

The Unholy Trinity

Recently I had the privilege of preaching Paul Bolt's funeral service. He had served our nation well during the era of the Korean War. His brother Donald also served in the US Air Force during that war, but did not come home.

On October 2, 1950, First Lieutenant Donald Bolt flew a pre-dawn mission to Pyongyang, North Korea's capitol city. He had made successful combat mission trips like it several times before. But this morning His airplane was hit in the engine by ground fire, and he was able to glide just clear of a low ridge of hills east of the city, landing in a rice field surrounded by a mile wide ring of trees.

Fellow pilots flying overhead saw what happened next. Donald quickly jumped out of the cockpit and started running across the dry rice paddies to the nearest trees. He stopped after about 100 feet and turned back toward his crippled airplane, ducking low as he moved.

He pointed his arms toward the trees, and the flight leader, Captain Charles McGee could see enemy troops jumping out of a truck. McGee made a pass firing his machine guns, which made the hostile troops take cover. McGee radioed for help, stating that Donald Bolt appeared to be unhurt, but was not going to escape the enemy.

McGee stayed and kept the enemy back as long as his fuel held out. Other planes came in throughout the day and were able to hold the enemy back. But they were 85 miles away from the Kimpo Air Base, and no helicopters there could be diverted to come and land and save Donald Bolt.

As night fell Major "Moon" Mullins flew the last patrol overhead, and was the last person to see Donald Bolt alive. Night forced him to leave. There were reports of his body being found a week later, Killed in Action, although officially he was listed as Missing in Action, and his remains have never been found.

Donald Bolt is just one of the kind of brave people we remember on Memorial Day, people that are the reason we enjoy the freedoms we do. But there is a little bit more to that story I want to tell you later.

In Revelation chapter 12 we learned that during the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation, Satan will persecute Israel and anybody who turns to Jesus.

Today we will see the human instruments Satan will work through to accomplish his diabolical plans. Taken together the 3 of them form an "unholy trinity," Satan's twisted counterfeit of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As awful as the actions of this false trinity are, however, we will also see that they can not thwart the victory saints get by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. And God presents these coming realities to saints of all ages to motivate our own faith and endurance no matter what we face!

Read Revelation 13:1-18

The Unholy Trinity

LET'S PRAY!

V. 1-4 The Background of the Beast

You may remember that 12:3 told us that John saw a sign in Heaven, a fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his head were seven diadems.

Chapter twelve went on to explain that the dragon was symbolic language for Satan, and it ended by telling us that that he stood on the sand of the sea; So when verse one tells us John saw a beast coming up out of the sea, we should use the previous “sign” language to guide us in how we read about this beast.

In other words, instead of thinking of this Beast as a monster, we need to think in terms of the human ruler to come elsewhere called the Antichrist. The term Antichrist comes from John letters. Daniel called him the Prince that shall come. Jesus called him the Abomination of Desolation. Paul called him the man of sin.

We were told of this ruler in Rev. 11:7, which called him the Beast that comes from the Abyss and kills the two witnesses when they finish their testimony.

We believe this is the rider on the white horse we met at the beginning of the first seal. From Daniel 9:27 we learn that he makes a covenant of peace at the beginning of the 7 year tribulation, but violates it at the 3 ½ year mid-point.

The Beast John saw in verses 1-4 clearly brings to mind the images of future kingdoms presented in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel chapter two Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue to speak of 6 future kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, a ten toed future kingdom, and Christ’s future Kingdom on earth.

In Daniel chapter seven Daniel had a vision of 4 beasts that talk about the same empires, with the last one having ten horns that one future little horn will dominate. The animals are the same as right here in Revelation chapter 13.

Revelation 13 combines these beasts and points out they have ongoing influence. In other words, Babylon’s influence is still a big deal. Persia (Modern day Iran) is in the news constantly now. Who can deny Greek and Roman influence on us?

If the beast of the sea is symbolic for a man, so is the sea. Usually in the Bible references to the Sea are to the Mediterranean Sea. The Roman Empire wrapped around it! See map of Roman Empire.

Read Daniel 7:20-27

We know that this ten kingdom prophecy of Daniel's remains in the future because not only has the ten leader form of the Roman Empire never existed in history, but neither has such a kingdom been suddenly crushed as prophecy indicates it will be. -David Jeremiah, *What in the World is Going On*, page 57

What must we conclude?

The Antichrist will probably come out of a renewed Roman Empire, perhaps from the current European Union states. Verse two tells us his real power will come from Satan.

We know that people can be possessed with demons. Perhaps this man will be possessed by Satan himself. In any event, he will be Satan's pawn.

Verse three says that one of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but was healed. Some think this means people will be astonished to see the Roman Empire itself come back to life, like when Israel became a nation again after 2,000 years.

Others, and I put myself here, think it refers to this man the Antichrist himself coming back to life after a fatal sword wound. We don't know for sure!

But we do know that those left on the earth at this point in the tribulation will be so impressed by this apparent resurrection that they will worship the beast, saying, "Who is like the Beast?" He's the man! And through his influence they will worship Satan, again here called the dragon.

Interestingly, one of the ancient objects of worship in China was a god named Pan Hu, a dragon dog. Perhaps people will knowingly worship Satan, or perhaps they will unwittingly worship Satan through some type of Dragon like idol of Satan.

V. 5-8 The Behavior of the Beast

In these verses we see four things the Antichrist will do:

He'll boast about how great he and the dragon are!

He'll blaspheme God!

He'll make war against the saints!

He'll rule the world!

It says here he'll do it openly for 42 months.

Daniel 7 & Rev. 12 said for time, times, half a time.

That's 3 ½ years!

That's 3 ½ years!

Of course, with the crowd left on earth after the rapture it won't be hard to criticize God. It's amazing how many atheists and agnostics I've met over the years who say they don't believe God exists, or doubt He exists, and still blame Him anytime something happens they don't like.

Many people will shake their fist at God during the Tribulation, and shout amen when the Antichrist says every problem earth has is because of God.

Now if you have a hard time picturing how the world will give it's allegiance to this man, read your history. In times of trouble people quickly cede their rights to anyone who claims to be able to bring stability!

“We do not need another committee. We have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man and be he god or devil, we will recognize him.”

-Paul-Henri Spaak, first president of the UN General Assembly, first president of the European Parliament, one time secretary general of NATO. -David Jeremiah, 65

V. 11-17 The Accomplice of the Beast

Verse 11 tells us of another beast, this one coming up out of the earth.

Later this beast will be called the False Prophet- Rev. 16:13, 19:20, 20:10.

If the Antichrist will primarily be a political ruler, the false prophet will clearly be a religious spokesman, possibly leader of the world religious community.

Now there are a lot of different people that call themselves Christians in the world, but you really can boil them down to two kinds.

True Christians of whatever denomination embrace Jesus' insistence that to go to Heaven a person must be 'born again' and take as their authority the Bible as the Word of God, seeking to obey its commands.

False Christians reject the idea of having to be born again and take as their authority their own collective judgment, often stating the Bible is merely a collection of writings by flawed men who could not understand our day.

If you have ever read the writings of those false Christians who are really embarrassed by what the Bible teaches, you may as well be reading words written by Atheists. They wind up stating the same beliefs.

False Christians join Atheists in affirming evolution instead of creation by God.
 False Christians join Atheists in being pro-abortion instead of pro-life.
 False Christians join Atheists in saying homosexuality is not a sin.
 False Christians join Atheists in condemning True Christians.

Verse 11 tells us this False Prophet will look like a lamb, but speak like a dragon.
 In other words...

No matter how religious he dresses, when the False Prophet opens his mouth, Satan's lies will come out!

Now fast forward to the time of the Tribulation. I believe true Christians will have been raptured. False Christians will be ecstatic and join secular humanists and other religions in agreeing with the man centered approach of the antichrist.

We saw a microcosm of that this past week. The President of Notre Dame embraced the President of the US, even giving him an award, even though the President's abortion view is an insult to Bible based Catholics everywhere.

During the Tribulation Church and state will be thoroughly intertwined. And as church history reveals, when church and state intertwine, it's bad!

I have been reading a great biography of Menno Simons, father of the Mennonites. Mennonites and Baptists are cousins on the denominational tree. Both rejected the idea of the state church, and both were persecuted by Roman Catholic and Protestant state-churchers alike! At that time your birth into a country was pretty much birth into the state church as well. As an infant you were brought to the church and baptized by sprinkling, and now the state knew you were here.

Menno Simons understood the Bible taught you were not born into the church, you were born again into the church and believer's baptism is how you became part of a church of believers in covenant with each other.

But living that out meant persecution by state authorities! The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, decreed that anyone who got re-baptized must be put to death. It is documented that thousands of men and women died after that by the sword, by drowning, by burning at the stake. For the last years of his life, Menno Simons lived as a fugitive with a price on his head! They even put people to death when they found out they had housed Menno Simons!

So it will be in the time of the tribulation. Together the Antichrist and the False Prophet will use whatever tools they can to stomp out belief in God.

We're told this False Prophet will be able to wow people with signs and wonders. That's always enough for some people! Perhaps these wonders will neutralize the impact of the two witnesses from chapter eleven.

The false prophet will encourage people on earth to set up an image of the Beast to aid their worship. Verse 15 could not have been understood by John in his day!

But in ours we understand that television, internet, cell phones and other technologies will be used to compel the entire world to worship the beast. Perhaps technology like Twitter and texting will give people the feeling they finally have a god who is not silent, one they have personal access to. Most will fall for it, and say out loud that this is better than anything Christianity ever offered.

Verses 16-17 show that during that time if you don't worship the beast, you won't even be able to buy anything or make a living.

It's simple really. You have to worship the beast to get the mark! This could be some type of microchip that would be scanned at the checkout. Without it, you can't buy anything. If you don't worship the beast, you won't get the mark; you'll be unable to buy anything. Microchips have already been implanted in some Alzheimer's patients in case they wander.

Now let me ask you something: How long would you be able to last right now if you couldn't buy anything? You might have to go out into the wilderness to live. Well, that's exactly what chapter twelve told us will be happening in those days!

V. 18 The Number of the Beast

WOW! The number of the beast is 666!

This is perhaps the item most speculated about in Revelation.

Let me just plead with you as your pastor not to make the mistake so many have made down through the centuries, trying to identify who the Antichrist is and what the number means. Throughout the last 2,000 years people have tried to equate this with cruel tyrants, powerful popes, and popular politicians. It really is a fool's errand, and gives the church a black eye.

One writer has remarked that this famous number has been made to yield almost all the historical names of the past eighteen centuries. A sound interpretation is to see the number as an emphatic form of six, which symbolically is the number of fallen man. -Irving Jensen 113

That thought should rule the day!

V. 8-10 Beauty and the Beast

What we have just talked about is a horrible time on earth. But Even in the midst of this time when the Unholy Trinity will desecrate the earth, God will encourage His beautiful people.

There will be many Jews and others who turn to Christ Jesus during this time. They will face awful circumstances, but they will be beautiful in God's eyes!

In verse eight it mentions the Book of Life, spoken of 7 times in Revelation!

Note in verse nine it doesn't say, "to the churches" at the end.

In chapters 2 & 3 it would say this and then say this was addressed to the churches.

In verse nine there is a special appeal to anyone still around who would repent and turn to God and get in on the Book of Life!

And then matter of factly in verse 10, it refers to the fact that the destiny of many of those who won't worship the beast is to be killed. But then, as if to reinforce that death is no big deal for the believer, is the call to faith and endurance.

Scripture challenges us to be brave in faith and have courageous endurance no matter what we face.

Folks, if you are put on the spot to speak of your faith, speak courageously!
If you're going to die for your faith, die bravely!

It will not catch God by surprise if you die for your faith!
All of John's apostle friends had!

"Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in Heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in Heaven. Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." -Matt. 10:32-34

John himself had already faced much persecution with faith and endurance!

We are also called to have faith and endurance no matter what we face!

Earlier I told you the story of Donald Bolt courageously dying for his country in Korea. What I wanted to share with you here at the end of this message is that he didn't have to do it!

He had already served at the end of WW II. But after college, in 1948 he volunteered for recall to active duty.

In 1949, in a standard move to reduce the abundance of pilots, Don was purged of his pilot status. At that point he could have returned to civilian status. There was little hope he would be able to fly again. Don chose to remain in the AF anyway, in hopes that an opening to fly would come.

When the Korean conflict came along, it did. Don Bolt was sent to the Far East Theater. After flying 8 combat missions, his plane was hit by machine gun fire and went down over enemy territory. He had to wait several hours that time to be picked up. He was given a ground assignment, and probably would not have had to fly combat missions again. But even though being shot down had hurt his confidence, Don courageously flew again when the opportunity presented itself. That's what he was doing when he gave his life for our freedom.

The Korean conflict ended in a stalemate between the two nations.
Was Don's sacrifice worth it?

North Korea and South Korea today are radically different places.

North Korea has lived to see the same devastating results of communism seen in the former Soviet Union: Rampant poverty, suppression of speech, persecution of Christians. There are 6,000 Christians imprisoned for their faith in 1 prison alone.

Meanwhile South Korea has prospered under freedom, and so has the gospel within South Korea; 33 % of the population are Christians, and only the USA sends more missionaries around the world than South Korea's 10,000+!

Thank God for courageous men like Donald Bolt!

Friend, I hope when all is said and done, when the story of your life is written, those reading it will see faith in Jesus and endurance no matter what you faced!

Let's Pray!