

# Anti-Christ Religion

*Book of Revelation*

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If you will, take your Bibles and look again with me in Revelation chapter 13. We have been slowly working our way through this book. I believe a few things that I trust we have learned and that is, number one, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. So everywhere we have opportunity and can read and study from that perspective, it is to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Number two, I trust you have seen is that this is very much a symbolic book. It pleased the Lord to cause John to use figures, symbols.

Some surmise and I don't know if that is the reason that this letter would have been circulated among the believers of the day and if anything were too apparent to any that would get a hold of a copy that it might in some way increase the persecution that they were facing. And so much as during any time of war when codes are used and things like that, only those that are privy to those codes would get any kind of meaning or understanding from it.

It is we know how the Lord purposed to communicate it and I find it to be a good evidence that this book is inspired by the Spirit of Christ, because your Lord often spoke in parables and used symbols. And when his disciples asked him why he said very plain that those that are without seeing they might not see. This book is not for everybody and I believe just like other portions of Scripture, God has ordained that certain portions of Scripture be a snare to some. And I believe that is how this book is being used today in most circles. It is fantastical. All kinds of schemes that are being developed and the Lord uses it to ensnare even further those that have not the Spirit of Christ.

Do I have all the answers? No. That is obvious. As many times as I have read through the book of Revelation probably in my life time this is the third time I have actually attempted to preach through it and every time I learn something. But, again, it is like a compass. As you navigate the waters there is a direction irrespective of the clouds, the waves and other things going on. There is a direction and if we can keep that in mind, I believe it will help us.

The direction, really, here, is like all of Scripture, to show us that God the Father has put all things in the hand of the Son and ordained all things and that even the evil that arises and that the Church faces is not outside the realm of what God has purposed. Every detail he has purposed. And we are going to see that here again this evening.

These are some very sobering pictures when you think in terms of beast like we saw last time rising out of the sea. And somewhat frightful, but we know that it is spiritually discerned because it says the name, as we saw in verse one, upon the heads is that of blasphemy. And so last time in verses one through 10 we considered how this beast represents government, antichrist government that when put in power has as its design to persecute the people of God, the Church of God. And certainly this would have been very real to those in John's day as there was an increased authority being given to Nero, to Caesar. The seven heads and 10 horns that you see there, some see as the very structure of that original Roman government which was designed where if one of the heads died, the whole empire didn't fall. There was a succession of powers, but every one of them were antichrist. And as I mentioned last time when Nero committed suicide, after all he did, that in the end there wasn't anything to live for, committed suicide. There was a thinking that somehow now the persecution would pass. But as we saw that beast that was mortally wounded was healed in verse three. I believe that is the sense.

“And I saw one of his heads.”<sup>1</sup>

So it wasn't the entire thing that fell.

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, another raised up in his place.

“...and all the world wondered after the beast.”<sup>3</sup>

What beast? Here was that power. And if you don't think that the Roman Empire was of great influence, number one, you want to go back and read in Daniel. That was the last earthly empire of which the Scriptures speak that was to be raised up until Christ came and, you know, instituted his kingdom. But even today you look at in religion how much of what is done has been brought over even in so-called protestant congregations, brought over from Roman Catholic religion. That is why they call it Roman Catholic. Some of these reformers that came out, their idea was not to do away with that church because in their mind that was the catholic church. Catholic means universal. And to this day those that are of true protestant origin, they still have with them the very same sorts of I would say grave clothes that you find in Catholicism. The priest, a certain way to dress, a certain liturgy, a certain, you know, formality, what they call sacraments, graces that are part of that church. And in sprinkling, all of these things.

You know, people get upset when I mention men like John Owen and John Calvin and Luther. They all believed in regenerative sprinkling. They believed... that is why they sprinkled babies, because they believe it is the way to bring that child into the kingdom of

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 13:3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

God and it is in their catechisms. And, you know, if for no other reason than that you have to stand back and look at it and say, “There is a problem here.”

But what we are going to see here in verse 12, you notice, it says ... or verse 11:

“And I beheld another beast...”<sup>4</sup>

In other words, one like the first and yet some differences. Here coming up out of the earth. The first beast came up out of the sea. This out of the earth. The first beast had how many horns? Well 10 horns. This beast had two. He had two horns. Notice:

...like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 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 the 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. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.<sup>5</sup>

Now everybody feels like they have got an inside understanding of this mark of the beast. But look what verse 18 says.

“Here is wisdom.”<sup>6</sup>

Before we jump too quickly to conclusions.

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of [it says] a man [in the original, man] ; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”<sup>7</sup>

666.

So as we consider going back to verse 11:

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Revelation 13:11.

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 13:11-17.

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 13:18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

It is similar to the first, certainly in connection with the first because it says there that they cause their followers to worship or to follow the first beast, literally worship you can see in verse 12.

“...and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.”<sup>9</sup>

What is this talking about? Well, I believe we have here an example of religion that is bound up with the state or government. In other words, a church state.

You say, “What are some examples?”

Well, obviously back in John’s day it would have been Caesar requiring people to bow the knee and before his banner that he had there actually own that Caesar is lord. He took terms that pertain to Christ alone. And if you expected to live, then you had to submit to those dictates.

We can see all throughout history and this is why I believe that much of what is written here, because this is to be taking place during the interval between Christ’s first coming and second coming. So at different periods of time, different ones of the Lord’s people reading this might be able to identify it with it.

You can go back to the time of Constantine where conversions were done by the sword. You know, and again it was forcing people to convert or die.

Well, a lot of people flooded into the so-called church at that time because they didn’t want to die. So whatever it takes.

And periods of time through the dark ages, medieval ages, the crusades. We have all seen movies where it was rule by sword.

As I mentioned to you, men like John Owen, because it goes both ways. Everybody likes to talk about how the Catholic Church persecuted those that were outside of it and certainly that was the case. There were small groups, you can read in Church history, small groups of those that gathered, sometimes in the fields, sometimes in homes, sometimes in caves in order to worship freely. And they were not part of the state church if you will.

John Bunyan is a good example where he spent 12 years in prison because he refused to take a license from the then Anglican Church which is a state church. Do you know who the heads of the Anglican Church is? They say Episcopal. It is the same thing. It is the Queen to this day. She is the figurehead of that church. A lot of the divisions of these state churches over the years were over seats of power. And much of Protestantism was

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<sup>8</sup> Revelation 13:11.

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 13:12.

just a revolt against having to send tithes and taxes and offerings to Rome. So they divided. Greek Orthodox. I could go on and on. If you know a little bit about Church history, these are all state churches.

But even Protestants aren't free. You know, everybody talks about John Owen, well he would read psalms. He was the chaplain of the parliament at the time and would read psalms and go in and slaughter any that were Catholic. In England and Ireland and those wars, if you remember a few years ago that is what you always heard about, the Christians, you know, versus the Protestants versus the Catholics, orange and green. You know, it is just... These are things that are described here. And people subscribe to them. If you don't believe just how—and this is going to help us in understanding the mark of the beast—engrained people are and dedicated to these, this heritage or denomination or creed, you know, they will die by it. And we happen to right now have a certain amount of freedom here in this country, but it wasn't always so.

Some of the Protestants that came over, they say, “Well, it was founded on religious liberty.” It wasn't. There were some people that had to pay dearly to earn what we enjoy today as religious freedom. And I have mentioned to you that is one thing I will defend. Men are not to be... the state is not to dictate how it is we are to worship and become involved in how we worship. That is a matter of conscience. It is also a matter of correction according to Word whenever politics becomes involved and tries to bring people together by law or rule there is a problem. There is trouble. And it is one of the problems with the Reformation. They would appeal to authority to get done what they needed to. They would vote in to power ones of their liking and then through law try to dissuade things their way. I fear that much of that goes on even in this country. You have got these religious movements that are very right wing, if you will. And their whole goal is to get control.

Personally, I don't want them dictating to me how I am going to worship. It is a different form of state religion. But I believe that that is what is being described here by John and, you know, we are being warned not to fall prey to it. When he says there in verse 12:

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.”<sup>10</sup>

Authoritarianism in religion where you organize. I can remember years ago a preacher telling me the dangers of becoming part of an organization even so-called sovereign grace because once you organize that means you have got to have a president and you have got to have a vice president. Now you have got something outside of the dictates of the local congregation which is the way the Lord has ordained that his Word go forth, through local congregations.

When people ask me what this congregation represents and who we are associated with, I can say that we are associated with the Lord's people wherever they are found throughout the world. We may not meet in great numbers here, but I know a number of people throughout this world that the Lord has brought us in contact with that rejoice in the

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<sup>10</sup> Revelation 13:12.

gospel message that is preached here and what this congregation stands for. Some have never set foot here, but we are not trying to organize them into a denomination somehow to represent who they are. You know, we commend them to the Lord. And some are in some isolated places. But that is just the way the Lord has purposed it.

But that is not how men think. Natural minds think we have got something going here, let's organize it. And that is of politics. That is the mindset, as it says here in verse 12:

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.”<sup>11</sup>

The Church, the truth Church is an organism. It is not an organization. Is there some structure? Yes. Obviously. We have certain days we meet, but we can change them. We have a way that... an order of worship, but it is designed to give us structure to keep our minds and hearts focused on the Word, on Christ, on the gospel. But we don't have some head of an organization sending down little articles that I am supposed to be reading for you, because this comes from headquarters, some central denomination. But there are... that is what organized religion is.

I believe that what is being described here is organized religion. And notice this second beast is the false prophet. It is described there in verse 11 as having two horns like a Lamb, but what? He spake as a dragon. That is clear. And if you go over to Revelation chapter 19, sometimes if you read far enough you will find the answer a little farther along. We don't need to go to commentaries to figure this out. Very clearly in Revelation 19 this beast is being described here and it says:

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet...”<sup>12</sup>

You see, the beast, the first beast is politics, government. The second:

“...with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”<sup>13</sup>

That is an amazing statement when you stop and think about it, that there will be people in hell who try to use the arm of government to propagate and establish their way of religion and believed fully in doing it that they were doing the work of God and yet in the end be cast into hell.

You know, it is the one problem that I have with the word “reformation.” God is not doing his work through reformation. He is doing his work through revelation, the revelation of his Word and the revelation of Christ through the preaching, but the revelation of Christ in the heart.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 19:20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

I trust that those of us sitting here and listening, if we are the Lord's that is the testimony we give. It is like Paul said. He didn't receive this of man, but of God. Paul for a while was part of this organized religion. We just read it in 2 Corinthians 12.

He said, "Do they boast of being Hebrews? I am a Hebrew. Do they boast of being Jews? I am more."

He practiced the Jewish religion more than anybody and yet when it pleased God to reveal Christ in him, the Lord drew him out.

There is a lot of subtlety and I am going to share with you something that has been going on the last two weeks how the Lord in his timing causes me to reflect on these things because I got invited to join this so called sovereign grace blog, you know, someone sent me an invitation and said they would appreciate me being part of it. So I clicked, accepted and now I am in this thing. But as I have been reading over the last several weeks the comments, it is a bashing of some that are high Calvinists. In other words, they feel like they have got it down right against those that are Arminians and those that are what they call tolerant Calvinists and just back and forth volleys going.

And when I read it at first I thought, you know, I need to just pull out of this thing. But the more I read, the Lord impressed me with the fact it wasn't an accident that I was invited and so I launched a statement which has set off a firestorm and the statement simply was that Calvinism is not the gospel.

You would have thought that I had just dropped an atomic bomb on this group. They immediately began to attack me as being free will because if you don't believe Calvinism is the gospel, then you must hold to free will religion. Those are the only two choices.

And one of the ones that this been doing most of the attacking, I challenged him. I said, "Why would you fire before you inquire?" I said, "There is now way that you know me and that you have taken the time to understand why I made the statement that I did, but out of clarity I will tell you what I mean."

And I gave him my simple testimony of how I had been a lost Calvinist. I had had the doctrines, dot the Is and cross the Ts for seven years and yet did not know Christ. And when it pleased God to reveal Christ in me I brought out that it is the Word that that the Lord used to bring home to my heart, his inspired Word.

Now is there some truth in the doctrines of Calvinism? Obviously. But that is not my gospel. You know, the gospel is from the beginning. And this is what I was pointing out. It, you know, you can go to 1618, the council of the Synod of Dort is where they came up with the five points of Calvinism. So if that is the gospel, what was there before then?

And I have a very strong persuasion against any that try to put man's name to that which belongs to Christ alone. And, you know, in the end I just said if the attacks continue, you know, you would have thought... I even quoted John nine. I said, "This reminds me of the

blind man and they are trying to pin down the blind man that the Lord healed, you know, that what he said was what I know is I was blind, but now I see.”

And my hope is built no nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. You know, I take it as a compliment when people come worship here and leave and don’t even know what Calvinism is, because that is not our gospel. Our gospel is Christ and the foundation is his blood and righteousness alone. That is the simplicity I believe of which Paul speaks that we need to beware lest Satan by his subtleties would draw us aside.

But anyway, I don’t know, you know, I think I probably said my last statement in it, but people equate knowledge with salvation and that is where these come from, you know? Is it the truth or isn’t it? If we know it then why would you say that it is not salvation?

Well, it is because one can have all the knowledge of these things. You know, you can believe very specifically certain facts about Christ, who he is, what he accomplished, where he is now. James said the devils believe and tremble. At least that you understand Satan knows and understands the severity of it. He trembles. I don’t see that in some of these men. There is no trembling. There is no fear of God. There is a pompous attitude, looking down the nose at those that they would consider to be lost and yet instead of praying for them and in a spirit of grace pointing them to Christ, continue to denounce them. And I just know where I was until it pleased the Lord to find me.

So I hope you understand why it is that for me as the Lord has taught me since he began his work of grace in my heart he has continued to separate me out from organized religion because I grew up in it. And some people are uncomfortable with it. I am not, because I know what it represents and I know how it can deceive and I know how it can mislead. If our eyes are not on this Word and what it teaches in Christ and our eyes are on men and we have to find out from men what is we are to believe, we are in trouble. We are in trouble.

But this is what John is describing here. I believe this state religion that is related to the false prophets and as you can see it is a world wide organization. That is the whole goal today is to get everybody unified in religion and denominations. I get stuff all the time here. In fact, when I checked the mail they are having a rolling for Jesus thing for youth, you know, and it is supposed to be non denominational. Let’s all get together. It is over at hot wheels. But that is what they have called it, rolling for Jesus. And they organize. They try to get people to get along and get together and if you ever bring up doctrine or truth, they will look at you sideways and wonder, you know, who invited you to the party.

But in all of this it is the Lord that has ordained it and, as we know from Scripture, he will cause many to be deceived by the very religion that they are and be hardened in it. And so that brings me to this final point here in this passage, the mark of the beast.

You know, it says there that, verse 17:



“And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”<sup>14</sup>

Now many people will attempt to interpret this mark as being or this beast, this mark of the beast as being some particular individual. I don't believe that is the case. You know, here it has very much to do with a spirit. And I believe, as you see in verse 18:

“...for it is the number of a man.”<sup>15</sup>

And I believe what is being taught here, as it says over in verse 11 where it all began. This is something coming up out of the earth.

When you go to the book of James, if you will, just go back a few books to James chapter three and verse 15, how does it describe earthly wisdom? Well it says here:

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”<sup>16</sup>

The whole point is that Satan is behind this. Hence, it looks like the Lamb.

You know, we are talking about people who take and open this Bible and read it. The Bible is still one of the most read books in the world in religion. But it says that he spake as a dragon.

Satan is never... Satan can imitate many things, but Satan cannot or will not cause sinners to look to Christ. He will get them involved in things that look similar to that which Christ may have established, but in the end it is to get them detracted from it.

The number of man, as you see in verse 18. It is a man made religion. I believe that is the sense there. Anything that is from the earth it is sensual, sensual in the sense it appeals to the flesh and it is of Satan.

That is true of all false religion. And we have to be prayerful with people who are caught up in it still because they are going to say, “Well, our preacher talks about Christ.”

They kind of hide behind that. You know, he talks about redemption. He talks about grace. He talks about forgiveness of sins. But the question is: The who, why, what, when and where. When we really break it down and begin to analyze what it is that is being preached, it is a religion that ultimately exalts man. I mean it is like I heard a preacher preach a message a number of years ago that always stuck with me the outline. And the Lord has used it to impress it on my own heart.

You know, if... it starts off, if God can purpose the salvation of sinners and yet those sinners that he purposed to save in the end are not saved, what does God's purpose have

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<sup>14</sup> Revelation 13:17.

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 13:18.

<sup>16</sup> James 3:15.

anything to do with salvation? If the Spirit of God can attempt to draw sinners to Christ and in the end those sinners can resist him to the point of condemnation, what does the work of the Spirit then have to do with salvation? It must not have anything to do with it. Or if you believe that Christ died for certain people that end up in hell anyway, what does the death of Christ have to do with salvation? Ultimately what you are saying is it comes down to you have the key and you decide. That is works religion. That is man made religion.

And so this is a place and a point where we that are taught of the Lord have to stand true. Will there be opposition? Yes. Will there be persecution? Yes. Will there be isolation? Yes. I You know, I don't personally suffer physically for what the Lord has taught me, but I will tell you it has brought isolation. It has brought division with some that I have been very close to over the years. But as the Lord continues to teach me and give me that persuasion that it is Christ and Christ alone is my salvation, that it is his blood and righteousness alone. It is not my believing it that makes me saved. I am saved because when he died he put away my sin and God graciously, unconditionally put to my account that very righteousness that he worked out. That is it. And because I am one of his, in time it pleased him to reveal Christ in me. That is why I believe. And that is why I look to him.

Well, there is a lot more that could be said there, but I trust that gives you and me a little bit of a summary of what John is describing there, something that he lived in his day and I believe just as strongly, just like the Scripture says:

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”<sup>17</sup>

To live godly isn't to live a holier than thou lifestyle, but it is to live in such a manner as to purpose to give God all the glory. And, really, if people ask you: What is the difference in how you worship and how others worship? You can sum it all up in this. Who gets the glory? That is it. Make it simple. You know, either Christ gets all the glory of it is man.

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<sup>17</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12.