth.

Drawing from what the Scriptures both teach and set forth as examples it is fair and accurate to say that every time Satan did something, anything, it involved deceit. He has the ability to reproduce this trait in others, particularly those who yield themselves to his control and allow him to control them. This is particularly true when Satan finds someone in whom he is allowed to reproduce his nature.

This is the case in Revelation thirteen when we are introduced to two individuals who yield their very beings to Satan. They become expressions of his alter-ego and allow him to take control of them, function through them, empower them and accomplish his goals and purposes through them.

We have already presented the truth which Jesus expressed when He identified Satan as **“the father or originator of the lie”** and said that *“when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it.”* It is now a fair conclusion to say that what we read in Chapter thirteen is a description of Satan’s deceit being expressed in the form of a powerful **“illusion.”**

Second, Scripture teaches us in a number of passages, some of which we have chosen to use, that Satan, presently and in the future, gains many followers by the use of deceit. Concerning Satan’s work in the **“last days,”** Jesus said:

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:11,24).

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Paul's writings contain many references to the deceitful work of Satan and how he manipulates others. In his second letter to the Corinthian church are many such references. Of these Paul also wrote in 2 Cor. 4:2-4, describing false ministers and saying that they were dishonest, walked in craftiness and handled the Word of God deceitfully, *"blinding the minds of those that believe not."* Consider also 2 Cor. 11:13-15 where Paul described Satan's ability to make his ministers appear to be genuine:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Perhaps Paul's clearest description of Satan's deceit is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, where he says in reference to the **Anti-Christ**:

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

We also find that God provides some helpful insights into how Satan and his henchmen operate during the Tribulation Period persuading people to follow him in his rebellion against God. In reference to the work of the **False Prophet, the second beast** who is introduced in verse eleven, Revelation 13:12 tells us :

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

Then, in the later half of **the Tribulation Period**, when Satan gathers his forces together to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ at the climatic battle of **Armageddon**, Satan uses his powers of deceit one final time. We read in Revelation 16:13-14:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

All of this is consistent with Satan and his actions. Following Nimrod’s efforts at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), Satan, anticipating that the Savior would enter this world via a virgin birth, propagated a crude fable as a imitation of that event. The fable gained a foothold in the pagan societies and mystery religions and was eventually brought into the life of the Israelites. Read about it in both Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-25 and Ezekiel 8:14 where we read that the Israelites worshipped **Seminaris and Tammuz**, the mother and the child, who were pagan pseudo imitations of Mary and Christ.

If Satan could so successfully seduce God’s people back then with crude stories imitating God’s plan, imagine the effect of his power during the Tribulation Period with the **“illusion”** of raising someone from the dead.

What we read in Revelation thirteen of this **“illusionary resurrection”** of this evil, perpetrated by a skilled and powerful deceiver, is the apex of Satan’s **“illusionary powers.”** He will succeed somewhat in that he will be able to seduce and gain power over multitudes of people. Yet, his seduction will fail. It will not affect the ultimate outcome, his defeat and eternal destruction.

Third, though Satan cannot perform supernatural acts, he does have much more power than any man and is the master of the **“illusion,”** the pseudo miracle. An **“illusion”** is a false image presented in such a manner as to trick and deceive a person into thinking that he sees something he thinks is real, but which is simply a delusionary image. With the skillful use of computer-generated graphics and the controlled use of laser beams, the entertainment industry today is very capable of presenting **“illusions”** that convince people that something is true when it is only an image or **“illusion.”** Even the so-called “master magicians” of today, when they are honest, will say that they make their living by presenting **“illusions”** and convincing people that they have seen what they haven’t seen.

Satan, who has much more talent and power than any person, and whom God **“lets,”** or allows to do what is according to his nature and will, presents a powerful **“illusion”** and that is what we are reading about in Chapter thirteen. It is this **“delusionary illusion”** which is described in Revelation thirteen as the **“first beast being killed and resurrected”** by **“the second beast”** or **False Prophet**. This is but one of the ways that Satan deceives man and deceit is his primary way of gaining followers.

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GOD'S PURPOSE AND LIMITATION ON SATAN'S ACTIONS

Revelation 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

Satan's actions have a purpose and a limitation that has been predetermined by God. God's purpose is *"the separation of the tares from the wheat,"* the true from the false. Jesus told a parable, and then explained it, in which *"tares"* grow in the midst of the *"wheat"* (Matt. 13:24-30; 37-42). In the time of the harvest, the *"tares,"* which have sown by the devil, manifest their true nature and are gathered and burned. In such a way God allows people to manifest their true nature.

Some people appear to serve Jesus, but actually are pretenders and deceivers who serve Satan instead of Jesus Christ. In this passage we see how such people publicly identify themselves as followers of Satan by worshipping Satan.

In addition to the pretenders, many in this world have long sought for an alternative to Jesus Christ whom they could worship and serve. Satan gives them what they have desired and they respond with boldness and arrogance saying, **"Who is like unto the beast?"**

In a sense God does not have to do anything to identify both those who claim to follow Him, but are in reality only pretenders, and those who reject Him outright, other than giving them a choice. God thus permits Satan to offer that option and they choose to follow him. God's purpose is achieved with absolute clarity.

God's limitation upon Satan's time frame is also clear.

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Revelation 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

God allows Satan and his representatives to have the ability to speak powerfully and persuasively, and with vile words, even towards Himself. These utterances of vile, hateful blasphemies are not only directed towards God, but they also include God's places of worship and the believers already in heaven.

Satan, whom God allows, to be a very talented and powerful speaker, will be able to persuade masses of people to yield their allegiance and adoration to him, even though it is illogical to do so and even when it seals their own damnation.

The choice of men to follow Satan is a clear and public expression of their rejection of Christ, exposing their true nature and placing the responsibility upon themselves for their own destiny. While Satan's seductive utterances may succeed in leading unbelievers to follow him, his words can do no harm to God, to His place of worship nor to those already in heaven. When he opens his mouth to speak, he spews out what is in his heart, publicly displaying what he is really like. Such a thing has always been true, not only of Satan, but of all men. In Matthew 12:33-37 and 15:18-19 Jesus had said:

“...how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Mat. 12:34-35; 15:19).

In the next chapter we shall read of just how clearly they define their allegiance and their destiny.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

God not only **“lets”** Satan speak in a vile way, but He also allows him do what he does, though God has predetermined the time frame in which he can do these things. In Matthew 24:22 Jesus spoke about this time: *“... except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”* In Revelation 13:5 God tells us that **“power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.”** God therefore defines the limitations of what Satan and his representatives can do as well as his time frame. In this case, Satan is allowed only **“forty and two months”** and Jesus explained that the time of testing will be so severe that no one could survive it if it were not so limited. **“Forty and two months”** takes us to the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period and to the time that the Lord returns in His glorious second coming as described in Revelation nineteen.

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Revelation 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

While persecution against followers of Christ is experienced in varying degrees today around our world, nothing in our world today can be compared to the persecution of believers which happens during the last half of the **Tribulation Period** as described here. It will be the darkest days for Christians in the history of our world, but, thank God, it will not involve the church, only those saved during the Tribulation Period.

God does not go into detail in His descriptions. He does not need to. What He says is sufficient to describe a totally intolerable time. Recall the persecution of the Christians during the first century and multiply its intensity many times over and no one can begin to understand the horror of that day.

In saying *“except those times be shortened, there should no flesh be saved”* (Mat. 24:22). Jesus was describing these times in the book of Revelation. These are also the times, not the present day, to which was Jesus was referring in Matthew 25:34-40 when He said He would bless those who provided aid and comfort for the persecuted.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed? or thirsty, and drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and in? or naked, and clothed? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34-40).

Over the years well-meaning Christians have tried to apply those words to other situations, but, according to the context, they fit into this time of great persecution. No other time is worthy of these words. It is the only time in the history of this world in which God actually allows Satan, without restraint, to make war with the believers and overcome them, exercising control over their lives.

Some phrases found in verse eight such as **“all that dwell upon the earth”** need special attention. The word translated **“dwell”** is **katoikeo** (2730) and means **“to permanently settled down, and be at home in a place.”** It refers to individuals who are home in this world, who love this world and the things of this world. God described such in 1 John 2:15-17:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

It is not surprising that such people would choose to worship Satan. Most of their lives have been spent choosing to worship and serve Satan. For many of them their lives have been focused on acquiring and enjoying things of this world, things associated with Satan. Indeed, many people **“love the things that are in this world.”** They build their lives around the **“things that are in the world.”** Such desires have become so strong that many people go to church expecting to be entertained by **“the things that are of the world.”**

Having long ago chosen to worship and serve Satan, it should be no surprise that they will choose to worship him at this time. When it comes to receiving **“the mark of the beast”** spoken of in verse seventeen, they will gladly participate in identifying themselves with **“the beast.”** It will be no drastic change for them. Receiving his **“mark”** openly declares what they have chosen to love and the one to whom they are devoted. They make their choice and God honors their decision. He allows them to choose whom they will serve even though it is contrary to His will. He desires for **“all men to be saved”** (1 Timothy 2:4) and **“is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9).

This causes some people to struggle with how the will of a sovereign God, Who desires for all men to be saved, could be nullified by the free will of those who choose to reject Him. The conflict in the minds of some regarding the sovereignty of God and the free will of men is hereby confronted. The reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with the free will of men, which may be an enigma in the minds of men, is no problem for God. It is only a problem for men because of man’s limitations. We should never judge or evaluate God or his truths by our ignorance and limitations. It is sufficient to know that each of those who chose Satan could have chosen Christ. God gives us some insight on this in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12:

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“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Knowing the hearts of all men (John 2:23-25) and knowing who truly believed in Him and who pretended to believe, God simply provided the necessary opportunities for those who did not love Him to choose the one whom they did love. Having refused to love the truth, the only option available to men was to love lies and deceit. Their choice resulted in their own damnation. In spite of being able to choose God's grace and salvation, they are free to choose to go into ***“the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels”*** (Matthew 25:41) if that is what they desire.

In His omniscience, God has always known who would choose Satan and who would choose Jesus. Even before the foundation of the world He wrote the names of those who choose Jesus in the ***“lamb's book of life.”*** Ephesians 1:4 tells us that ***“he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”*** and then details His purposes and work of redemption.

Revelation 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

Revelation 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Anyone who wants to hear what God is saying simply needs to listen. Many people hear sounds, but never understand what is being said because they don't want to. Here is God's oft repeated invitation to listen to what He has to say and choose to do what He says. It is to every person and every person must choose.

Verse ten describes an awful time. It is not now; it is during the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation Period. Lawlessness will rule the day because Satan will be in charge. Those who choose to become followers of Jesus will have to endure that time or die. Those who survive will do so just like all of God's children have always done, by faith, and it will require a lot of faith.