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Sermon Notes

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The Power and Persuasion of the Final False Prophet

Revelation 13:11-18

The people of God have been plagued throughout redemptive history by false prophets... people who have stood up and preached a false religion and led away large numbers of disciples after themselves. They are skillful orators and religious geniuses, able to tap into the selfish interests and pride and heart desires of their hearers and manipulate them into following them with religious zeal

The Bible records the actions and words of many false prophets... Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses, Balaam who enticed Israel to sin with Moab, the prophets of Baal who opposed Elijah at Mt. Carmel, Hananiah who prophesied lies during Jeremiah's days... and many others

So also church history records the devastation wreaked by false teachers...

All of the famous false religions and cults of our world have been started by false prophets; and it's possible to see supernatural (demonic) involvement in their stories

Muhammad had visions of an angel from the cave of Hira in AD 610, which began the Koran

Joseph Smith was a conman, a dowser who used seer stones to try to find hidden treasure before he began the Mormon religion based on revelations from the angel Moroni

Charles Taze Russell, in the late 19th century, revived the old Arian heresy that Jesus is a created being, and started the Watchtower

Bible and Tract society that we now know as the Jehovah's Witnesses

Mary Baker Eddy began the cult known as Christian Science in the late 19th century as well, denying that sickness and death are real because matter isn't real

In my lifetime, the false prophet Jim Jones led a group of 909 fanatical followers to drink poisoned Kool Aid and die in Guyana on November 18, 1978

The history of false prophets is horrific, and 2 Peter says "blackest darkness is reserved for them"

But the final and greatest false prophet will spread the final and greatest false religion... the one centered on the Beast from the Sea, the Antichrist.

I. The Person of the False Prophet (vs. 11)

A. The Beast from the Earth

Revelation 13:11-12 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. ¹² He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

1. He is called a "beast"... directly compared and connected with the Beast from the Sea
2. His origin, however, is the earth, not the sea
3. He is a BEAST still, exercising a destructive effect on all who listen to him and follow his words and commands

B. The "False Prophet"

Revelation 13:11-12 he spoke like a dragon. ¹² He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

1. Later in the Book of Revelation, John will call him the **FALSE PROPHET** three times... Revelation 16, 19, and 20

C. A Person, Not a System or a Philosophy

1. Many Protestant commentators have seen this as symbolic language for a worldwide system of false religion following the Pope in Rome
2. However, this does not fit the text
 - a. John calls him “another Beast” directly comparing him with the first Beast, which we have seen is the Antichrist, a specific man with a lifespan
 - b. Furthermore, the fate of the false prophet is the same as the dragon and the Beast from the Sea... to be thrown into the Lake of Fire and be tormented for eternity
 - c. It is not possible to throw a false religious system into the lake of fire... only the devil, angels and humans are
 - d. So, the “Beast from the Earth” is a person who has yet to come on the scene... but he is the final link in a wicked chain of false prophets and teachers who have tormented people throughout all of redemptive history

D. Two Horns Like a Lamb

Revelation 13:11 He had two horns like a lamb

1. Whereas the Beast from the Sea has ten horns, this beast only has two horns
2. And his appearance is like a lamb, pointing to an outward winsomeness and apparent gentleness... but he really is a soul-killing monster

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

False teachers have always appeared good and gentle and loving on the outside, but are wicked and corrupt on the inside:

Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

E. Spoke Like a Dragon

1. John says his language was that of a dragon, or really THE Dragon, Satan
2. Satan is depicted as an enormous Red Dragon in Revelation 12, standing by the shore of the sea calling forth the Beast of the Sea
3. So the Beast from the Earth speaks the Dragon's words
4. This false prophet will be an exceptionally SKILLFUL LIAR, apparently gentle but full of guile and treachery

II. The Purpose of the False Prophet (vs. 12)

Revelation 13:12 He... made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast

A. Ultimate Goal of Satan: to Be Worshiped

1. He fell originally because he wanted to take God's place on the throne of Heaven (Isaiah 14)
2. He tempted Jesus by offering him the whole world if Jesus would simply bow down and worship him (Luke 4)

B. Ultimate Goal of the Antichrist: to Be Worshiped

1. Every world conquering potentate in history has desired to be worshiped like a god
2. Alexander the Great thought himself to be a god
3. The Roman Emperors demanded to be worshiped as gods
4. Even a small-time king like Herod in Acts 12 yearned to be worshiped... and God struck him down for his blasphemy

5. How much more this final, most powerful, most successful world ruler
6. Paul says this is exactly what he will do in God's temple

2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

C. Ultimate Goal of the False Prophet: False Worship of the Antichrist

1. The false prophet will be the world-wide champion of the Beast
2. He will be his mouthpiece, his advocate, his High Priest and the enforcer of the cult surrounding him

III. The Power of the False Prophet (vs. 12-14)

A. First Power: Political Authority

1. Antichrist Delegates His Authority

Revelation 13:12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

2. The False Prophet Turns Authority into Religion

- a. Remember the worldwide extent of the Antichrist's power

Revelation 13:7 he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

- b. Remember that the world also will worship the Antichrist

Revelation 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast-- all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

- c. The False Prophet will be instrumental in making this happen
- d. He wields the full power of the state in the matter of religion... there will be no separation of church and state in the final government of planet earth

- e. It will be literally illegal not to worship the Antichrist
- f. He will be able to unleash the military to compel people to worship
- g. He will also be able to apply the civil authorities as well—the police force and the intelligence apparatus... to find out and arrest any who resist

B. Second Power: False Miracles

1. Focus: the Antichrist's Miraculous Recovery

Revelation 13:3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.

Revelation 13:12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

Revelation 13:14 the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

- a. This seems to be the central theme of the DEITY of the Antichrist
- b. So the false prophet will speak of this constantly, and use it as proof of the deity of the World Ruler

Beyond this, ...

2. The False Prophet Performs His Own Miracles

Revelation 13:13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.

- a. This will immediately call to mind the contest that Elijah had on Mt. Carmel with the false prophets, the prophets of Baal
- b. The rules of that contest were clear... an altar was set up with an animal sacrifice on it; and whichever god answered a prayer for fire to fall from heaven is the true God

- c. At that time, the prophets of Baal cried out for hours with fanatical zeal, crying for Baal to answer by fire
- d. Satan certainly has the power to do that; but God RESTRAINED HIM at that time... out of grace to Israel, God would not allow Satan or any of his demons to send fire falling from the heavens
- e. But Elijah called in prayer and proved the reality of the living God... God answered by fire from heaven which burned up the sacrifice, the altar, and even the stones themselves
- f. But this time God allows both the Antichrist and the False Prophet to do amazing miracles, even causing fire to fall from heaven
- g. Paul predicted it and said it will be an intentional JUDGMENT on the wicked of the earth who refuse to believe in Jesus

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

We should see the grace of God throughout centuries of human history in that he restrains Satan and demons from making false teachers and cults more compelling... he doesn't allow them to do signs and wonders to deceive people

C. The Worldwide Effectiveness of the False Prophet

Revelation 13:14 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth.

Revelation 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast...

1. This will be statistically the most popular religion in the history of the world

2. More people will worship the Antichrist than ever worshiped Jesus Christ, or Allah, or Buddha, or any other deity
3. A higher percentage of the human race will worship the beast
4. The combination of governmental power and miraculous power, backed by the full power of the Devil and his demons will make for an overwhelming success rate
5. Every other religion will be illegal, and all of them except Christianity will become instantly obsolete
 - a. Islam will become obsolete... hundreds of millions of Muslims will convert or die
 - b. Hinduism will become obsolete... the nationalistic religion of India will give way to this one world religion
 - c. Imagine... finally Hindus and Muslims will be one in religion, because they will each give up one Satanic lie for the more powerful one
 - d. Millions of Buddhists will give up their meditations and their seeking of enlightenment to worship the Beast
 - e. Even atheists and agnostics will cease their skepticism and will bow down because of the powerful delusion God is sending them... they will believe the lie
6. BUT there is one group that will refuse to bow down, that will refuse to believe
7. Genuinely converted Christians... the elect

D. BUT THE ELECT Are Not Deceived!!

Revelation 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast-- all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

1. The elect, chosen from before the foundation of the world, will be specially protected by God

2. We are SEALED by the Holy Spirit

1 John 2:18, 20 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ...²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

3. We are instructed ahead of time in the Bible exactly what to expect

Matthew 24:24-26 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible.²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.²⁶ "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

4. This will be the reason why the Dragon and the Antichrist are so enraged
5. Not satisfied with 95% of the world's population, they will go after the ones who refuse
6. Nebuchadnezzar was not satisfied with the fact that almost every single one of his officials in Babylon bowed down to his idol; he was irrationally enraged at Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual to kill them with extreme prejudice
7. In the same way, despite the fact that all the royal officials at the king's gate in the capitol city of Susa knelt down before him and paid him homage, Haman was enraged at ONE JEW, Mordecai, who refused to kneel...
8. These self-worshiping tyrants are JEALOUS, and will brook NO DISSENT
9. So, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will enact a final solution, a program to hunt out all the Christians who refuse to bow down and worship

Two steps... 1) a supernatural IDOL... the image of the Beast that everyone must worship or be slaughtered; 2) the Mark of the Beast, required for anyone who wants to buy or sell

IV. The Program of the False Prophet (vs. 14-17)

A. The Image of the Beast Set Up

Revelation 13:14 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

1. Throughout the history of the world, people have crafted idols, images representing the deities they were worshipping
2. In the Ten Commandments, God specifically forbids this in the worship of himself

Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

3. So this final and wicked religion will have an IDOL... the most compelling in the history of the world
4. This idol is something that is MADE... crafted... and quite probably set up in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem... the Abomination of Desolation

B. The Image of the Beast Comes to Life

Revelation 13:15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak

1. Amazingly, this image has supernatural powers
2. It seems to come to life, and to BREATHE
3. Obviously its speaking is focused on causing the people of the earth to worship the Antichrist

C. The Death of All Who Refuse to Worship the Image

Revelation 13:15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

1. This is the compulsion of the STATE
2. The threat of execution for all who will not worship

D. Controlling All Buying and Selling on Earth... the Mark of the Beast

V. 666: The Mark of the Beast (vs. 16-18)

Revelation 13:16-18 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

A. Source of Endless Speculation

B. Simple Explanation of the Text

1. The False Prophet extends the power and control of the Antichrist to the economic side
2. The controlling of all commerce in the name of the Antichrist makes his power complete
3. It extends to every single person on the face of the earth, no matter what their socio-economic level... EVERYONE SMALL OR GREAT, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND SLAVE
4. It affects their bodies... a mark on the right hand or on the forehead
5. Without the mark, you cannot buy or sell... including especially food
6. The mark of the beast is the mark of his NAME... so it effectively says "I own you"... all that you think, all that you do
7. It is a grotesque parody of the marking of the elect with the Holy Spirit

Revelation 7:3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

8. The continual involvement of the individual in loyalty and worship to the Antichrist every single time he or she buys or sells anything is incredibly invasive and powerful

C. The Call for Wisdom

Revelation 13:17-18 the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

1. The mark is some kind of branding... before the digital age, we would think of a tattoo or a brand marked into the skin
2. Since the advent of high-tech scanning and tiny electronic devices, most speculation has centered around some kind of semiconductor implant that gives out a special signal, marking the identity of the person and his/her loyalty to the Antichrist
3. The mark is identified as the “name of the beast” or the “number of his name”
4. It is directly tied to the specific Antichrist, his name
5. The call for wisdom has been an intellectual challenge to geniuses throughout church history... many have used methods of identifying Hebrew, Greek, or Latin letters to specific numbers... the first letter being given the number value of 1, the second letter 2, etc.
6. This practice is called *gematria*... and it has been used to apply to Nero Caesar, Domitian, Caligula, Napoleon, Hitler, even Ronald Wilson Reagan (who had six letters in each of his three names), etc.

Matthew Henry in his commentary refers to a work popular in his day: “The most admired dissertation on this intricate subject is that of Dr. Potter, where the curious may find sufficient entertainment.”

7. The verb used in verse 18 is translated “calculate”... the number of the Beast

- a. It means to count accurately as with pebbles
 - b. It is frequently tied to mathematical calculation... even Isaac Newton got involved in it
 - c. I don't believe that this approach is entirely wrong, since I think those going through those horrible years will be able to do this calculation as a confirmation of their sense that this man is the Antichrist
8. John says it is "the number of man" or perhaps the "number of A MAN"...
 9. John MacArthur says that it represents man created on the SIXTH DAY, and God resting on the SEVENTH DAY; so that no matter how powerful man ever becomes, he's only ever going to be 6 6 6
 10. Better: it is code language that will only make sense to the final generation of Christians... the ones who need to figure it out
 11. Eschatology is always about combining biblical teaching with current events

Matthew 24:15-16 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-- let the reader understand--¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Note the combination of scripture's teaching from Daniel with the current event of "WHEN YOU SEE..."

Matthew 24:32-33 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

Final generation will know things we don't know: Only the final generation will have all the signs in place... the seven trumpets, the rebuilding of the Temple, the two witnesses, the rise of a powerful world leader who looks like he died and came to life again

They will be able to calculate the number of the Beast, 666, and assign it to the real person

D. The Punishment of Receiving the Mark... eternal condemnation in hell (Revelation 14:9-11)

VI. Applications

A. Thank God for His Grace at Forewarning Us

1. God has warned the entire human race through the scripture... no one should be surprised when these things take place

Mark 13:22-23 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect-- if that were possible. ²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

2. God is good to us to warn us and make it clear what NOT to fall for
3. Unfortunately unbelievers only scoff at these warnings...

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

B. SO... Don't Be an Unbeliever!!

1. The powerful delusion that will come on the final generation is a man doing miracles with the full backing of Satan and all his demons; his personality will be compelling, his miracles will be powerful, his words beguiling
2. NOW is the time to prepare by believing in Christ... the true King, the true Savior
3. See in Christ the holiness of his life, the perfection of his teachings... how he doesn't pander to your ego or feed your pride, but like a true physician he tells you what your dying soul needs to hear

C. Teach Your Children

1. We may or may not be the final generation
2. BUT there will someday be a final generation
3. Jesus told us ahead of time so that we could be ready
4. Paul felt it necessary to warn the Thessalonians in detail and repeatedly about the man of sin that was coming
5. John warned BOTH that one final Antichrist is coming, and even now many antichrists have come
6. Teach your children about the coming end of the world based on Revelation

D. In the Meantime... Be Discerning!

1. Local churches are responsible for the teaching they receive
2. False prophets and false teachers are at work even now... even if not the final versions
3. Study BOTH the life and the doctrine of your leaders
4. If they are apparently righteous, be thankful, not suspicious... don't assume that the truth about them is that they are deeply evil and you just don't know it
5. BUT it is the job of each Christian to be a BEREAN and take what your pastors and teachers say to you and line it up with scripture to see if it's so
6. Jesus said

Matthew 7:15-16 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them.

7. Don't put up with false teachers

2 Corinthians 11:19-20 You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or

exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.

8. Identify false teachers now

a. Tim Challies identified some well-known patterns of false teachers NOW

i) The Heretic

The Heretic is the person who teaches what blatantly contradicts an essential teaching of the Christian faith. He is a gregarious figure, a natural leader teaching just enough truth to mask his deadly error. Yet in denying the faith and celebrating what is false, he leads his followers from the safety of orthodoxy to the peril of heresy.

Of course, all cults like the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the oneness Pentecostals (who deny the Trinity) all teach false doctrine...

Tim Challies calls Pope Francis a false teacher as well, in that all Popes since the Reformation have denied justification by faith alone. This Pope goes beyond that to teach a mushy form of universalism:

"You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don't believe and who don't seek the faith. I start by saying – and this is the fundamental thing – that God's mercy has no limits if you go to him with a sincere and contrite heart. The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience. Sin, even for those who have no faith, exists when people disobey their conscience."

ii) The Charlatan

The Charlatan is only interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his wallet. He uses his leadership position to benefit from others' wealth.

Challies cites examples of famous TV preachers like Benny Hinn and Creflo Dollar that con people into sending them millions of dollars

iii) The Prophet

The Prophet claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture – new, authoritative words of prediction, teaching, rebuke, or encouragement. In reality, though, he is commissioned and empowered by Satan for the purpose of misleading and disrupting Christ’s church. John offered an urgent warning about him. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Challies cited Sarah Young, the author of *Jesus Calling*:

Young's daily devotional is written in words as though they were spoken directly by Jesus Christ Himself. This creates almost a new canon of scripture, new direct revelation of words Jesus is speaking through the prophetess Sarah Young. Very dangerous.

iv) The Abuser

The Abuser uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people.

The Abuser claims he is tending souls, but his true interest is ravishing bodies. He works his way into women’s lives, confidence, homes, and beds. When he is not pursuing illicit sexual pleasure, he may be domineering people to gain power, abusing them on his path to prominence. He does this in the name of ministry, with the claim of God’s anointing. He unapologetically uses and abuses others to feed his lusts.

v) The Divider

The Divider uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church....This false teacher brings strife, not love. He generates factions, not unity. He desires discord, not harmony.

vi) The Tickler

The Tickler is the false teacher who cares nothing for what God wants and everything for what men want. He is the man-pleaser rather than the God-pleaser. Paul thought of him as the ear-tickler, saying things that please the sensibilities of normal people. Without a doubt, Joel Osteen is the clearest example in our day of such a false teacher... he refuses to assert the exclusivity of Christ or the sinfulness of sin, but only wants to stay positive.

vii) The Speculator

the one obsessed with novelty, originality, or speculation. Today, as in every age, the Speculator obsesses about the End Times... and he often makes specific predictions about the end of the world, even to the point of setting dates

BE ON YOUR GUARD!!! Forewarned is forearmed!!