

### **FOCUS #3—THE RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST**

One of the most popular indoor sports of armchair theologians is seeking to identify the Antichrist, spoken of by the prophet Daniel and the apostle John. Over the years many people have speculated as to the identity of the Antichrist.

Before the Protestant Reformation, the most accepted idea was that the Antichrist was the Catholic Pope. In the twelfth century Saint Bernard thought that Pope Anacletus was the Antichrist, while in the thirteenth century Frederick II, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, accused Pope Gregory IX of being the Antichrist.

It wasn't simply Protestants making these accusations, but also those who belonged to the Catholic Church and fell out of favor with the papal regime, in power at the time. Of course Protestant scholars and theologians were convinced that the Antichrist was living in Rome disguised as the pope. These scholars included Martin Luther, Philip of Melancthon, John Calvin, Huldreich Zwingli and William Tyndale.

People continue to play the game today. Among the more modern accusations are John F. Kennedy, Henry Kissinger, Bill Clinton and now Barrack Obama. Many have tried to utilize Hebrew numerology and the study of Gematria to identify the Antichrist by his number, 666 as recorded in Revelation 16:18.

If the number system doesn't work in English, then Hebrew, Greek and Latin are examined. Recently on CNN, I heard someone say that the name, Obama, pronounced in Persian means "He is the one." Of course you know that people are running away with this.

I can honestly say to you that I do not know who the Antichrist is! But, I can tell you what he will be like. Just as you know, the Bible never identifies who the Antichrist is, but it does give us an indication of what he will be like.

We will examine the Antichrist by focusing on the data that the Scripture provides us with: the names and titles of the Antichrist; the origin of the Antichrist; the character of the Antichrist; and the activities of the Antichrist.

#### **The Names and Titles of the Antichrist**

There exist a variety of names and titles applied to the Antichrist throughout both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. These include the names Antichrist, Man of Lawlessness, Son of Destruction, Little Horn, the Prince who is to come, and the Beast from the Sea. These names or titles reveal a great deal of information about the nature and character of this future individual.

**Antichrist:** The most common name applied to this future end-times individual is that of the Antichrist. Amazingly the term “antichrist” is found only five times in the Bible, and all five of these occurrences are in the first and second epistles of John. “Four of the five occurrences are in reference to the people of John’s day who were opposed to Christ and His work, either denying His deity (1 John 2:22) or the fact that He had come in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7).

- **1 John 2:22**, “*Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.*”
- **1 John 4:3**, “*and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*”
- **2 John 7**, “*For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*”

Only once does it refer to the person of the future.”<sup>1</sup> This occurrence is in 1 John 2:18 where it states, “*Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming.*” No further information is provided other than this future individual is referred to as Antichrist.

“The word ‘Antichrist’ has a double significance. Its primary meaning is one who is *opposed* to Christ; but its secondary meaning is one who is *instead* of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The usage of the term by John in his epistles reveals the first aspect of being in opposition to Christ.

John explains that antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ and even denies both the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). He also emphasizes that failure to confess Jesus is the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). Lastly even failure to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh is another aspect of this opposition to Christ.

The secondary meaning comes from the Greek term, *ANTICHRISTOS*. The original meaning of the preposition *anti* was “in the place of.” So the term antichrist carries a secondary meaning of “in the place of Christ.”

Both aspects of the term antichrist will apply to the future individual Antichrist as he will be both opposed to Christ and attempt to stand in the place of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 97.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *The Antichrist* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1979), 60.

**Man of Lawlessness:** This second name or title applied to the Antichrist is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:3**, *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the son of destruction...”*

Here this coming one is referred to as “the man of lawlessness.” Further in the context of 2 Thessalonians, verse 8 refers to him as “that lawless one.” The term for lawlessness is the Greek *ANOMIA*, which speaks of someone who transgresses the law.

The title of lawlessness reveals the extreme wickedness of the Antichrist. “Man of lawlessness intimates that he will be the living and active embodiment of every form and character of evil and signifies that he will be sin itself personified.”<sup>3</sup> He will truly be a wicked and sinful man. Christ was the sinless God-man, but Antichrist is the man of sin/man of lawlessness.

**Son of Destruction:** A third title applied to the Antichrist is also found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:3**, *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the **son of destruction**...”*

The phrase “Son of destruction” is also found in John 17:12. In John 17:12 it is translated “son of perdition” and is referring to Judas Iscariot. This phrase speaks of the eternal destiny of the individual, that being eternal damnation. Just as that is the eternal destiny of Christ’s betrayer so it will be the outcome for the Antichrist. Taken together with the preceding phrase “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the Antichrist is seen as a wicked, vile and sinful man who is destined for eternal damnation.

**Little Horn:** Another title or name applied to the Antichrist is “little horn.” The term horn in both old and New Testaments can be used in a figurative sense to symbolize power, strength or might.

In the context of Daniel 7 the term is representative of kings or rulers (cf. Daniel 7:24).

- **Daniel 7:24**, *“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 61.

The description of Antichrist as a little horn as opposed to the other horns that are mentioned is because it is a picture of him prior to his rise to power and world dominance. So the picture offered here of Antichrist by the use of this title is one who will be a ruler with strength and power.

**The Prince Who is to Come:** In Daniel 9:26 we have yet one more name or title applied to the Antichrist. Here he is mentioned as a prince who is to come.

- **Daniel 9:26**, “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of **the prince who is to come** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

In fact he is called a future prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. At the time of the writing of Daniel that destruction was yet future, but now is past history. It was the Roman peoples who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70.

“If the text is to be taken literally at this point, this future ruler will come out of the peoples and nations that made up the ancient Roman Empire.”<sup>4</sup> So this title reveals both the origin of Antichrist as coming from a future reorganized Rome, the fact that his coming will be in the future, and that he will be a prince (ruler) of this future nation/Kingdom.

**The Beast from the Sea:** This name or title of the Antichrist is found in Revelation 13:1.

- **Revelation 13:1**, “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw **a beast coming up out of the sea**, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”

This is a symbolic picture as there is much figurative language used in this passage. It is best to understand this vision as descriptive of the person of the Antichrist as opposed to referring to Antichrist as a literal beast rising out of the ocean waters.

The term *beast* here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. “It pictures that final world empire which will find its embodiment in a satanically empowered individual who will present himself as a counterfeit Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 268.

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Exegetical Digest of Revelation 8-14* (Sun Valley, CA: Robert L. Thomas, 1993), 273.

There is some disagreement as to what is meant by the term, sea. This passage likely draws from the similar passage of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7:3, Daniel sees four beasts rising out of the great sea. The great sea as used in the Scriptures is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea.

In another similar passage, Revelation 17:15, the sea is to be understood as peoples and multitudes and tongues. The best conclusion is that John is witnessing the rising of the beast, Antichrist, from among the peoples of the Mediterranean world. So this title further reveals the origin of Antichrist, being from the Mediterranean world, and the nature of the Antichrist as being extremely ferocious.

### **The Origin of the Antichrist**

The origin of the Antichrist can be explained from two different perspectives. The first is the physical perspective, which identifies the earthly origin of the Antichrist. The second perspective is the spiritual perspective, which identifies the spiritual origin or nature of the Antichrist.

***The Earthly Origin of the Antichrist:*** The earthly origin of the Antichrist is possibly found in three locations within the Scriptures. The first is in Daniel 7:7, where the fourth beast in Daniel’s vision is likely understood as a reference to the Roman Empire. It is from this fourth beast that the little horn, previously identified as a reference to the Antichrist, rises up.

- **Daniel 7:7**, *“After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.”*

This coincides well with Daniel 9:26 where the Antichrist is mentioned as the prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple.

- **Daniel 9:26**, *“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”*

The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple occurred in AD 70 by Rome. Therefore, the earthly origin of the Antichrist would appear to come from within the area that made up the Roman Empire.

Another possible mention of the Antichrist’s earthly origin comes from Revelation 13:1 as mentioned earlier.

- **Revelation 13:1**, *“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”*

The sea is likely a figurative expression referring to the people of the Mediterranean area. This of course is the same territory controlled by the ancient Roman Empire.

So the earthly origin of the Antichrist is from somewhere around the Mediterranean area, likely coming out of the peoples and nations that made up the ancient Roman Empire. A form of this empire may be revived in some future time and it is from this region that the Antichrist will most likely come onto the world scene.

Some have made a case that nations of Europe are going to come together to form this future nation/empire. Others suggest that it may include more than just Europe and that the U.S. will in some way be connected with this future empire. But, it is hard to be certain, since the Scripture gives us no other details. We are not given any names, specific locations or titles. All we know is that the earthly origin of the Antichrist in some way descends from a revived form of the Roman Empire. Anything else is just speculation.

***The Spiritual Origin of the Antichrist:*** The Scriptures not only describe the earthly origin of Antichrist, but they also provide instruction regarding the spiritual origin or nature of this future individual.

In Revelation 11:7 the Antichrist is described as a beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit.

- **Revelation 11:7**, *“When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”*

The picture here is likely of the demonic origin of this beast. This beast (Antichrist) will be completely under Satan’s control and will receive his power, throne, and authority from Satan (cf. Revelation 13:2).

- **Revelation 13:2**, *“And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.”*

His coming is in accordance with Satan, as 2 Thessalonians 2:9 describes the power, signs and lying wonders of the Antichrist.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:9**, *“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of*

*His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders...*

Antichrist's earthly origin may be from some form of revived Roman Empire rising up from the Mediterranean peoples, but he is truly of his father, the devil and will be but a pawn in the hand of Satan.

### **The Character of the Antichrist**

What is the Antichrist like? What character qualities does he possess? The Scripture has a great deal to say about the character of the Antichrist. We will work through an overview of these qualities as they are highlighted in both the Old and New Testaments.

***He will be Intelligent:*** The first quality is really the only positive quality. In Daniel 7:8 the Antichrist is described as a little horn with eyes like the eyes of a man. "Eyes are symbolic of insight, intelligence, and prudence. The significance here is that the Antichrist will be characterized by an unusual mental ability."<sup>6</sup> He will be a very sharp and knowledgeable man. Although he will be quite intelligent, the phrase "eyes like a man" also emphasizes that he will not be a supernatural being, but simply a man. Thus he only possesses an earthly intelligence that cannot compare to the omniscience of God.

***He will be Apparently Peaceful:*** The key here is that he is not a peaceful man, but gives the appearance of being a peacemaker. This can be seen in Daniel 9:27, where he is seen making a covenant with the many. The "many" is a reference to Israel and thus some sort of covenant or peace treaty is made between the Antichrist and Israel. Possibly this covenant will ensure protection for Israel, the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstatement of temple sacrifices. What a great man of peace this ruler will appear to be in order to broker such a covenant. The true character of the Antichrist will shine through half way through that seven-year agreement as he will break the covenant, put an end to the sacrifices, and erect an abominable image of himself in the temple. So although for three and one-half years he gives the appearance of being a man of peace, he truly is not.

***He will be Arrogant:*** A common characteristic applied to the Antichrist in the Scriptures is that of boastfulness or arrogance. This is first seen in Daniel 7:8, where he is described as having a mouth speaking great things. Antichrist will be quite boastful as Daniel 7:25 goes on to describe him as speaking pompous words against the Most High. This is further referenced in Daniel 11:36, where he is said to speak blasphemy against God and exalt himself above every god.

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<sup>6</sup> Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 188.

Paul also references this characteristic in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, where he describes the Antichrist as exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The apostle John also adds to this by mentioning that the Antichrist was given a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies (Revelation 13:5).

In fact, Revelation 13:6 reveals three ways in which the Antichrist will blaspheme God:

1-“He will blaspheme God’s name by casting direct aspersion on His person.

2-He will blaspheme His Tabernacle by speaking against His dwelling place.

3-He will blaspheme those who dwell in heaven—the saints and the angelic host.”<sup>7</sup> The Scriptures paint a portrait of the arrogant and blaspheming nature of the Antichrist in almost every passage that he is mentioned.

**He will be Deceitful:** In addition to his arrogance, Antichrist will be quite a deceiver. This can first of all be seen in his making and breaking a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27). He will have appeared to be a friend and protector of Israel, but will truly have deceived them as he will turn on them half way through the agreement and break the covenant.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Paul speaks of the Antichrist as coming with lying wonders. He will apparently be capable of doing great and mighty acts as if he was God, but they are called lying wonders because they are in accordance with the working of Satan. Verse 10 goes on to directly state that the coming of the Antichrist is with all unrighteous deception. In this particular context Antichrist will be capable of deceiving the unsaved people of the earth and leading them straight into eternal damnation.

1 John 2:22 can also be applied to the Antichrist. John states that anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. This would certainly apply to the Antichrist who is in opposition to Christ and sets himself up in the place of Christ. Antichrist will indeed be an untrustworthy and unrighteous deceiver of the people of the world.

**He will be Belligerent:** The Antichrist will also be very belligerent in his character. This can be seen first of all in Daniel 7, where the Antichrist as the little horn will rise up and pluck out by the roots three of the other horns. The horns here symbolizing kings (cf. Daniel 7:24) are moved out of the way, overcome or subdued by the little horn. Daniel 7:21 adds to this that this same horn was making war against the saints. Apparently the Antichrist’s belligerent nature is worked out not only through an eagerness to go to war, but also to persecute and oppress God’s saints. Daniel further mentions this persecution or wearing out of the saints again in verse 25.

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<sup>7</sup> David M. Levy, *Revelation Hearing the Last Word* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1999), 149.

The Apostle John also mentions this warlike nature of the Antichrist in making war with the saints (cf. Revelation 13:7). Not only will Antichrist be able to make war with the saints, but he will also be able to overcome them. “Acting as Satan’s tool, the beast is able to wage war against the saints throughout the entire globe and to overcome them. Many believers in Christ among both Jews and Gentiles will perish as martyrs during this awful time of trial.”<sup>8</sup> This warlike tendency of Antichrist can also be seen in Revelation 19:19, when at the second coming of Christ, the Antichrist and the kings of the earth will gather together to make war against Christ.

**He will be Powerful:** Antichrist will also be a very powerful man. This can be seen first of all in Daniel 7 with his rising up and removing three other rulers in some sort of a future Roman Empire (cf. Daniel 7:24).

He will also evidently be powerful enough to make a covenant with Israel giving them peaceful protection while rebuilding the temple and reinstating temple sacrifices (Daniel 9:27). He will be powerful enough to exalt himself above all that is called God and make himself out to be God (cf. Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

He will also be powerful enough to make war with and persecute the saints (cf. Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7). According to Revelation 13:7, he will be powerful enough to gain authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

The greatest description of this power is given in the image of the beast of Revelation 13. In verse 2 he is described as being like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion.

The metaphor of a leopard as mentioned here brings to mind its swiftness and agility. This is foreshadowed in the third beast of Daniel 7, which was a reference to the Alexandrian Empire and their ability to swiftly move forward in battle. As it is applied to the Antichrist and his kingdom, he will likewise have the power and ability to move his army swiftly into battle and conquer his enemies (cf. Revelation 6:2).

“The bear is a metaphor for the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, depicting that kingdom’s ferocious strength, combined with its great stability (cf. Daniel 7:5).”<sup>9</sup> Likewise the Antichrist will have such power and strength in his future kingdom.

The next descriptive phrase of the Antichrist and his kingdom is that he has a mouth like the mouth of a lion. “The phrase, *mouth of a lion* indicates a mouth of great capacity,

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<sup>8</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 201.

<sup>9</sup> *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ed. John MacArthur Jr., (Nashville, TN: Word Bibles, 1997), 2009.

one which has a large extent of opening; in particular, the formidable teeth, which the lion's mouth exhibits."<sup>10</sup>

The Babylonian Empire was depicted as a lion, with great consuming power (cf. Daniel 7:4). Likewise the kingdom of Antichrist will be powerful and consuming. The power of the Antichrist is further stated in Revelation 13:2 as being from the dragon, who is none other than Satan. The Antichrist will be a very powerful ruler as he will be energized by Satan himself.

### **The Activities of the Antichrist**

There are a few key activities of the Antichrist that must be noted. These range from his beginnings as the leader of some western nation and the signing of a covenant with Israel, his rise to power as a dominant world leader, his persecution of the saints and his demand of the world's worship.

***Antichrist Signs a Covenant with Israel:*** One of the earlier activities of the Antichrist on the world scene seems to be his signing of a covenant with Israel (cf. Daniel 9:27). At this point Antichrist will have already been placed in the position of leadership of some western nation. He as noted earlier must come from a nation in the area once controlled by the ancient Roman Empire. He will already be politically positioned and powerful enough to ensure the protection of Israel, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and the reinstatement of temple sacrifices. This covenant as noted in Daniel 9:27, will begin the seventieth week (a seven-year period) allotted to Israel. This seven-year period is the same as the Tribulation period described in the book of Revelation. The Tribulation begins with the signing of this covenant between Antichrist and Israel.

***Antichrist Rises to World Dominance:*** During the first half of the tribulation the Antichrist will be rising in power to world dominance. He is depicted in Revelation 6:2 as being given bow and a crown as he went out to conquer. This seems to be a reference to his ability to conquer the entire earth through a bloodless coup, since there is no mention of arrows. It is possibly through other treaties similar to the one signed with Israel that Antichrist will be able to accomplish world-wide dominance. Another reference to this achieving of world-wide dominance might be found in Daniel 7 as the Antichrist (the little horn) uproots three other rulers in this future ten-nation confederacy. It seems clear that by the mid-point of the Tribulation period, Antichrist has assumed world-wide dominance (cf. Revelation 13:7).

***Antichrist is Apparently Killed and Resurrected:*** This particular event is described in Revelation 13:3, where the Antichrist is described as one of the heads and is apparently killed. The terminology seems to be strong. *Slain, (esphagmenon)*, suggests a violent death. Further the term *fatal wound (plaga)* is suggestive of having had a deadly blow.

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<sup>10</sup> Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart & Co., 1847), 639.

In fact the whole first part of verse 3 could be literally rendered, “*And (I saw) one of his heads as it had been slain into death, and his plague of death has been healed.*” In verse 12 the phrase *plague of death* is repeated, only it is translated *fatal wound*. In verse 14 we are told that this plague is by the sword.

For all practical purposes it appears that the Antichrist is indeed given a death-blow and killed, but is healed and brought back to life. The only real difficulty in carrying it this far is the term *as (HOS)*. This term is often used as a comparative particle in which case it would suggest the appearance of death. However this term could just as easily be understood as a temporal particle and could be translated *after or when*. In this case it would indeed be suggestive of a literal death and some sort of a resurrection. In either case it seems apparent that the world understands the Antichrist to be dead and is amazed, when he has been healed. In fact this seems to lead directly into the worship given to the beast in verse 4. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Satan and the Antichrist are closely counterfeiting the death and resurrection of Christ.

***Antichrist Demands the World’s Worship:*** After the Antichrist is apparently raised from the dead, the entire world will be in utter amazement. In fact Revelation 13:4 says that they worship the Antichrist and suggest that he is incomparable. It is this worship that the Antichrist will demand from all the inhabitants of the earth.

Clearly amazed by his resurrection much of the unbelieving world will have no problem worshipping the Antichrist. At this point in the career of the Antichrist, he will break the covenant that he had previously made with Israel and he will put an end to the temple sacrifices and offerings (cf. Daniel 9:27). In fact he will proclaim himself to be God and sit as God in the newly rebuilt Jerusalem temple.

Apparently, many great yet false signs and wonders will be done by the Antichrist and his false prophet (2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9-10; Revelation 13:13-15), which will deceive the unbelieving world. This demand for worship will escalate to the point that the false prophet will encourage the people to set up an image of the Antichrist in the temple (Revelation 13:14). This false prophet will enable this image to both breathe and speak (Revelation 13:15). The Scriptures would equate such idolatry with the worship of Satan (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:36-37). In fact since Antichrist is energized and empowered by Satan, this truly is a form of Satan worship. The penalty for refusing to participate in such worship will be that of death according to Revelation 13:15.

***Antichrist Persecutes the Saints:*** It seems that this will be a primary activity of the Antichrist as it is mentioned several times in the Scriptures. Antichrist is said to make war against the saints, and overpower them (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7) and to persecute the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:25). It seems that this primarily occurs during the second half of the Tribulation period, as Daniel says that they will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time, which is a reference to a three and one-half year period.

Daniel also states that this persecution will take place until the coming of the Ancient of Days, which is likely a reference to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. This persecution of the saints can also be seen in the Antichrist rising up, making war with the two witnesses and killing them (cf. Revelation 11:7). Although the persecution may be primarily an occurrence of the second three and one-half years of the Tribulation, it is apparent that some persecution will take place during the first half as well according to the fifth seal judgment (Revelation 6:9-11) and Christ's Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:9).

***Antichrist Wages War Against the Lord Jesus:*** The final activity of the Antichrist will be a last ditch effort to maintain world dominance in the face of Christ's return to the earth. This is described in Revelation 19:19 as the glorified Christ appears and is returning to the earth. The Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and their armies will gather together to make war with Christ. It is at this point that the Antichrist and his false prophet are captured and the rest of the armies are killed. This final war of the Antichrist will be short-lived and he will be utterly defeated as he is cast into his final doom.

### **The Judgment of the Antichrist**

The final doom of the Antichrist is recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 19:20. The Antichrist's control of the world will be broken upon Christ's return to the earth. The Lord shall return, breaking the power of the Antichrist, demonstrating him to be a deceiver (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8), decimating his armies (Revelation 19:21), and casting the Antichrist along with his false prophet into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 19:20). So the judgment against the Antichrist is utter defeat and eternal damnation.

## REVELATION 13 “THE BEAST FROM THE SEA”

**Revelation 13:1-10**, *“And he stood on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast, which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.”*

This passage in Revelation is an interlude in the events of the book. The interlude began in Revelation 12:1 with the great signs of the woman and the dragon. The woman is best identified as Israel and the great red dragon as Satan. This interlude now continues with the appearance of a beast from the sea (13:1-10) and a beast from the earth (13:11-18). We will focus on Revelation 13:1-10 this morning and the identity of this beast from the sea.

### **The Appearance of the Beast: (vv.1-2)**

At this point in the interlude, John sees a vision of the dragon from chapter 12 (Satan) standing on the sand of the seashore. There is some textual difficulty here in this verse, as some manuscripts read, "I stood," while others read, "he stood." If it is "I stood" then this would be the Apostle John standing on the seashore, but if it is "he stood" then it is a reference to the dragon from chapter 12.

The earliest and best manuscripts would support the reading of "he stood." So this is the introduction of a new vision, in which John sees the dragon (Satan) standing on the sand of the seashore. It is possible that the dragon is summoning the beast from the sea and thus preparing to equip him for world dominance and the oppression of Israel and tribulation saints.

It is at this point that we have an appearance of this beast from the sea and his description.

*A beast coming up out of the sea:*

The first description of the Antichrist is a picture of a beast coming up out of the sea. This is a symbolic picture as there is much figurative language used here. It is best to understand this vision as descriptive of the person of the Antichrist as opposed to a literal beast rising out of the ocean waters. The term beast here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. "It pictures that final world empire which will find its embodiment in a satanically empowered individual who will present himself as a counterfeit Christ."

There is some disagreement as to what is meant by the term, sea here in Revelation 13:1. This passage likely draws from the similar passage of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7:3, Daniel sees four beasts rising out of the great sea. The great sea as used in the Scriptures is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea.

In another similar passage, Revelation 17:15, we are told that the sea is to be understood as peoples and multitudes and tongues. The best conclusion is that John is witnessing the rising of the beast (Antichrist) from among the peoples of the Mediterranean world.

This would suggest that the Antichrist will come from the Mediterranean world and likely the leader of some western nation. Daniel 9:26 reveals that he comes from the peoples that destroyed Jerusalem, whom we know as Rome. So the Antichrist will rise up from the Mediterranean world possibly through a reorganized Roman Empire.

*Having seven heads with blasphemous names:*

The seven heads likely represent seven successive world empires controlled by Satan as mentioned earlier in Revelation 12. The blasphemous names indicate that these seven world empires were in direct opposition to God and His plan. There are two different views as to the identity of these seven world empires.

**One view sees them consisting of:**

1. Sumeria, under Nimrod.
2. Egypt, Israel's first oppressor
3. Assyria, who destroyed Israel.
4. Babylonia, who destroyed Judah.
5. Medo-Persia.
6. Greece.
7. Rome, ruling at the time of Christ.

This particular view sees all seven heads as past historical kingdoms that oppressed God's people throughout Biblical history.

**A Second View sees them consisting of:**

1. Egypt.
2. Assyria.
3. Babylonia.
4. Medo-Persia
5. Greece.
6. Rome.
7. A Revived Roman Empire.

This view sees these seven heads as successive world empires, who have all oppressed God's chosen people (Israel). The only difference is the first kingdom of view 1, Sumeria was prior to the founding of Israel and is replaced by the future world empire of Antichrist, which will be some sort of a revived Roman Empire and will indeed oppress Israel during the last half of the tribulation.

This second view seems to fit better in the context of the Book of Revelation and the Tribulation Period. It also makes more sense in this being an identification of the Antichrist. Antichrist will rise to power from a revived form of the Roman Empire, which stands in a long line of nations, who have been influenced or controlled in some way by Satan and who have oppressed Israel.

*Having ten horns with diadems:*

The term horn (KERATA) is taken in a figurative sense for power or strength such as in Luke 1:69. In a general sense it is a symbol of power or might. Here in the context of Revelation 13 it is likely representing 10 powerful rulers (cf. Daniel 7:24). This is further evidenced by the 10 diadems, which are on the horns.

These diadems are a mark of kingly rank. It is best to understand that these 10 rulers or kings, who have great power, make up the revived Roman Empire and it is out of these 10 nations or rulers that the Antichrist will rise up and take control of the world. This is supported by the previous revelation of Daniel 7:15-26, which demonstrates that the Antichrist will indeed rise up out of a kingdom of ten-rulers.

*The beast, which I saw was like a leopard:*

"The selection of these three animals is related to the similar revelation given in Daniel 7, where the successive world empires are described by the lion, referring to Babylon,

the bear, referring to Medo-Persia, and the leopard, referring to the Alexandrian Empire.

The fourth empire gathers all these elements and characteristics in itself and is far more dreadful in its power and blasphemy than the preceding empires." Thus the Revived Roman Empire takes on all these features from these other empires.

"The leopard was a metaphor for ancient Greece, alluding to the Greek's swiftness and agility as their military moved forward in conquest, particularly under Alexander the Great (cf. Daniel 7:6)." The leopard was commonly found in Israel.

*His feet were like [those] of a bear:*

"The bear was a metaphor for the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, depicting that kingdom's ferocious strength, combined with its great stability (cf. Daniel 7:5)." The bear, which was indeed found in Israel was very powerful and had the capability of crushing its prey at will since it had extreme strength in its feet and claws.

*His mouth like the mouth of a lion:*

"The lion was a metaphor for the ancient Babylonian Empire, referring to the Babylonian's fierce all-consuming power as they extended their domain (cf. Daniel 7:4)." "The phrase mouth of a lion indicates a mouth of great capacity, one which has a large extent of opening. In this idea are the formidable teeth, which the lion's mouth exhibits." Such lions were common in the Jordan Valley and the Judean hills.

The three animals thus combined by the writer symbolize swiftness and ferocity in springing upon prey, tenacity in holding it and dragging it away, and a ravenous appetite for devouring, with extraordinary powers adapted to satisfy it." Thus this beast in Revelation 13 combines the features of all the qualities of Israel's former oppressors.

*The dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority:*

The last description of the beast is bound up in this last phrase of verse 2, which reveals that the Antichrist receives his power and authority from the dragon (Satan). We are told by John that it is the dragon, who is behind the rise of Antichrist. It is the dragon, who gives the Antichrist his power.

The term power (DUNAMIS) simply means "strength, ability to accomplish anything, or power". The term throne (THRONOS) here refers to regal power such as civil or military dominion. Authority here is referring to the Antichrist's world dominance and authority during the Tribulation.

This verse likely resumes the narrative of verse 1. John sees the dragon standing on the seashore, then the beast rises up out of the Mediterranean peoples, and is given power and authority from the dragon, Satan. Simply put the beast will be energized by the dragon. He will be but a pawn in the hand of Satan.

### **The Affliction of the Beast: (vs. 3)**

Verse 3 is a difficult passage to interpret. There seem to be a variety of interpretations.

1) Some see this head being slain as the Roman Empire, which has seemingly been put to death, but in the last days will be revived. The difficulty with this view is that the terminology seems to be speaking of an individual and that the terminology used seems to be speaking of an apparent or literal death.

Also the idea of a Revived Roman Empire is not suitable enough for the world to be in amazement and worship the beast.

2) Other views include seeing some historical figure being raised to life such as Nero, Judas Iscariot, or Hitler. These are also unsatisfactory especially since dead unbelievers will not be raised until the Great White Throne Judgment.

3) The only real option is that this future beast, the Antichrist is the head that is apparently killed and healed. In this view the head would be representative of the entire beast.

The terminology seems to be strong. Slain, (ESPHAGMENON), suggests a violent death. Further the term fatal wound (PLAGA) is suggestive of having had a deadly blow. In fact the whole first part of verse 3 could be literally rendered, "And (I saw) one of his heads as it had been slain into death, and his plague of death has been healed."

In verse 12 the phrase *plague of death* is repeated, only it is translated *fatal wound*. In verse 14 we are told that this plague is by the sword. For all practical purposes it appears that the Antichrist is indeed given a death-blow and killed, but is healed and brought back to life.

The only real difficulty in carrying it this far is the Greek term *as* (HOS). This term is often used as a comparative particle in which case it would suggest the appearance of death.

However this term could just as easily be understood as a temporal particle and could be translated after or when. In this case it would indeed be suggestive of a literal death and some sort of a healing/resurrection. In either case it seems apparent that the world understands the Antichrist to be dead and are amazed, when he has been healed.

In fact this seems to lead directly into the worship given to the beast in verse 4. Whatever the case it is apparent that the dragon and the beast are closely counterfeiting the death and resurrection of Christ. The question that is left to answer is whether Satan has the power to restore a dead person to life?

It seems that it would be impossible to determine for sure whether Satan could be allowed this kind of power. It seems that the best conclusion is the conclusion made by Dr. Robert Thomas in his commentary, "Whether the beast performs this marvelous feat through deception or through power permitted by God, it still brings him into the limelight as never before."

#### **The Adoration of the Beast: (vs. 4)**

After his apparent death the world will be in utter amazement that this individual (the Antichrist) will be healed and returned to life. This amazement and wonder will evolve into worship. "The final form of apostasy is not simply the worship of some pagan deity but the worship of Satan himself."

"Worship of the dragon (explicitly mentioned only here in Revelation), who empowers the beast is one and the same with worship of the beast. Both will be associated with image worship (13:14- 15), which like all idolatry, is devil worship (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:19-21).

Revelation mentions worship of the beast several other times (cf. 13:8, 12; 14:9, 11; 20:4) and worship of his image several times as well (cf. 13:15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20)."

"The beast is Satan's substitute for Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and to him the world as a whole flecks to give homage, indicated in the questions "Who is like the beast? Who is able to wage war with him?" "The incomparability of the beast is what provokes people to worship him." Obviously the understood answer to these questions in the minds of the people is **no one**.

#### **The Arrogance of the Beast: (vv. 5-6)**

"Most world dictators have proven to be persuasive speakers, able to motivate the masses to their political ideology. The Antichrist will be no exception." He will obviously be able to mesmerize the entire world by his speaking ability. However, "the evil character of the world ruler of that day is shown in his boasting and blasphemy. A similar description of the same character is given in Daniel 7:8, 11, 25."

According to verse 5 not only was he arrogant in speaking blasphemies, but he was given authority to operate for 42 months. This time period is of course 3 1/2 years and will coincide with the last half of the tribulation period.

Evidently sometime around the middle of the tribulation the Antichrist will either, be killed and raised from the dead or will fake his death and resurrection. This healing of an apparent deadly wound will amaze the world so that they will begin to follow after the beast.

It will be at this time that he will break his covenant with the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:27), go in and defile the temple, proclaim himself to be God, and set an image of himself up in the temple (2 Thessalonians 2:4). From that point on he will gain world dominance and oppress both Israel and believers.

Verse 6 goes on to amplify the blasphemous speech of the beast as mentioned in verse 5a. "Verse 6 lists three ways in which the beast will blaspheme God:

- 1-He will blaspheme God's name by casting direct aspersion on His person.
- 2-He will blaspheme His Tabernacle by speaking against His dwelling place.
- 3-He will blaspheme those who dwell (tabernacle) in heaven—the saints and the angelic host who, along with Michael the archangel, will cast Satan out of heaven (12:7-9, 12)."

It is important to note that the phrase *that is* does not exist in the Greek manuscripts. In fact there exists two readings of this verse. The alternate reading would include the Greek KAI (and). Thus the translation would read as the NKJV and the NIV. "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven."

The NASB would conclude that there are just two objects of the Antichrist's blasphemy, while the other major versions (I believe appropriately) see three.

### **The Aggression of the Beast: (vv. 7-8)**

*The universal dominion of the beast: (vs. 7)*

- First of all the Antichrist will be given power "to make war with the saints and to overcome them."

"Acting as Satan's tool, the beast is able to wage war against the saints throughout the entire globe and to overcome them (cf. Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:10; Rev. 7:9-17). Many believers in Christ among both Jews and Gentiles will perish as martyrs during this awful time of trial."

- Second we see the universal power of Antichrist as it becomes worldwide by the middle of the Tribulation.
-

The phrase every tribe and people and tongue and nation is an emphatic way of expressing the entire world. The point being made is that the authority of Antichrist will become worldwide. Antichrist will take control of the world.

*The universal worship of the beast: (vs. 8)*

Not only will Antichrist receive worldwide power, but he also will receive worldwide worship. “*All who dwell on the earth,*” is qualified by the statement, “whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life.” So that the statement, “*all who dwell on the earth*” does not include believers in Christ.

This book of life includes only the names of those who are the elect of God. Those who worship the beast and take the mark of the beast do not have their names written in the book of life. According to God’s eternal, electing purpose before creation, the death of Christ seals the redemption of the elect (the believer) forever (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27,28).

Antichrist can never take away the salvation of the elect. The eternal registry of the elect will never be altered, nor will the saved (the elect) in the Antichrist’s day worship him.” It is likely because of their refusal to worship Antichrist that he goes after the saints to make war with them and overcome them.

### **The Appropriate Response of the Saints: (vv. 9-10)**

Verses 9 and 10 offer a challenge to the Tribulation saints. In this challenge the Tribulation saints are being warned of impending persecution by the beast. They are being urged to submit to divine providence and persevere to the end.

*Verse 9:*

The phrase “If anyone has an ear, let him hear” is a frequent expression in the gospels (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35). There is also great similarity with the conclusion of each of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3. However the phrase “unto the churches” is omitted here. Some take this as evidence of the previously raptured church saints.

*Verse 10:*

There exist a number of variations on the original reading of the. The best understanding is likely, “If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he departs. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, [it is necessary for] him to be killed by the sword.”

This rendering of the original Greek text leads to the above interpretation of this verse. It does not see a use of force by the saints, but simply stresses the inevitability of

persecution and death for the faithful. "This interpretation agrees with the invitation of verse 9. It also fits with the reference to endurance in verse 10.

It invites the faithful to recognize that the actions of this false messiah have been decreed by God. This meaning also coincides with the emphasis on divine providence in the Jeremiah passages to which John alludes in verse 10 (Jeremiah 15:2; 43:11).

The emphasis in the immediate context on the victory of the beast over the saints leaves little room for any other meaning except an encouragement to accept this as the sovereign will of God."

The conclusion of verse 10 offers two personal qualities needed to sustain believers in the midst of this persecution.

**Endurance (HUPOMONE):** This term literally means, "to remain under." It pictures an endurance with things or circumstances or trials. It is a brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world.

"It denotes patience in trying circumstances. It does not denote a grim, fatalistic resignation, but a courageous acceptance of hardship, suffering, and loss."

**Faith (PISTIS):** Here in Revelation 13 this term likely takes on the nuance of faithfulness or fidelity rather than the connotation of faith. It speaks of an undying dedication and faithfulness to the Lord in the midst of persecution from the beast.

These two qualities of endurance and faithfulness will be necessary for those who must endure this terrible time of persecution and death.